



WORKPLACE PREGNANCY SUPPORT GUIDE

A Comprehensive Resource for Employers & HR Leaders

Presented by

Lavender Honey Stories

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Empowering workplaces to nurture, protect, and celebrate pregnant employees.

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1 Introduction

Welcome to the **Workplace Pregnancy Support Guide**, created by Lavender Honey Stories. As a Childbirth Educator and Professional Doula, I have seen firsthand the profound impact that a supportive environment has on a pregnant individual's well-being — both at home and in the workplace.

Pregnancy is not simply a personal milestone; it is a journey that intersects deeply with professional life, and employers have both the opportunity and the responsibility to make that intersection a positive one.

Although pregnant employees often do not go out on leave until just a few weeks or even days before they are due, they require a well-structured support system to navigate the lead-up to their delivery date and their subsequent return to work. When pregnant workers feel supported, their overall well-being improves, leading to **higher retention rates, enhanced productivity, and a deeply positive workplace culture.**

Supporting pregnancy also signals to prospective and current employees that they can plan for a long-term future with your company. Modern family-first HR departments have dedicated and ongoing support from benefits, policies, and culture.

In this guide, we explore actionable tips for HR leaders and employers to effectively support pregnant employees, encompassing both immediate quick wins and sustainable, long-term strategies.

"When pregnant and postpartum employees feel seen, heard, and supported, they bring their best selves to work. Creating that culture of support isn't just the right thing to do—it's an investment that strengthens employees, teams, and organizations alike."

— Clintisha Flemming

2 The Importance of Supporting Pregnant Employees

To understand how you can support pregnant workers, you must first understand why it matters. A lack of support can lead to costly healthcare complications, increased absenteeism, and high turnover rates. A lack of support can manifest overtly through insufficient healthcare coverage—or subtly, through inefficient workflows or a stressful work environment.

Impact on Employee Health and Wellbeing

During pregnancy, employees face physical and emotional changes that can impact their performance at work. Supporting policies that help reduce prenatal stress can lead to significantly better outcomes for both parent and baby, including:

- Fewer complications during pregnancy
- Faster recovery times postpartum
- Lower rates of postpartum depression and anxiety
- Greater likelihood of returning to work after leave

Business Benefits of Supporting Pregnancy

Supporting pregnancy also yields significant benefits for your business. Procedures like C-Sections and NICU stays are among the highest drivers of employer healthcare costs. Comprehensive maternity benefits can help control those costs by providing targeted, personalized care. In the workplace, supporting pregnant people increases the likelihood they will return from leave, directly reducing the high costs associated with recruiting, training, and filling an empty role. Furthermore, it improves your company's employer brand, paying dividends for future recruiting and long-term retention.



A supportive workplace culture begins with inclusive, respectful collaboration.

3 Legal Considerations & Compliance

Supporting pregnant and postpartum employees begins with understanding their rights in the workplace. Federal laws prohibit pregnancy discrimination and require covered employers to provide reasonable accommodations when needed. Compliance is more than a legal obligation—it is a foundation for building a workplace culture where employees feel valued, respected, and supported.

Legislation	Key Provision
<u>Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA)</u>	Up to 12 weeks of protected, unpaid leave for pregnancy, childbirth, and recovery.
<u>Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA)</u>	Employers must provide “reasonable accommodations” for workers' limitations related to pregnancy and childbirth, unless it causes “undue hardship.”
<u>Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA)</u>	An amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions unlawful sex discrimination in employment decisions.
<u>FLSA & PUMP Act</u>	Requires reasonable break time and a private, non-bathroom space to express breast milk.

Always consult with qualified legal counsel to ensure your specific workplace policies comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

4 Key Components of an Effective Support Program

There are multiple ways to support pregnant people in the workplace, ranging from scheduling and policies to comprehensive maternity benefits and specialized training. Below are the four foundational pillars of an effective pregnancy support program.

■ Flexible Work

Allow remote or hybrid arrangements, flexible hours, and modified duties. Reduce commuting stress and ensure access to critical prenatal appointments.

■ Temporary Lifting Restrictions

Reassign heavy lifting duties to help employees work safely.

■ Financial Support

Offer paid parental leave and financial planning benefits to help employees responsibly prepare for the costs of a new family member.

■ Seating Accommodations

Offer ergonomic adjustments, such as stool, chair, or sit-stand desk options to reduce physical strain.

■ Health & Wellness

Provide access to specialized maternity resources such as virtual care, childbirth education, doula support, and coaching to close gaps in prenatal care.

■ Manager Training

Conduct routine training to help managers sensitively accommodate pregnant employees, reduce discrimination, and improve the overall employee experience.



Flexible work arrangements empower pregnant employees to stay productive and well.

5 Building a Supportive Workplace Culture

Building a supportive workplace for pregnant employees is key to fostering inclusion and maintaining a productive workforce. HR leaders can implement several initiatives to create a more compassionate and welcoming environment.

Encouraging Open Communication

One of the most critical aspects of a supportive workplace culture is encouraging open communication. An open-door policy for HR and managers allows employees to safely discuss their pregnancy-related needs—such as modified duties, flexible hours, or time off for medical appointments. This helps employees feel that they can trust their managers to respect their needs and easily access the many resources available to them.

Peer Support and Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Creating peer support initiatives, like mentorship programs or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), provides pregnant employees with a structured opportunity to connect with others facing similar situations. These programs are essential for reducing feelings of isolation, offering emotional support, and sharing practical tips on managing work alongside pregnancy. Effective ERGs have been shown to enhance employee engagement and foster more inclusive workplace environments.

Recognizing and Celebrating Milestones

Helping employees prepare for pregnancy involves logistics, but it is vital not to forget the human element. This is one of the most exciting times in an employee's life—do not be afraid to celebrate it. Consider simple, respectful gestures like hosting a baby shower, organizing a send-off before their leave begins, or arranging small gift contributions for their newborn. Something as simple as a thoughtful card or a team-wide congratulatory email can go a long way in creating recognition and showing positive support.

"Culture is the invisible benefit. It costs nothing to be kind, and it means everything to a pregnant employee navigating one of the most transformative seasons of her life."

— Clintisha Flemming

6 Addressing Challenges & Obstacles

Creating a supportive environment for pregnant employees means acknowledging the challenges they might face and providing effective strategies to overcome them.

Managing Workload and Performance

Pregnant individuals will inevitably approach all projects with their due date in mind. As they progress further into pregnancy, they may experience decreased energy levels or feel their focus is divided as they prepare for birth. Clearly outlining expectations and performance goals beforehand ensures your organization and the employee are aligned. It is crucial to set realistic expectations, offer flexibility, and resist the urge to micromanage during this transitional period.

Handling Discrimination and Bias

When managing workload and performance, it is extremely important to be aware of how discrimination and bias can impact interactions. Identify areas where bias can occur (including official communications, performance reviews, and policies) and make a definitive plan to address them. This should include mandatory manager and employee training on unconscious bias, as well as annual policy reviews and regular employee feedback surveys.



Open, supportive HR conversations are the foundation of a pregnancy-friendly workplace.

7 Returning to Work After Leave

An employee's return to work after welcoming a child is a significant transition. While many employees are eager to re-engage with their work, they may also be navigating physical recovery, sleep deprivation, new caregiving responsibilities, and the emotional adjustment to parenthood. A thoughtful return-to-work process can improve employee satisfaction, strengthen retention, and support long-term success.

Offer Flexibility When Possible

Employees returning from parental leave may benefit from temporary flexibility, such as adjusted schedules, hybrid or remote work options, or a gradual return-to-work plan. Even small accommodations can ease the transition and improve employee well-being.

Support Lactation Needs

Federal law may require employers to provide reasonable break time and a private space for expressing breast milk. Employers should ensure employees know what resources are available and how to access them.

Set Realistic Expectations

Returning employees may need time to adjust to new routines and responsibilities. Managers should focus on clear priorities, reasonable workloads, and ongoing communication during the transition period.

Return-to-Work Planning Checklist

- ✓ Design a phased return schedule before leave begins
- ✓ Confirm lactation room availability and amenities
- ✓ Schedule a welcome-back check-in for the first week
- ✓ Update the employee on key team changes and projects
- ✓ Revisit workload and performance expectations together
- ✓ Share available childcare assistance or EAP resources

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Measuring Success: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Supporting pregnant and postpartum employees is an investment in workforce well-being, retention, and organizational culture. Like any workplace initiative, success should be measured to understand its impact and identify opportunities for improvement.

Tracking the progress of your pregnancy support programs helps you understand what is working and where you might need to make adjustments. Start by setting your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and then determine how you will collect data to validate and track against them.

Key Metrics to Track

Retention Rate	Return-to-Work Rate	Accommodation Utilization	Participation in Support Programs	Manager Preparedness
Measure the percentage of employees who remain with the organization following pregnancy, parental leave, and the postpartum period.	Track the percentage of employees who return to work after parental leave.	Monitor the types and frequency of accommodations requested and provided.	Track attendance at maternal wellness workshops, educational sessions, employee resource groups, and other family-support initiatives.	Assess whether supervisors understand workplace protections, accommodation processes, and best practices for supporting employees during pregnancy and postpartum.
Why it matters: Higher retention reduces turnover costs and preserves institutional knowledge.	Why it matters: This metric can help identify barriers that may be preventing employees from returning.	Why it matters: Understanding accommodation trends can help employers plan resources and identify common employee needs.	Why it matters: Participation rates can indicate employee awareness, interest, and engagement.	Why it matters: Managers play a critical role in shaping employee experiences and workplace culture.

*"Supporting employees through pregnancy and postpartum isn't just good for families,
it's good for business."
— Clintisha Flemming*

About Lavender Honey Stories

Lavender Honey Stories helps organizations support pregnant and postpartum employees through education, workplace wellness initiatives, and practical resources designed to improve employee experience and retention.



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Thank you for downloading this guide and taking the first step toward a more supportive, inclusive, and empowering workplace for every pregnant employee.