



Infant at Work Program

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The Deputy Director for the Office of Human Resources (OHR) is hereby delegated the authority to update this policy as needed and also to issue those guidelines which may be necessary for the implementation of this policy.

It is the policy of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to have available to employees a program which will allow for mothers, fathers, or legal guardians to bring their infants four weeks through the sixth month of age, to work. This program will be available to those whose work environment is deemed safe for an infant.

Infants, parents, and IDPH all benefit from this program. Research shows that allowing a parent and infant to remain together in this earliest stage of life supports critical bonding, healthy infant brain development, and parental well-being. It also enables exclusive breastfeeding which improves lifelong health.

IDPH expects this program to alleviate the difficult transition that new parents face in returning to the workplace. We expect the program to produce benefits for both employees and IDPH:

i. *Benefits for employees:*

- Lower day care costs
- Better financial stability for young families
- Employees feel supported
- Lower stress for parents
- More options for women
- Easier breastfeeding
- Enables working fathers to be more involved with their babies

ii. *Benefits for IDPH:*

- Increased employee loyalty
- Higher morale
- Employees return to work sooner
- Attractive benefit that can be used for recruitment
- Increased retention/lower turnover costs

I. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY/APPROVAL

- b. *Program Eligibility:* Permanent IDPH employees who have successfully completed the probationary period, if applicable, and who are mothers, fathers, or legal guardians of babies four weeks to six months of age, may apply to participate.

Participants must have a job function that does not require regular travel or job responsibilities and/or work environment that would inhibit their ability to care for their child and perform their duties (at the discretion of their supervisor). Participating employees must be the parent or legal guardian of the infant. Birth mothers must be medically released by their physician prior to their return to work.

- c. *Approval Process to Participate:* Those who wish to participate must submit to their supervisor and management team an Individual Plan for approval. The Individual Plan must include, at minimum, (1) a start and end date for participation, (2) designation of an alternate care provider outside the agency, (3) designation of onsite alternate care provider(s), (4) list of the equipment needed for the care of the baby, (5) plan for diaper changes, disposal of soiled diapers and clothing, and schedule for feeding, and (6) list of any agreement between the supervisor and employee of concessions necessary for the completion of performance objectives during the period of enrollment in the program. If concessions are necessary, the Individual Plan will include an interim evaluation with agreement on any objectives which need to be modified during the time the employee is participating in the Program.
- d. *Work Location Limitations:* Work locations or positions that are physically unsafe for the baby, such as the bench-work areas in IDPH laboratories or facilities that require IDPH inspections, will not be allowed. Management will make the determination of the appropriateness of the work location for an employee's participation in the program before an Individual Plan is approved.
- e. *Program Participation:* This program may not be for everyone and is an opportunity that must work for employees, supervisors, and the office environment overall. Management will support parents trying the program, even if it is later determined that it is not the best fit. It is anticipated that some employees may not participate full-time. Management will allow participants to update their approved Individual Plan as appropriate throughout duration of the program.

II. CARE FOR BABY

- a. *Work Environment:* It is understood that babies will cry when they are hungry, need to be changed, or need to be comforted. Reasonable time will be authorized by management to care for the baby during these periods. If management indicates the baby is disrupting others' work, he/she may request the employee find other care for the child. If the employee is unable to maintain the balance of child care and work performance and must leave work to focus on the baby's care, they will be required to take appropriate benefit time during their absence from work in accordance with department policy and directives.

III. FACILITIES

- a. *Space Accommodations:* The Individual Plan must outline the space that will be utilized for the care of the baby. As an Agency, our facilities are at full capacity and we are unable to provide participating employees with additional or alternative space for baby equipment. Any equipment that is utilized for the care of the baby must fit safely into employee's workspace.

- b. *Special Parking for Parents*: IDPH will be unable to make any special parking accommodations for parents who participate in the program. Parents will need to consider their current parking and transportation situation as part of their evaluation to participate in the program.

IV. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- a. *Co-worker Illness and Workplace Exposures*: IDPH will notify participants if management is aware of serious workplace exposures, such as pertussis or measles. Parents should be aware that bringing their child to work is a risk, and the workplace cannot be guaranteed to be free of bacteria, viruses, and other disease-causing agents.
- b. *Health and Safety of the Workplace*: It is the sole responsibility of the participating employee to evaluate the health and safety of the workplace and take necessary steps to avoid exposing their baby to those that may be sick.

V. PROGRAM EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The Infant at Work Program is a pilot program; therefore management will establish an on-going review process to evaluate success on a Department-wide and individual basis. Prior to completing their Individual Plan, the employee will be asked to complete the Employee Readiness Assessment to establish a baseline of their expectations of the program; the challenges and benefits they anticipate encountering. On a quarterly basis throughout the pilot, parents will be asked to provide feedback to management on lessons learned so ongoing improvements can be made by management to ensure a successful implementation. As part of the off-boarding at the conclusion of the pilot, parents will be given the opportunity to provide management with feedback on the benefits they identified through participation in the program and recommendations for quality improvement.

IDPH management will concurrently assess the feedback from participants and supervisors and make proper adjustments as necessary to maximize the quality of the program. At the conclusion of the pilot, IDPH will prepare a final report for the Illinois Department of Central Management Services.