

AWS Statement on Supporting Surgical Trainees Who Are Breastfeeding

Friday, June 26, 2020

The Association of Women Surgeons (AWS) recognizes the importance of supporting physicians and trainees who are breastfeeding. AWS joins the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Breastfeeding, and the National Medical Association in the endorsement of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) policy entitled, "Breastfeeding and Lactation for Medical Trainees."

Breastfeeding is associated with numerous health benefits for both women and children. However, national breastfeeding rates are suboptimal: only one in four infants in the United States is exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life, as recommended by the World Health Organization. Women physicians have been shown to be at increased risk of failing to meet breastfeeding milestones, and surgical trainees appear to be at particularly high risk.

Recent updates to the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Common Program Requirements include a new provision for lactation accommodations for residents and fellows: training programs are now required to provide adequate facilities and time for lactation. The AAFP's statement on supporting breastfeeding medical trainees includes detailed information to assist institutions in developing robust lactation policies. The statement delineates specific requirements for lactation rooms and protected time for milk expression – including special considerations for surgical/procedural specialties – and additionally offers recommendations for promoting a culture of support.

The mission of the AWS is to inspire, encourage, and enable women surgeons to realize their professional and personal goals. We pledge to support breastfeeding surgical trainees in their efforts to provide optimal nutrition for their children. AWS categorically supports efforts to promote workplace equity and foster the well-being of surgical trainees and their families.

Breastfeeding Resources for Physicians and Medical Trainees:

- [American Academy of Family Physicians. Breastfeeding and Lactation for Medical Trainees Policy.](#) August 2019.
- [Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education \(ACGME\). Common Program Requirements \(Residency\).](#) Revised June 10, 2018. Effective July 1, 2019.
- [Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education \(ACGME\). Common Program Requirements \(Fellowship\).](#) Revised June 10, 2018. Effective July 1, 2019.
- [World Health Organization. Breastfeeding.](#)
- [Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. Statements.](#)
- [Doctor Mothers Interested in Lactation Knowledge](#) (Dr. MILK).