

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES

PERSONNEL OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM



EFFECTIVE DATE: **POM 13-003**
30 May 2013

By Order of the Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service:

VADM Regina M. Benjamin, Surgeon General

TO: All Active Duty Corps Officers and Applicants Seeking Appointment to the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service (Corps)

SUBJECT: Guidance for Officers who are Breastfeeding

1. This Personnel Operations Memorandum (POM) provides suggested guidance for female U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps (Corps) officers who breastfeed their children. This POM also provides additional operational direction regarding:
 - a. Postpartum issues contained in [Manual Circular No. 377](#).
 - b. Medical appointment standards in the eCCIS ([CCI 231.01](#), "General Appointment Standards" and [CC29.3.5](#), "Medical Examination Requirements").
 - c. Corps deployments and mandatory readiness training.
 - d. The Officer Basic Course ([CCI 325.05](#), "Officer Development Training").
2. Background.
 - a. The benefits of breastfeeding are well-recognized. In 2007, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality published a summary of systematic reviews and meta-analyses on breastfeeding and maternal and infant health outcomes in developed countries. These benefits for infants include protection against otitis media, gastroenteritis, severe lower respiratory infections, and necrotizing enterocolitis, sudden infant death syndrome, childhood obesity, type 2 diabetes, and leukemia. Maternal health benefits of breastfeeding were also identified, including reduced risk for type 2 diabetes and breast and ovarian cancers.¹
 - b. In 2011, Surgeon General Regina M. Benjamin, MD, MBA, issued a "Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding" that identified ways that families, communities, employers, and health care professionals could improve breastfeeding rates and increase support for breastfeeding. The Call to Action specifically called upon employers to develop supportive breastfeeding policies and comprehensive, high-quality workplace lactation support programs.²

- c. In the 2000 HHS Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding,³ Surgeon General David Satcher, MD, PhD, recognized breastfeeding as one of the most important contributors to infant and maternal health. Surgeon General Satcher also recognized that breastfeeding rates in the United States were low. Additional research has shown that active duty servicewomen exceed the national target for breastfeeding initiation; however, breastfeeding duration rates quickly decline to markedly below the national breastfeeding rates at 2 weeks and beyond.⁴
 - d. Providing accommodations for breast milk expression is essential for a mother to maintain breastfeeding and to improve rates of breastfeeding exclusivity and duration. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act requires employers to provide a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by a woman to express breast milk.⁵ The Office of Personnel Management Memorandum on Nursing Mothers in Federal Employment further extended these accommodations to the civilian service workforce at federal facilities.⁶ Supervisors and duty locations are encouraged to extend these accommodations to Corps officers.
3. Female Corps officers are encouraged to follow the breastfeeding guidelines recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics⁷ (AAP) and other health organizations.⁸⁻¹¹ The AAP recommends that mothers exclusively breastfeed for the infant's first six months of life, and that breastfeeding continue for at least one year or as long thereafter as mutually desired.⁷
 4. Officers who breastfeed may obtain a time-limited medical waiver if recommended by the officer's attending physician or health care provider. The request for a time-limited medical waiver is submitted via a memorandum (Appendix 1) signed by a health care provider to the Medical Affairs Team for consideration. It is suggested that a copy of the memorandum is shared with the Commanding Officer and/or supervisor.
 - a. The time-limited medical waiver will be in effect during lactation and is granted in increments not to exceed 12 months.
 - b. For the duration of the medical waiver, the officer may be exempt from immunizations as noted in Manual Circular No. 377.
 - c. For the duration of the medical waiver, the officer may be exempt from Corps deployments and all mandatory Corps readiness training. However, officers must meet all other requirements to maintain their Basic Level of Force Readiness Standards.
 - d. Newly appointed officers who receive a time-limited medical waiver shall attend the two-week Officer Basic Course (OBC) upon their Call to Active Duty (CAD). The Corps will provide accommodations for expressing breast milk, storage, and shipment, if necessary. The Director, Commissioned Corps Personnel and Readiness may waive the requirement to attend the OBC on CAD in extraordinary circumstances. However, in all cases, the officer must attend the OBC within 180 days of reporting to their initial duty station.

-S-

Regina M. Benjamin, MD, MBA
VADM, USPHS
Surgeon General

REFERENCES:

1. Ip S, Chung M, Raman G, Chew P, Magula N, DeVine D, et al. Breastfeeding and maternal and infant health outcomes in developed countries: evidence report/technology assessment no. 153. AHRQ Publication No. 07-E007. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. April, 2007. Available at: <http://archive.ahrq.gov/downloads/pub/evidence/pdf/brfout/brfout.pdf>.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General; 2011. Available at: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/breastfeeding/calltoactiontosupportbreastfeeding.pdf>
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HHS Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health; 2000. Available at: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/archive/breastfeeding/programs/blueprints/bluprntbk2.pdf>
4. Department of the Navy. BUMED Instruction 6000.14: Support of servicewomen with nursing infants. Available at: <http://www.med.navy.mil/directives/ExternalDirectives/6000.14.pdf>
5. Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Pub. L 111-148, codified in [29 U.S.C. 207\(r\)](#)
6. U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Memorandum for Heads or Executive Departments and Agencies, Nursing Mothers in Federal Employment, signed by John Berry on December 22, 2010. Available at: http://www.dol.gov/wb/media/OPM_Memo_from_WHD.pdf
7. Gartner LM, Morton J, Lawrence RA, Naylor AJ, O'Hare D, Schanler RJ, et al.; American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Breastfeeding. Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. Pediatrics 2005;115:496–506. Available at: <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/pediatrics;115/2/496.pdf>
8. American Academy of Family Physicians. Breastfeeding (policy statement). 2007. Available at: <http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/policies/b/breastfeedingpolicy.html>. American Academy of Pediatrics. Policy statement: Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. Pediatrics 2012;129:e827–e841. Available at: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/3/e827.full.pdf+html>
9. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Committee on Health Care for Underserved Women, and Committee on Obstetric Practice. ACOG Committee Opinion #361: breastfeeding: maternal and infant aspects. Obstet Gynecol 2007;109(2Pt1):479–480.
10. American College of Nurse-Midwives, Division of Women's Health Policy and Leadership. Position statement: breastfeeding. 2004. Available at http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/position/Breastfeeding_05.pdf
11. American Public Health Association. A call to action on breastfeeding: a fundamental public health issue. 2007. Policy No. 200714. Available at: <http://www.apha.org/advocacy/policy/policysearch/default.htm?id=1360>

Appendix 1
Memorandum Template

DATE: _____

TO: Medical Affairs Branch

CC: Commanding Officer and/or Supervisor

FROM: _____ (Health Care Provider Name)

SUBJECT: _____ (Officer's rank, name and PHS serial number)

RE: Medical Waiver Request for Breastfeeding

I am writing to confirm that the subject officer is currently breastfeeding/providing breast milk for her infant, who was born on _____ (infant's DOB). I recommend that a time-limited medical waiver be granted for:

The following immunizations:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Participation in USPHS deployments and all mandatory Corps readiness training.

Further, in accordance with breastfeeding guidelines recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), I recommend that this officer remain in a work environment that is conducive to breastfeeding and/or the expression of breast milk. If you have any questions, please contact me at _____ (health care provider's contact information).

(Health Care Provider's Signature Block)