



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION

Washington, D.C. 20240

National Policy Memorandum

Office of the Director

Number: NPM-EDUC-37

Effective: 11/01/2024

Expires: 11/01/2025

Title: Bureau of Indian Education's Breastfeeding Mothers' Milk Medicine Program

1. Purpose

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) is committed to supporting our first Indigenous food – breast milk. BIE supports Indigenous communities that continue to be transformed and uplifted with access to the tradition and knowledge of milk medicine. By investing in a work environment that promotes healthy families, BIE supports our team member's breast milk medicine goals, the vital connections between well-being, mental health, and milk medicine. BIE acknowledges the challenges faced by Native and Indigenous milk medicine carriers and their families. BIE will continue dismantling barriers to mental health support for lactating individuals through education, collaboration, and dedicated spaces to promote the well-being of those on their breastfeeding journey to benefit our collective community health.

BIE's policy centers on Indigenous Knowledge and Equity in First Food Practices, reclaiming the cultural sovereignty that is essential for Native youth and BIE employees serving the needs of our communities. This step fosters self-determination and preserves traditional practices to celebrate health and wellness across generations.

This program is in support of and in accordance with Public Law 111-148, OPM Memorandum CPM 2010-19, and the Department of Interior's Public Bulletin No: 11-11.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all BIE offices, Bureau-operated schools and staff. The BIE recommends that Tribally Controlled Schools review this policy and consider adopting these recommendations for the health and wellness of our Indigenous communities.

3. Policy

All BIE-operated schools must provide reasonable accommodations for nursing mothers to pump or express breast milk. This includes allowing reasonable use of time and suitable facilities for nursing mothers to express breast milk for up to two years.

A. Lactation Time.

Under this policy, BIE principals, supervisors, and office heads or their designees, must provide reasonable break times for nursing mothers within their organization for up to two years after the child’s birth. The frequency and duration of lactation breaks may vary, and accommodations must be made to accommodate the needs of the nursing mothers.

Additional recommendations and best practices are as follows:

- Allow for flexible schedules for lactation break time and coordinate classroom or office coverage as needed.
- Allow for adjustments to the employee’s work schedule and use of accumulated credit hours, if available.

B. Facilities for Lactation.

BIE offices and schools must provide a clean and private space at the school or work site that includes a place to sit, a flat surface other than a floor, a door with locks for privacy, and access to an electrical outlet to be used by nursing mothers.

Additional recommended best practices are as follows:

- Establish a reservation system for using the space or a sign to ensure the space is free from intrusion or interruptions.
- Ensure that there is a sink in or near the identified space, and anti-bacterial soap to clean after use.
- Supply a small refrigerator in or near the identified space to store expressed milk and pump parts.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

A. Office of the Director, BIE grants authority for establishing the BIE Breastfeeding Mothers’ Milk Medicine Program and is responsible for providing fiscal and administrative support to the program when applicable and available.

B. All BIE Offices are responsible for leading the integration of the BIE Breastfeeding Mothers’ Milk Medicine Program into their programs.

C. Associate Deputy Director (ADD), Bureau Operated Schools is responsible for leading the integration of the BIE Breastfeeding Mothers’ Milk Medicine Program into their respective Bureau-operated schools and office programs within their divisions and allocating necessary resources to implement this policy.

- D. **ADD, Navajo Schools** is responsible for leading the integration of the BIE Breastfeeding Mothers' Milk Medicine Program into their respective Bureau-operated schools and office programs within their divisions to implement this policy, and for providing technical assistance and allocating necessary resources if Tribally Controlled Schools within their respective area choose to implement this policy.

- E. **ADD, Tribally Controlled Schools** is responsible for leading the integration of the BIE Breastfeeding Mothers' Milk Mothers Program their office programs in their region and providing technical assistance and allocating necessary resources should Tribally Controlled Schools choose to implement this policy.

- F. **ADD Post-Secondary Education** is responsible for leading the integration of the BIE Mothers' Milk Medicine Program into their respective post-secondary institutions and office programs and allocating necessary resources to implement this policy.

5. Approval

TONY DEARMAN

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Tony L. Dearman
Director, Bureau of Indian Education

11/1/2024
Date