

## MODULE 4: Discussion Points for Economic Issues

For some families, economic realities in their lives may cause concern about implementing safe sleep and breastfeeding.

### ***Cannot afford a safe sleep space for the baby***

Families with limited economic means may not be able to purchase a crib or other safe sleep space or may not have room for a separate sleep space. In addition, families with housing insecurity who may be living with relatives or friends, moving from place to place, or “couch surfing” may need a portable sleep space that they can easily transfer from place to place during frequent moves.

You will need to check resources in your community to provide information for families about what might be available. (Learn more about the importance of knowing community resources as part of the Conversations Approach in Module 6). It’s important to let families know that there are ways to address this issue and that together with them you will figure out a plan.

Discussion Points:

- Many community groups, health departments, hospitals, etc. have giveaway programs that provide a safe sleep surface and include sleep education activities.
- For families with housing insecurity, it is most important to help them connect with resources to address those issues. Reassure them that they can plan for a safe sleeping space for their babies.
- Even shelters, however, may not provide safe sleep options for families. Again, it is important to engage organizations from many sectors in the community to support families’ decisions.

### ***Breastfeeding is more expensive than formula feeding.***

Mothers may have heard that it’s expensive to breastfeed, especially if they are going back to work and have to purchase equipment to pump breast milk. Because WIC mothers on the non-breastfeeding food package receive infant formula for their baby, some mothers may feel that they’re getting more value compared to breastfeeding WIC moms who receive less or no formula.

Discussion Points:

- Breastfeeding can actually save a family up to \$1,500 in the baby’s first year that would go to the purchase of formula.
- Breast pumps are not always necessary to breastfeed. It depends on the mother’s schedule.
- Private and public insurance may pay for the purchase or rental of breast pumps if they are needed.
- Breastfeeding mothers in WIC receive an enhanced food package and can remain on the program longer than non-breastfeeding mothers. Breastfeeding mothers also receive breast pumps and have access to peer counselors, IBCLCs, and designated breastfeeding experts that can help them with their breastfeeding journey.

***I can't breastfeed at work and I don't think my employer will let me pump milk at work.***

Mothers are naturally concerned about continuing breastfeeding when they go back to work. Because in the United States we have such poor maternity leave policies, mothers typically get no or little time off. Thus, sustaining breastfeeding is a challenge. Mothers in low paying jobs, or those who are worried about issues such as their immigration status, typically have little power in advocating for themselves and are especially vulnerable. There are, however, newer legal supports to help them.

**Discussion Points:**

- Sometimes it is possible to arrange one's schedule and childcare so that mothers can breastfeed their babies before work, during breaks or lunch, etc. Of course, as the baby gets beyond the six months of exclusive breastfeeding, the number of times a day the baby needs to be fed will decrease as well.
- If that approach is not possible, then using a breast pump can support ongoing breastfeeding. It takes some preparation to pump milk at work.
- If a person has a job where the mother is paid hourly, and in some cases where she has an overall salary, there is a federal law passed in 2010 that requires employers to provide break time for pumping and a place with privacy to do it (not the bathroom!). Employers are required to provide this opportunity until the baby is one year old.

The problem is that this law requires that the mother make a complaint to activate any compliance intervention. This is difficult for mothers in low-paying jobs, and they may be afraid to advocate for themselves. In Module 6, learn about the importance of helping families find advocates as part of their plans.

- If the job is not covered by the law, the mother can talk to her employer. The mother can let the employer know that breastfed babies are usually healthier so breastfeeding employees miss less work because of a sick infant. In addition, employees who get support for breastfeeding are happier and more productive. In fact, breastfeeding is so important that a law exists to support breastfeeding in the workplace. There is important information about helping employers understand how supporting mothers' breastfeeding is good for their interests (See the Resources section of Going Deeper in the left navigation bar of Module 4).

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This handout has been developed as a component of the Building on Campaigns with Conversations: An Individualized Approach to Helping Families Embrace Safe Sleep & Breastfeeding online curriculum. To view the entire curriculum, please visit: <https://www.ncemch.org/learning/building>.

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