



Pump at Work Protections under the Fair Labor Standards Act



WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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1-866-4-US-WAGE



Presentation Topics

- Covered Employees
- Break Time Requirements
- Space Requirements
- Exemptions
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FLSA Pump at Work Protections

The FLSA requires employers to provide reasonable break time and a private place other than a bathroom for an employee to pump breast milk for their nursing child for one year after the child's birth each time such employee has need to pump at work.



The PUMP Act

On December 29, 2022, the Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers Act (PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act or PUMP Act) became law, extending right to pump protections to millions of workers and allowing for additional remedies for violations.

- Extended coverage effective as of December 29, 2022.
- Additional remedies available for violations occurring on or after April 28, 2023.

Eligible Employees

- Nearly all employees covered by the FLSA are eligible to pump at work.
- Employees are eligible to pump at work for one year after their child's birth.
- Narrow exemptions may apply for certain employees of small companies and certain transportation employees.

Enterprise Coverage

All employees of an enterprise are covered under the FLSA if the employer is:

- Engaged in interstate commerce, has at least two employees, and does at least \$500,000 a year in business, or
- Engaged in the operation of a hospital, residential medical or nursing care facilities, schools, preschools, or a public agency.

Individual Coverage

- Individual employees may be covered and entitled to FLSA protections to pump at work if they are engaged in interstate commerce even if the employer is not a covered enterprise.
- Interstate commerce includes making out-of-state phone calls, receiving or sending interstate mail or electronic communications, ordering or receiving goods from out-of-state suppliers, handling credit card transactions, and performing accounting or bookkeeping for such activities.
- Domestic service workers, such as housekeepers, full-time babysitters, and cooks, are normally covered by the law.



Reasonable Break Time

The FLSA requires employers to provide nursing employees:

- Reasonable break time
- Each time such employee has need to pump at work
- For one year after the child's birth

The frequency of breaks needed to pump at work, as well as the duration of each break, will likely vary.

Reasonable Break Time - Examples

- Irina, a shift manager at a fast-food restaurant, takes four 25-minute pump breaks each day when she first returns to work after the birth of her child.
- Leslie, a department store delivery driver with a nine-month-old baby, needs two 30-minute pump breaks each day she works.

Compensation for Break Time

- As with other breaks under the FLSA, the nursing employee must be completely relieved from duty or the time spent pumping must be counted as hours worked for the purposes of minimum wage and overtime requirements.
- If an employer already provides paid break time and if an employee chooses to use that time to pump, they must be compensated in the same way that other employees are compensated for break time.
- An employer must also pay for pump breaks if required by Federal or State law or municipal ordinance.

Space Requirements

Nursing employees must be provided a space that is:

- Shielded from view,
- Free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, and
- May be used to pump breast milk.

The space cannot be a bathroom.



Shielded from View / Free from Intrusion

- Employers must ensure the employee's privacy, for example, by displaying a sign when the space is in use or providing a lock on the door.
- Workers who telework must also be free from observation by any employer-provided or required video system, including computer camera, security camera, or web conferencing platform.
- Employees on passenger trains may temporarily obscure the view of recording devices when the train is not moving.

Functional Space

- The location must be functional as a space for pumping milk.
- An employer may temporarily designate a space or make a space available when needed by the employee.
- Employers should take into consideration the number of nursing employees and their work schedules to determine whether more than one space should be designated or created.

Space - Example

- Merin, a logging company employee, pumps in a break room at the company's office. The room is shielded from view and Merin is permitted to lock the door during pump breaks.

Undue Hardship Exemption

An employer that employs fewer than 50 employees is not required to provide break time and space only if it would impose undue hardship.

- The employer must demonstrate that compliance requires significant difficulty or expense when considered in relation to the size, financial resources, nature, or structure of the employer's business.
- Not available to employers with 50 or more employees.
- All employees who work for the employer, regardless of work site, are counted.

Exemption for Crewmembers of Air Carriers

- The FLSA's pump at work protections do not apply to crewmembers of air carriers.
- Crewmember means a person assigned to perform duty in an aircraft during flight time.

Rail Carriers and Motorcoaches

The FLSA's pump at work protections generally apply to employees of rail carriers or motorcoach services operators as of December 29, 2022. However, coverage for certain employees of rail carriers and motorcoach services operators begins December 29, 2025. These employees include:

- Train crew members involved in the movement of a locomotive or rolling stock or who maintain the right of way of a rail carrier, and
- Employees involved in the movement of a motorcoach.

Exemptions After Three-Year Delay

- Even once pump at work protections are applicable to these employees on December 29, 2025, an exception to these protections may apply if an employer demonstrate that compliance requires significant expense or results in unsafe conditions.
- Significant expense does not include installing a curtain or other screening protection.

A person wearing a white short-sleeved shirt is using a breast pump. The pump is connected to two clear plastic bottles with yellow caps, which are partially filled with milk. The scene is set against a soft, out-of-focus background of white fabric, likely a bed or a clean surface. The lighting is bright and natural, creating a clean and professional atmosphere.

Interaction with State Laws

- The FLSA's pump at work protections do not preempt a State law or municipal ordinance that provides greater protections to employees than those provided by the FLSA.
- Many states have laws related to pumping milk at work.

Prohibited Retaliation

- It is also a violation of the FLSA to “discharge or in any other manner discriminate against” any employee because, for instance, they filed a complaint to assert their pump at work rights or cooperated in an investigation regarding these protections.
- Employees are protected regardless of whether the complaint is made orally or in writing.
- Most courts have ruled that internal complaints to an employer are also protected under the FLSA's prohibition on retaliation.

Example – Prohibited Retaliation

- Leslie is a delivery truck driver for a department store and takes breaks to pump breast milk twice a day. The supervisor complains that the breaks are interfering with the delivery schedule and moves Leslie to a lower-paying job as a result.
- In this example, Leslie has experienced unlawful retaliation under the FLSA.

Remedies

- Employers are liable for appropriate legal or equitable remedies under the FLSA.
- Effective April 28, 2023, remedies for violations of the reasonable break time and space requirements may include employment, reinstatement, promotion, and the payment of wages lost and an equal amount as liquidated damages, compensatory damages, and make-whole relief, such as economic losses that resulted from violations, and punitive damages where appropriate.
- These legal and equitable remedies are already available for violations of the anti-retaliation prohibition.

Enforcement

An employee may file a complaint with WHD or may file a private cause of action seeking appropriate remedies.

- An employee or other party can file a complaint with WHD at any time within a two-year statute of limitations.
- Special notification procedures may apply to filing a private action where an employer has failed to provide an employee with an appropriate space to pump.
- These special procedures do not apply before an employee or other party can file a complaint with WHD.

Special Notification Procedures

Before an employee can file a private suit regarding an employer's failure to provide a space to pump, the employee must notify the employer of the failure and allow 10 days for the employer to come into compliance.

The employee is not required to provide this notice:

- If the worker has been fired for requesting reasonable break time or space,
- If the worker has been fired for opposing employer conduct related to PUMP Act rights, or
- Where the employer has expressed a refusal to comply.

WHD Information

The Wage and Hour Division (WHD) of the U.S. Department of Labor administers and enforces the FLSA, including the pumping at work protections.

How to [contact WHD](#):

- Call our toll-free information and helpline, available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in your time zone, 1-866-4USWAGE(1-866-487-9243)
- Visit <http://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/contact>.

WHD Resources

Additional information about the [FLSA Protections to Pump at Work](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pump-at-work) can be found at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pump-at-work>

- Fact Sheet # 73: FLSA Protections to Pump Breast Milk at Work
- FAQs: FLSA Protections to Pump Breast Milk at Work

[What to Expect from Your Employer When You're Expecting](http://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/maternal-health)

<http://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/maternal-health>

Additional Resources

- [Supporting Nursing Moms at Work: Employer Solutions](http://www.womenshealth.gov/supporting-nursing-moms-work/what-law-says-about-breastfeeding-and-work/what-employers-need-know)
<http://www.womenshealth.gov/supporting-nursing-moms-work/what-law-says-about-breastfeeding-and-work/what-employers-need-know>
- [National Conference of State Legislatures Compilation of State Breastfeeding Laws](http://www.ncsl.org/health/breastfeeding-state-laws)
<http://www.ncsl.org/health/breastfeeding-state-laws>
- [Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding](http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/resources/calltoaction.htm)
<http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/resources/calltoaction.htm>
- [EEOC Enforcement Guidance on Disparate Treatment](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/enforcement-guidance-unlawful-disparate-treatment-workers-caregiving-responsibilities)
<http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/enforcement-guidance-unlawful-disparate-treatment-workers-caregiving-responsibilities>

Additional Resources - cont.

- [OPM Guidance on Nursing Mothers in the Federal Workforce](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/legacy/files/NMothersFederalEmplmnt.pdf)
<https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/legacy/files/NMothersFederalEmplmnt.pdf>
- [Guide for Establishing a Federal Nursing Mother's Program](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/worklife/reference-materials/nursing-mother-guide.pdf)
<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/worklife/reference-materials/nursing-mother-guide.pdf>.
- [CDC Workplace Lactation Support Program Toolkit](https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/index.htm)
<https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/index.htm>

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Questions?