



# 2022 Family-Friendly Focus



The Family-Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program is a partnership among First 5 San Luis Obispo County, the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce and the County of San Luis Obispo. This FREE initiative, housed within the Chamber, aims to help businesses hire and retain employees, support working parents' balance between job and home life, and bolster the economic vitality of our communities. The program builds on the SLO County Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit which was created by the "We Are the Care" Initiative – a countywide coalition dedicated to addressing local child care and related work-life balance challenges faced by local families.

## AUGUST HERO: Central Coast Breastfeeding Coalition

Returning to work after having a child can be challenging for new parents who are juggling new emotional, physical, and financial demands while trying to resume their professional obligations. This can also be a defining moment for employers striving to create a caring and supportive environment; one that ultimately helps keep moms in the workforce. According to research by the Maven Clinic, 75% of expecting moms are eager to return to work after having a child. Yet, 43% of them wind up leaving their positions after they give birth. While remote work and infants-at-work policies aid in retention, so do provisions that help women continue breastfeeding after transitioning back to work. That's where the Central Coast Breastfeeding Coalition (CCBC) comes in!

CCBC is a collective of breastfeeding advocates who network, share resources, lead projects, and provide breastfeeding education based on current research and best practices. The group also works with local organizations to create and implement lactation accommodation policies based on and building upon California law – such as providing a reasonable amount of break time for an employee desiring to express milk, the use of a room or other location that is private and meets certain specifications plus access to a sink with running water and a refrigerator suitable for storing milk close to the employee's workspace. While there are some exemptions or allowable modifications for businesses with fewer than 50 employees, most breastfeeding employees are entitled to these accommodations.

Those are just the basic requirements. Leslie Mehigan, MBA and Board-Certified Lactation Consultant, serves as Chair of the CCBC. She says moms tell the CCBC that companies that go well beyond the law offer dedicated lactation rooms with

a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere along with plenty of sterilizing and storage space, provide a multi-person pump so employees can share and don't have to carry their own, schedule flexibility depending on the lactating employee's needs, and cultivate an overall workplace culture that champions onsite lactation supports. Tamara Hembree, a labor and delivery nurse at Twin Cities Community Hospital, knows the value of these measures. "Motherhood is full of so many challenges, and being a working mom is one of them. I am grateful that Twin Cities provides a positive environment where I can pump milk. I have been able to provide for my family financially while continuing to nourish my baby. Having the support from my employer and coworkers has made a huge impact on my breastfeeding journey, and for that I am forever grateful."

Along with Twin Cities, several other SLO County employers also get high praise for their lactation policies/practices: PG&E Diablo Canyon Power Plant, Mindbody, Morris & Garritano, and Trust Automation, to name a few that the CCBC holds up as examples. The effort is worth it, as businesses are better able to retain female employees, recruit new ones, and actively contribute toward realizing the proven health benefits of breastfeeding for working moms and their babies. Mehigan encourages employers to ask their employees what they need to meet their individual breastfeeding goals, and to widely share breastfeeding policies with their employees. Higher morale and loyalty are likely to result, and that's a win-win for the wellbeing of families and the economic health of our local communities!

*You can learn more about and connect with the Central Coast Breastfeeding Coalition by visiting [centralcoastbreastfeeding.com](http://centralcoastbreastfeeding.com).*



To learn more about the Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit, visit [slofamilyfriendlywork.org](http://slofamilyfriendlywork.org). For information on the Family-Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program, contact the SLO Chamber's Workforce Development Manager, Christina Lefevre Latner, at (805) 786-2762 or [christina@slochamber.org](mailto:christina@slochamber.org). To learn more about early-childhood related initiatives, go to [first5slo.org](http://first5slo.org).