



Kiowa County Health Department

**For Release:** August 9, 2015  
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## Everyone Can Help Support a Mother Breastfeeding at Work

People today know the importance of breastfeeding. While most new mothers start out breastfeeding, many Oklahoma mothers are not able to exclusively breastfeed for six months as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). One of the challenges they face is continuing to breastfeed after they return to work.

The Kiowa County Health Department promotes Breastfeeding. The goal is to empower and support all women, working in both the formal and informal sectors, to combine work with child-rearing, particularly breastfeeding.

Major medical organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Association of Family Physicians recommend babies receive nothing but mother's milk during the first six months of life, and continue breastfeeding for at least the first year. Like any aspect of raising a child, breastfeeding requires encouragement and support from a community. Support from hospitals, workplaces and family members go a long way in helping mothers and babies breastfeed for maximum benefit.

According to national and state surveys, mothers say breastfeeding is easier when they have support at home as well as at work. It is important that family members, clinicians, friends, co-workers and employers know how they can help make breastfeeding easier. Family members can help with household chores and other children. Employers can support mothers by being recognized as breastfeeding friendly worksites.

The Kiowa County Health Department WIC clinic encourages breastfeeding in Oklahoma by presenting award certificates to mothers who choose to breastfeed.

OSDH and the Coalition of Oklahoma Breastfeeding Advocates (COBA) recognize worksites that meet the following criteria for becoming breastfeeding friendly:

- Flexible break times and a private location are provided for mothers to express milk.
- A water source is accessible for washing hands and breast pump equipment.
- A written breastfeeding policy.

For information about becoming a Breastfeeding Friendly Worksite, and a list of current recognized sites, visit the Oklahoma breastfeeding website at <http://bis.health.ok.gov>.

For breastfeeding support and information, call the Oklahoma Breastfeeding Hotline toll free at 1-877-271-MILK (6455) or contact the Kiowa County Health Department at 580-726-3316.