



The Business Case for Breastfeeding

Empowering working mothers & their families with better health

“PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H) provided the supports necessary to help us create a lactation room for our working mother’s”.

Jennifer Klabunde,
Human Resources Director
Ecumen Detroit Lakes



If you ask Jennifer Klabunde, Director of Human Resources at Ecumen Detroit Lakes Senior Housing when did the thought for a lactation room enter her mind, she would tell you “It was a thought I had years ago but we just did not have the time and space for doing it”. So back on the shelf that thought went.

In March 2012, Ecumen joined the worksite wellness collaboration that PS4H was sponsoring led by Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN. It was there that Leslie Anderson, Certified Lactation Counselor for PS4H shared about the Business Case for Breastfeeding. This sparked a renewed interest for Ecumen.

“When someone like Leslie comes along who has all the tools and resources to help, the decision was simple. It would have been foolish for me not to act, since it was my responsibility to advocate for the health of our employees”, says Klabunde, “PS4H had a model policy template for us to follow. They were able to take us through the approval steps and offer the support needed during implementation”, states Klabunde.

Ecumen is Minnesota’s largest non-profit provider of senior services. Nearly 98% of Ecumen’s workforce is female and many of them are at the childbearing age. Ecumen is always looking for ways to respond directly to the needs of their workforce. Employee Dawn Pfeifer shared the following comments, “I wouldn’t have been able to continue to breastfeed without this great space. At other places I worked, I was told that I would have to use the restroom. I am glad that Ecumen Detroit Lakes has this beautiful space for me to use.”

That is a sentiment that is often echoed by many women who do not have the right support in their workplace to keep breastfeeding, but those times are changing because of organizations like Ecumen.

There are very clear health benefits for mother and baby. For infants breastfeeding is linked to decreases in respiratory and ear infections, decreases in allergies and GI disturbances and healthier weight as children grow older. For mothers, breastfeeding can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and certain cancers.

At Ecumen the lactation room is in a central location, close to the employee break room and entrance. Mothers can drop off their pump and supplies before beginning work. With funding provided by PS4H the room has been furnished with comfortable seating and a small refrigerator to store the baby’s milk.

“The positive response that we have received from our staff is being shared throughout Ecumen in hopes that other lactation rooms be established,” says Klabunde.

Currently the lactation room at Ecumen Detroit Lakes is being used by 5 women and another 6 women will be going on maternity leave in the coming months. The lactation room is now integrated into the orientation process for new hires, and it has become a critical resource for supporting the health, attitude and productivity of employees at Ecumen.

January 2013



health reform
MINNESOTA
SHIP | Statewide Health Improvement Program