



Commissioned Corps Women's Issues Advisory Board Breastfeeding and Deployments in the USPHS Commissioned Corps

Medical Waivers for Breastfeeding

There are three types of [Medical Affairs Branch \(MAB\) waivers](#) that may relate to breastfeeding:

Waiver Type	Waiver Description
Pregnancy Waiver	Exempts officers from deployment during pregnancy and for 12 months after the anticipated delivery date (regardless of infant feeding method)
Breastfeeding Waiver – Requested after Pregnancy Waiver expires	After the expiration of the Pregnancy Waiver at 12 months, officers should be prepared to deploy. A Breastfeeding Waiver may be requested to ensure additional lactation resources are available when deployed or at a CCHQ or RDB training. Granted for 5-month intervals, with ability to extend as needed. The officer will be assigned to a Medical Readiness Category 2 (MRC-2) which will communicate to the deployment team that regular breaks, electricity, and refrigeration must be provided. <i>If an officer is on a Breastfeeding Waiver and these accommodations cannot be met during the deployment, the officer will not be rostered for that deployment.</i>
Deployment Waiver – Requested after Pregnancy Waiver expires	Requests for a full deployment waiver due to breastfeeding will only be considered if there is documentation from a healthcare provider that terminating breastfeeding (not just dietary supplementation which can be done with expressed breastmilk) will significantly adversely affect the health of the officer or their child.

Breastfeeding Support While Deployed

Officers should use the Medical Waiver Program to request a [Breastfeeding Waiver](#) **prior to being rostered** for deployment. An officer who is deployed while on a Breastfeeding Waiver should work with their deployment chain of command to discuss the following resources:

- Regular breaks to express milk
- Electricity to operate the pump and other related tools
- Refrigerator and/or freezer to store expressed milk
- A designated private space for mothers to express milk other than a restroom*
- Running water to clean breast pump parts*

The [Joint Travel Regulations \(JTR\)](#) allows for reimbursement of storage and shipping expenses for expressed breast milk up to \$1,000 per TDY, including: 1) commercial shipping fees, 2) excess baggage fees, 3) disposable storage containers (e.g., storage bags), 4) cold shipping packages. The officer must keep all receipts for reimbursement after travel. Reimbursement procedures depend on who is sponsoring the travel:

- 1) **USPHS Deployment:** The officer should send an email to the CCHQ readiness box (PHSReadiness@hhs.gov) and the travel preparer who rostered the officer. The officer should ask the travel preparer to include breastmilk shipment in their authorization.
- 2) **Agency travel:** The agency is responsible for reimbursement. Officers should work with their travel preparer to coordinate when booking travel.

If an officer with an approved Breastfeeding Waiver is deployed and resources/support are not provided or are insufficient, the officer should discuss with her deployment chain of command.

*These breastfeeding resources are not explicitly stated in the Breastfeeding Waiver but are typically available in deployment settings.