

Erin Rinehart: Health & Human Development

Mentor: Ann Bertagnolli, Lynn Hellenga -- Montana INBRE, Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program

Montana Public Worksite Breastfeeding Support

The Nutrition and Physical Activity (NAPA) Program is grant-funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and was established to decrease the prevalence of obesity and other chronic diseases. One of the specific goals of NAPA is to increase breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity as breastfeeding has been shown to have a positive impact on health including the prevention of obesity. One of the challenges to breastfeeding duration is the mothers' return to work after maternity leave. In 2009, Montana established a worksite breastfeeding law in which public worksites must have a written policy supporting employees who breastfeed. They must provide a clean private space and allow the employee flexible break times for expressing milk. To date there has been no system established to track compliance with this law. As a pilot study, I surveyed Montana public worksites to determine their current status of having a written policy, providing proper space, flexible break times, and support for employees who breastfeed. Of the survey responses received 78.7% were aware of the MT breastfeeding laws and 58% reported having a written breastfeeding policy. Most worksites do provide flexible break times, but find it challenging to provide the space.