

# Worksites Support Healthy Babies and Healthy Moms



Mothers' room upgrades at Fergus Falls Public Schools

## Breastfeeding Initiative a Key Component of Worksite Wellness

Did you know that there are benefits to breastfeeding for both mothers and babies? Breastfeeding mothers reduce their risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and diabetes, and reduce their babies' risk of ear and respiratory infections, diarrhea, asthma and obesity.<sup>1</sup> A growing number of employers are trying to help breastfeeding moms continue to do so once they return to work. To advance these efforts, PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H) integrates breastfeeding support into its Worksite Wellness initiative. The incentive for businesses is clear: Supporting breastfeeding at work can provide as much as a 3:1 return on investment as a result of reduced healthcare costs, reduced employee absenteeism related to healthier babies, lower turnover, and higher productivity.<sup>2</sup>

The PS4H Golden Start Breastfeeding Initiative offers worksite wellness partners assistance with selecting an appropriate space for a mothers' room, drafting a lactation policy, and securing funding for comfortable chairs, small refrigerators and signage. Vector Windows, StoneL and MnDOT District Four, three members of the 2017 PS4H worksite wellness collaborative, recently made such changes. A fourth member, the City of Detroit Lakes, developed a breastfeeding policy. Across PS4H's service area, dozens of workplaces have invested time and money to create mothers' rooms over the past several years. In total, 18 employers in Otter Tail County, five in Wilkin County, 13 in Becker County, and 14 in Clay County now have lactation rooms for

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/bf/professionals.html>

employees and visitors.

Jen Kohorst, Fergus Falls Public Schools District Nurse, championed the changes in the Fergus Falls Schools. "Through the help of PartnerSHIP 4 Health, we were able to update our mother's rooms, making them cozy and comfortable for nursing/pumping moms," she reports. "In areas with ever-changing pumping room locations, we also were able to create 'on the go' pumping bags, helping make any area pumping friendly. PS4H made the process seamless and helped me every step of the way, from applying for the grant to connecting me with a local lactation consultant. Over the last few years, the district has seen high numbers of employees who are new moms, making this project well worth it to support those who choose to breastfeed. We are thrilled with the new updates and very thankful for the assistance and grant PS4H provided."

## BFW Awards and Otter Tail County Coalition Build Momentum

Worksites ready to go beyond establishing a policy or creating a lactation room find that applying for official Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace (BFW) Designation guides further improvements, grows internal support, and recognizes progress. Three worksites have received the Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace designation: Lake Region Healthcare, Otter Tail County, and StoneL. Adding to the impact of the BFW designations is a new local breastfeeding coalition. "Partnership 4 Breastfeeding" includes staff from Lake Region Healthcare, Perham Health, and Otter Tail County Public Health. With support from PS4H, the coalition works to increase public awareness of and support for breastfeeding, create connections that improve breastfeeding support in healthcare, workplace and other settings, and develops referral and education programs for new mothers. Is your workplace interested in becoming a breastfeeding friendly workplace or connecting with the local breastfeeding coalition? Contact us to learn more!

To learn more about PartnerSHIP 4 Health, visit <http://partnership4health.org>

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**Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin Counties**

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**  
**Leslie Anderson**  
**Golden Start Breastfeeding Initiative**  
**218-736-8625**  
**goldinit@lrch.org**



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/employer-solutions/index.html>