

Breastfeeding-friendly Learning Environments: Developing a Breastfeeding Policy or Guidelines for Early Childhood Education Settings

Background

CanBreastFeed (www.canbreastfeed.co.nz) is an initiative of the Canterbury Breastfeeding Advocacy Service which is a health promotion contract managed by Te Puawaitanga ki Ōtautahi Trust. The service has been developed with the primary aim of supporting breastfeeding women, by working to remove the barriers to breastfeeding. Te Puawaitanga Ki Ōtautahi Trust is a kaupapa Māori provider of a range of health, education and social services.

Breastfeeding advocacy is about helping to remove the barriers to breastfeeding that women may experience. This can involve:

- support groups where women can find information and spend time with other mothers;
- mother-to-mother breastfeeding peer support networks;
- breastfeeding friendly early childhood education centres;
- breastfeeding and family-friendly workplaces;
- breastfeeding friendly cafes, libraries, swimming pools, shopping malls — anywhere that mothers, babies and children spend time and have a right to be.

Considerations for Policy Development

Discuss what is most important to your community to create an environment that supports, protects and promotes breastfeeding.

You may wish to use the sample below to write your guidelines or policy.

Sample Breastfeeding Policy or Guidelines for Early Childhood Education Settings

Rationale

Breastfeeding provides significant health protection for both babies and mothers. The Ministry of Health recommends all babies are exclusively breastfed to around 6 months, and then continue to breastfeed for at least a year or longer if desired. Early Childhood Education settings play an important role in supporting mothers to continue breastfeeding, as returning to work is one of the most common reasons for discontinuing the breastfeeding journey.

Aim

To support, protect and promote breastfeeding among our staff and whānau by having spaces, practices and staff that enable and honour breastfeeding.

Strategies

EDUCATION

- Our staff and families are familiar with this policy.
- Our staff are educated to handle breastmilk safely, and to bottle feed breastfed babies responsively, in a way that is similar to and thus protective of feeding at the breast.
- Children attending our centre are exposed to the normative nature of breastfeeding through books, posters, discussions and through seeing breastfeeding in the centre.

ENVIRONMENT

- We provide a warm, comfortable, culturally sensitive space for mothers and staff to breastfeed or pump, with access to privacy, power, hot water, a handbasin and a fridge.

INFORMATION & SUPPORT

- We provide commercial-free information about breastfeeding for staff and families, including information about local community and health services offering breastfeeding support.

Practices

FOR BREASTFEEDING WHANAU

- Breastfed babies are fed according to their feeding plan and in a way that is responsive, sensitive, and similar to and protective of breastfeeding.
- At first contact with us, families are made aware of our commitment to breastfeeding, and are offered information to support their transition into managing breastfeeding with their child in care.
- Feeding plans made with parents are honoured at all times, including wishes around the use of pacifiers.
- The International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes is upheld.

FOR BREASTFEEDING STAFF

- Practices will comply with the Employment Relations Amendment Act 2008 (Breaks, Infant Feeding, and Other Matters) to support staff who are mothers to continue to breastfeed.
- Breastfeeding staff will make a plan with their managers to ensure they are able to take breaks appropriate for them to continue breastfeeding. They will have access to appropriate environments for breastfeeding and/or expressing breastmilk.

Communication

- This policy will be reviewed every two years and communicated to staff and families at these intervals.
- Breastfeeding staff will have a meeting with their manager prior to returning to work to make a plan to continue breastfeeding once they are at work.
- All breastfeeding families will receive information at first contact about how the centre protects breastfeeding, and will make a feeding plan with staff.

Date reviewed: _____

Date of next review: _____



CanBreastFeed

Canterbury Breastfeeding Advocacy Service

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