



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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DHMH Honors Businesses for Support of Breastfeeding Employees Baby, Mom and Business Benefit from Family First Policies

Baltimore, MD (August 31, 2009) – Governor Martin O'Malley had earlier proclaimed August 2009 to be "Breastfeeding Month" in Maryland. As August comes to a close, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) recognizes eight employers across the state whose programs and policies support new mothers to continue breastfeeding their babies after they return to work with a "Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Award."

The honorees include:

- The National Security Agency at Fort Meade
- RiskMetrics Group in Rockville
- Franklin Square Hospital Center
- Frederick Memorial Healthcare System
- Sinai Hospital
- St. Agnes Hospital
- Union Hospital of Cecil County and,
- The Upper Chesapeake Medical Center

"These employers have demonstrated a commitment to the wellbeing of their employees and their families," said DHMH Secretary John M. Colmers. "They serve as role models for other businesses, large and small, across the State."

It takes little investment on the part of an employer to provide a "breastfeeding-friendly workplace," just short break periods and a small, clean, private space for breastfeeding employees to pump and store breast milk. But the return on this investment is significant.

"The health benefits of breastfeeding are clear," said Secretary Colmers. "With this award we're highlighting the benefits to business, as well."

Benefits for business include less absenteeism and lower healthcare costs. Mothers (and fathers) miss fewer days of work because breastfed infants are sick less often. Healthcare

costs are reduced because breastfed babies have fewer doctor visits, fewer hospitalizations, and need fewer prescriptions. Studies estimate a \$400 savings on health care in just the first year of life for every breastfed baby.

Businesses also benefit with higher employee morale and increased productivity. Breastfeeding mothers who have support in the workplace are more likely to return to work, and to return earlier. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, nearly three-quarters of all mothers are in the work force, including 60% of mothers of very young children.

Choosing to breastfeed is one of the earliest and most important decisions a mother makes with regard to her child's health. Health professionals agree that breastfeeding provides a host of health benefits for both babies and mothers. These include fewer illnesses and infections in young infants, less risk of chronic illnesses in childhood, and lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer in women who breastfeed.

More information about the business benefits of breastfeeding, how to set up a breastfeeding support program in your business, and application for the Maryland Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Award can be found at www.marylandbreastfeeding.org

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