

## Waconia Schools Support Breastfeeding Employees

Waconia Schools is located in Carver and Hennepin counties, about 35 miles west of Minneapolis. Waconia Schools serves nearly 4,100 students and 650 employees at the district's high school, alternative learning center, middle school, three elementary schools, and education service center.

In January 2019, Waconia Schools began assessing lactation needs in all district buildings. A variety of staff participated in the assessment, including those from health services, human resources, administration and custodial services. Waconia Schools used the assessment results gathered to establish lactation room standards and criteria.

Utilizing support from Carver County Public Health's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), Waconia Schools created a designated lactation room within each of the district's seven buildings. As with many growing school districts, finding an appropriate space in each building was a challenge, but that was overcome by including staff from multiple departments in the assessment and planning. SHIP also helped Waconia Schools obtain a variety of materials for each room, including a comfortable chair, footstool, small side table, waste basket, small refrigerator, lamp, privacy shades/screen, and door sign and lock for all rooms. Custodial staff provided a significant amount of in-kind support to clean, paint and organize all rooms.

Waconia Schools Human Resources Department developed information for the employee handbook and family leave packets that addresses the district's support of breastfeeding employees and new lactation rooms. Waconia Schools also has breastfeeding resource bags available in each lactation room, which include a small cooler bag filled with free samples of breastfeeding support materials (*e.g.*, nursing pads, breast milk storage bags) and additional information and resources related to breastfeeding and returning to work. (The breastfeeding resource bags were provided by Public Health and obtained using UCare Foundation community grant funds.)

Adding private, designated lactation rooms at Waconia Schools' buildings, and enhancing district procedures, provides breastfeeding mothers returning to work a comfortable, safe and supportive environment. Providing training to district administration on how they can support a breastfeeding employee helps to further establish an environment that supports and values breastfeeding employees.



Middle School – Before



Middle School – After



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