

Protecting Breastfeeding in Public: It's a Civil Right!

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Breastfeeding in public has a stigma in our society.



Promoting Breastfeeding in Public: It's a Civil Right! 2016



This stigma is causing many women to not meet their breastfeeding goals. Often they feel like they have to wean early because they are afraid to breastfeed their babies outside of their homes.

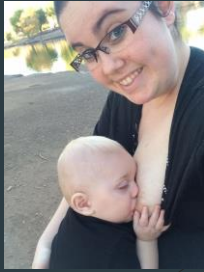
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Breastfeeding in public is a civil right!



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- Forty-nine states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands have laws that specifically allow women to breastfeed in any public or private location. (Exception is Idaho)
- Twenty-nine states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands exempt breastfeeding from public indecency laws.



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If these laws are in place, then why are women still harassed for breastfeeding in public?

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It is imperative that we begin to change our society's perspective about breastfeeding in public, which requires a great deal of education about these civil rights as well as normalizing breastfeeding in general.

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If breastfeeding in public is a civil right, why are moms afraid to breastfeed in public?

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Why are moms afraid to breastfeed in public?

- ▶ Being shamed. Getting negative comments and dirty looks.
- ▶ That someone will shame or laugh at me.
- ▶ Negative comments and looks.
- ▶ At first I just was afraid of dirty looks or comments, but I am breastfeeding an almost two year old and 3 month old now, so I'm no longer afraid of that.
- ▶ My feelings about nursing in public absolutely evolved as our breastfeeding relationship progressed. As a new mom, I was nervous and felt I needed to cover. But as we worked on establishing a strong breastfeeding relationship, that was difficult to manage on my own since latching wasn't easy for us. So I stopped covering pretty early on and just went for it. Later when my son was still breastfeeding at 2 years old, I worried that I would start to get comments or dirty looks because he was older. But since his needs come first, we just did our thing.

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State laws do not provide many moms the security to overcome these fears of public shaming. The laws are in place, but too many people don't know about them. Plus, societal attitudes are not breastfeeding supportive.

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Societal Views of Breastfeeding in Public

Public Perception and Attitudes

- ▶ Population-based public opinion telephone survey of 2,075 NYC residents, 18 years or older, conducted by the NYC Dept of Health and Mental Hygiene. 53.6% respondents women. Mixed demographics. 53.6% some college or more.
- ▶ 50.4% of respondents were not supportive of public breastfeeding, agreeing with the statement that women should breastfeed in private only.
- ▶ 33.2% of respondents were uncomfortable with women breastfeeding near them in public, such as a shopping center, bus station, etc.

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Muller-Klaus, Ward C, Hackett M. Perception and attitudes: breastfeeding in public. In: Hum Lact. 2014;30(2): 195-200.

Breastfeeding Knowledge and Attitudes

- ▶ Cross-sectional survey of 248 undergraduates in an introductory nutrition class at a large university.
- ▶ Breastfeeding knowledge was very high
- ▶ Females (71%) were significantly more likely than males (47.7%) to consider public breastfeeding to be embarrassing and unacceptable.
- ▶ Authors make an excellent point - Because young infants usually eat every 2-3 hours, it is hardly possible to increase breastfeeding rates if society deems public breastfeeding to be unacceptable and embarrassing.

Kavanaugh K, Liu Z, Nicklas J, Habibi M, Murphy L. Breastfeeding Knowledge, Attitudes, Prior Exposure, and Intent among Undergraduate Students. *J Hum Lact*. 2012; 28(4): 538-564

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Online Discrimination

- ▶ Researcher wanted to gain an understanding of online opinion around a nursing in public harassment incident in the UK in April 2014. Collected 884 Mail Online (UK online news site) and 1210 Tweet responses to the incident and the ensuing nurse-in.
- ▶ 47% of the comments on Mail Online were considered either
 - ▶ harsh - *ang get over it, why would you want to breast feed your child in sports direct anyway. Pathetic*
 - ▶ sexist - *I actually feel embarrassed for these silly women*
 - ▶ misogynistic - *Maybe we are all approaching this wrong. We should stare at the mothers until they feel so uncomfortable that they never want to breastfeed in public again.*
- ▶ 36% of the comments on Mail Online had the theme of visibility is offensive
 - ▶ *I don't understand why some woman(s) accept that in this modern day its not exactly the most comfortable thing to see in public... I for one feel awkward around women that are breast feeding as they seem to look at you like your kind of perv if you look in they(ers) direction...*

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Online Discrimination

- ▶ 14% of the comments on Mail Online had the theme of exhibitionism
 - ▶ *With all the perverts around, why would any decent woman want to expose herself in public? I suspect many of them are exhibitionists or self centered...*
- ▶ 11% of the comments on Mail Online made reference to NIP being similar to urination/ defecation/sexual intercourse
 - ▶ *Urinary and defecation are also natural but you wouldn't expect to find babies being allowed to do that would you, some people think they can do as they wish without regard to anybody else, its a me-me society unfortunately.*
- ▶ 10% of the comments on Mail Online were classified as solely unsupportive
 - ▶ *I'm sure the mother in question was to breast feed her child successfully that day in other surrounding so why try to give Sports Direct a bad name. They sell sports clothing not breastfeeding services!!!*
- ▶ As for comparing Mail Online to Twitter: Positive Breastfeeding comments: MO (9.5%) vs. Twitter (76%); Negative Breastfeeding comments: MO (85%) vs. Twitter (1.5%)

Grant, Aimee. "Discrimination": The Online Response to a Case of a Breastfeeding Mother Being Ejected from a UK Retail Premises. 2015: 11

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NIP Harassments Incidents in the Media

NIP Harassment Incident at Applebee's Response: News Coverage



- ▶ 9/8/2012: A mother in Georgia was breastfeeding her 20 month old in Applebee's.
- ▶ A manager asked her to either finish breastfeeding her child in the bathroom or leave.
- ▶ When she refused to stop of leave, he called the police on her.

<http://www.wjla.com/story/2012/09/08/18-mom-breastfeeding-in-applebees/101581.html>
accessed 1/17/16

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Applebee's Response



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NIP Harassment at a Mall Response: Social Media

12/6/14

On Saturday, December 6th, the Carnival Cruise kiosk manager at the Carlsbad Outlet Mall, told a mother to leave the bench she was sitting on while breastfeeding her child and to go to the bathroom because she was making people "uncomfortable." The manager of the kiosk told her, "We have a place in the bathroom so you can breastfeed your baby. You might be fine here, but you're making everyone else uncomfortable".

According to the mother, she told them she had the legal right to breastfeed there. The manager and staff members refused to listen to her, defended their actions by saying they had the right to tell the mother whatever they pleased since, "We have freedom of speech."

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Paa.la (an amazing NIP activist in CA) asked her followers to FB and Tweet comments to the Carlsbad Outlet mall and this was the result:



Paa.la poses the question: "Do you think this is enough though? What education were they providing for the employees and vendors at the mall to ensure that this situation doesn't come up again?"

<http://carlsbadoutletmall.com/malls/2014/12/07/breastfeeding-harassment-incident-at-the-premiere-outlets-in-carlsbad/>
accessed 1/8/16

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NIP Harassment at Walmart Response: Nurse-In

February 5, 2015

Manager at Walmart tells a mother she either has to quit nursing her baby or cover up.

Mom left store feeling 'humiliated.'

20 or so moms staged a nurse-in the next day - handed out pamphlets to employees and shoppers about their right to breastfeed in public.

Walmart has a corporate policy supporting breastfeeding in public in their stores, as well as Oklahoma has a law that protects this right - manager stated he was unaware of this policy or state law.

<http://www.thefirstpost.com/article/2015/02/05/breastfeeding-women-descond-walmart-after-store-shames-nursing-mom> - accessed 1/6/16

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New Hampshire gets snippy about the nip

12/30/2015

State Rep. Amanda Bouldin (D) wrote a post on Facebook expressing her opposition to a proposed bill in New Hampshire that would make it a misdemeanor for women to expose their nipples in the state. Bouldin wrote an open Facebook message to the sponsor of the bill, State Rep. Josh Moore (R), saying that he should scrap the bill or at least exempt new mothers who are breastfeeding.

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Response: See for yourself....



Josh Moore Who doesn't support a mothers right to feed? Don't give me the liberal talking points Amanda. If it's a woman's natural inclination to pull her nipple out in public and you support that, than you should have no problem with a mans inclination to stare at it and grab it. After all... It's ALL relative and natural, right?

Like · Reply · Just now

http://www.huffpost.com/entry/new-hampshire-house-nipples-breastfeeding_648477cc0c00998901506 - accessed 1/6/15

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Are mothers' fears about breastfeeding in public warranted?

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How can we learn from these situations and prevent them from happening in the future?

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Data Collection and Support for Victim

- ▶ Best for Babes Nursing in Public hotline
 - ▶ Mothers can call and report an NIP incident on the hotline. Hope is that documenting these incidents will help encourage national change in policies.
 - ▶ Mom records a message.
 - ▶ Member of the NIP hotline team returns the call and provides support on how to remedy the situation.
 - ▶ Statistics from Best for Babes, as of 1/12/16: Since inception - October 2012 - 534 incidents have been reported across the USA, and that is only what's been reported, not necessarily occurred.
 - ▶ <http://www.bestforbabes.org/nursing-in-public-hotline-855-nip-free/#tthash.GZGS9CUM.dpuf>

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Prevention and Education

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Local NIP Harassment Incident

- ▶ On January 8, 2013, San Diego Breastfeeding Center was contacted through Facebook about an NIP incident that was witnessed at a local courthouse.
- ▶ A mother was egregiously harassed by a bailiff for nursing in the courtroom, as well as in the courthouse hallway.
- ▶ The mother reported the incident to the bailiff's supervisor and was told not to expect any sort of resolution.

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Taking action

- ▶ Contacted the head of the court system, who sent me to the San Diego Police Department.
- ▶ Met with the third in command at the San Diego Police Department.
- ▶ Three Goals:
 - ▶ To have a positive resolution to the incident
 - ▶ To add an education segment to the annual training program that discusses how to best protect the rights of a breastfeeding mother while protecting decorum in the courtroom.
 - ▶ To have a formal, written apology sent to Rebecca by the sheriff's department.

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Resolution

- ▶ Better than expected!
- ▶ Commander was gracious and empathetic, and had already set in motion a mandatory training bulletin to be shared with all law enforcement staff, not just the deputies who work in the court. This bulletin, which we helped to create, stated the law, as well as scenarios on how to protect the harassed mother in a NIP incident.
- ▶ Commander opened an investigation into the nursing in public harassment incident to further review the bailiff's behavior and treatment of the mother. He also expressed how sorry he was the mom felt so humiliated the day of the incident and that he will do everything he can to make sure that a similar incident doesn't happen again.

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San Diego Nursing in Public Task Force



Creating the SD NIP Task Force From the Ground Up



- ▶ Collaborated with our local breastfeeding coalition
 - ▶ Moral Support
 - ▶ Host the online resources
- ▶ Volunteer meeting
 - ▶ Identify community needs
 - ▶ Distribute tasks
- ▶ Set up webpage and Task Force contact info on SDBFC's website

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SD NIP Task Force's Mission

- ▶ Educate our community about the California laws that protect a mother's right to breastfeed in public.
- ▶ Provide support and guidance to mothers who have faced harassment or discrimination for breastfeeding in public.
- ▶ Empower mothers, by providing resources that educate them on their civil rights to breastfeed in public and how to handle a harassment incident.
- ▶ Empower business owners, by providing resources that they can integrate into their employee handbooks and training materials so that they are compliant with California law.



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SD NIP Task Force's Role



- ▶ To maintain an online resource for community members to prevent and ameliorate nursing in public discrimination.
- ▶ Serve as local advocates for mothers who have faced harassment for breastfeeding in public.

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NIP Task Force Online Resources

- ▶ CA law, as well as link to US laws
- ▶ Scenarios for how to handle NIP harassment incident
- ▶ Template letter for mom to send after NIP harassment incident
- ▶ Steps to remedying an NIP harassment incident (for moms, businesses, and other task forces)
- ▶ Steps to filing complaint with DFEH
- ▶ Resources for businesses
- ▶ Videos for breastfeeding in carriers/wraps
- ▶ <http://www.sdbfc.com/nip/>

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Since May 2013, the San Diego Nursing in Public Task Force has helped to mediate over a dozen NIP Harassment incidents.



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Flexing our NIP Muscles

- ▶ Local incidents
 - ▶ FOX 5 News
 - ▶ Applebee's
 - ▶ LA Fitness
 - ▶ Chula Vista library
 - ▶ Buggy's coffee shop
 - ▶ SD Airport lactation rooms - letting airport staff and public know they actually exist
 - ▶ Pediatrician's office with a sign asking mothers to cover up
 - ▶ Workplace accommodation situations - multiple
 - ▶ Poway School district
 - ▶ YMCA pool
- ▶ Out of the area incidents
 - ▶ Public pool



Poway School District

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Feedback from businesses



UPDATE!
One of the co-owners of Buggy's Brew finally contacted Robin. Einbinder-Kristin@SBE has asked to schedule a meeting with Robin to discuss how they can prevent what happened to me from happening again! Here is the email she sent:

Dear Robin,
I just forwarded your letter sent to Dan Moran. As co-owner of Buggy's Brew Coffee I feel it will be most productive if you and I meet to discuss the issues highlighted in the complaint outlined in your letter. I am also happy to talk with Alecia to understand the complete picture.
I would like to talk more about creating breastfeeding policy and to create opportunities to learn from this occurrence. I am available on Friday Oct. 24, between 12:00 - 2:30. Please let me know where you would like to meet and whether that time will work for you.
I am thrilled to use this opportunity to raise awareness and promote healthy breastfeeding and supportive environments for mothers. This is truly an opportunity for growth.
Kristin Moran, Owner
Buggy's Brew Coffee

These cheers for the NIPFF! Hip hip hooray! Hip hip hooray! Hip hip hooray!
October 22, 2014 at 8:55pm · Unlike · 16

Feedback from Mothers

Mom asked to leave LA Fitness because she was breastfeeding in the dressing room.



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Feedback from Mothers

Do you feel like having a local Nursing in Public Task Force makes you feel more confident about NIP? Why or why not?



Yes, it makes me feel more confident, as it's raising more awareness for what should be normal. It helps to push the normalcy of it a little further than what one person can do, like myself.

Yes, because you would always have someone there to back you up. Sometimes it's hard to stand up for yourself, especially when multiple people put you down.

Yes, it's just sad that it's needed.

It doesn't make me feel more confident, because I already feel confident. However, I REALLY appreciate that it's there in case anything happens to me or a friend!

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Feedback from Mothers

Do you feel like having a local Nursing in Public Task Force makes you feel more confident about NIP? Why or why not?

I think having a local NIP Taskforce is awesome. I knew that if I ever got into a situation where my rights were being threatened as far as being able to freely breastfeed my son, there was a team standing by to come in and help to educate in a respectful and impactful way.

I am grateful to have this community resource if needed; it's always good to know someone has your back. I think positive comments from others is the biggest confidence boost, as well as knowing I'm meeting my kids' needs. While neither the negative or positive comments have changed my behavior, they do affect how I'm feeling in the situation.



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Areas Where We Would Like to Expand our Resources (as requested by our local moms)

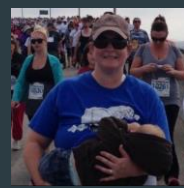
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More Resources



- ▶ PowerPoint presentation for childbirth educators and lactation educators to share in prenatal classes about right to NIP and NIP Task Force resources
- ▶ Templates for businesses to create NIP-friendly policies
- ▶ Positive NIP stories
- ▶ More NIP Videos
- ▶ E-Commerce
- ▶ National NIP Task Force website!!!!

Conclusions



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Conclusions

- ▶ Education, education, education (families, businesses, organizations, community members) = **breastfeeding normalization**
- ▶ Breastfeeding normalization (More comfortable a woman feels about breastfeeding on the go) = **less bottles and longer breastfeeding duration**
- ▶ Longer breastfeeding duration = **increased breastfeeding rates and moms meeting their personal breastfeeding goals**
- ▶ It all starts with education
- ▶ Must educate businesses and organizations so that their staff members know how to handle these situations, appropriately, should they arise.
- ▶ More community-based support for preventing nursing in public harassment and empowering mothers with tools to remedy harassment incidents.

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