

## **Washington State Laws Protect A Women's Right to Breastfeed in Places of Public Accommodation**

2001: Breastfeeding in public is not considered indecent exposure. (HB 1590)

2009: Breastfeeding mothers are a protected class and can breastfeed their children in places of public accommodation (restaurants, swimming pools, movie theaters, government buildings, museums, libraries, busses, parks, etc.). (HB 1596) [Now that the bill has passed and is law, it should no longer be referred to by its bill number. If we want to refer to it with a number, it should be the RCWs (49.60.030 and 49.60.215)]

### **What Businesses and Employees Need to Know:**

The owner, manager or employee of a place of public accommodation cannot request a mother stop breastfeeding, cover her child, move to a different room or area, or leave. [changed where comma went]

If someone complains to you, as an employee or owner of a business, about a mother breastfeeding her child, politely explain to the customer that the law protects the right of the mother to stay where she is to breastfeed. If they are offended, the only suggestion that you can make is that they avert their eyes or move away.

If you choose to provide a space for breastfeeding mothers, place signs prominently in your business and know it is her right to stay where she is. She does not have to use a designated area.

The law does not apply to employees. However Washington Law (HB 1590) does encourage employers to support breastfeeding employees. To learn more about this visit the Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington website: [www.breastfeedingwa.org](http://www.breastfeedingwa.org).

To contact the Washington Human Rights Commission with questions about the law that protects a mother's right to breastfeed in places of public accommodation call 1-800-233-3247 or visit [www.hum.wa.gov](http://www.hum.wa.gov).

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