

**What Works: Accommodating Nursing Mothers At Work**

# Transcript

**Maureen McGough:** OK, so now we're going to go to Captain Scribner from the Vermont State Police to share with us an innovative solution that they recently implemented around providing a safe space for nursing mothers who return to the workplace.

**Julie Scribner:** Thank you, Mo. So, I'm from Vermont State Police. We are an agency...well right now we're about 300 people, 39 of which are women. And we are spread out over the small state of Vermont, 10 different barracks. So, five of our barracks are newer. I guess 15 years old is not newer now that I think of it, but five of our barracks are newer, bigger, more modern spaces. And then five of our barracks are older. In some cases, in really, really, really rough shape.

Back in late 2019, one of our female troopers was pregnant, and we knew that she was planning on breastfeeding when she came back to work and we were like, huh? How's that going to work?

And we happened to run into some folks that own a company called Mamava. It's based out of Burlington, Vermont. It's a women-owned small business, and you might have seen their lactation pods in some of the airports across the country. They are the size of a very, very, tiny, tiny camper. Those are kind of the big pods. So, these lactation pods, they have some different models. We ended up purchasing one, which was called the Mamava Solo. I would say that that size one is the size of two porta-potties, right. So, that's kind of what if you took two Porta-Potties, and kind of smashed them together. It's kind of roughly that size. I'm just trying to give you a quick idea.

So, these pods, they need a space that, you know, it can be put in a lobby of an office that, you know, perhaps that's able to be used by, you know, victims that are in for an interview or that are waiting, you know. So, there's kind of dual-use there. It may be put in the office somewhere.

So, there are a couple of things that I hope that you will learn from our mistakes. So, we were able to purchase this pod, and honestly, the Lieutenant that did the purchasing on this, if you had told him when he came on the job 25 years ago that he was going to be putting together a purchase order for a lactation pod as part of his job, he would have told you that was crazy. And honestly, when we got approval for this, as progressive as our department is, it was still a little surprising to me that we were going to, you know, drop \$10,000 on a lactation pod for, that you know, that could be used for multiple members, but in all honesty, we have very few members that are pregnant. So, for one person, really. And I was actually surprised, but I was thrilled.

So, we purchased the pod. We set it up in her barracks, and her barracks happens to be one of the old, really rundown ones, and there was not a good place for it.

So, what we didn't do was put any guidelines for other troopers as far as this pod. So, what Mamava suggest is that you implement and document a lactation policy. You know there's some more information about that if you go to mamava.com, M-a-m-a-v-a, you can read it more in detail, but outline breaks for pumping sessions and respect pumping sessions scheduled on their calendars. So, most moms pump for 30 minutes, one or two times during an 8-hour shift.

And then disrupting that schedule impacts milk production, and that's exactly what happened in this case when the trooper was using the pod, and she was thrilled with having that option. But people were actually interrupting her. They were like knocking on the door and trying to talk to her and stuff while she was in there, which just it is completely mind-blowing to me that lack of respect.

So, implementing a policy and, you know, just some education with the other troopers to that you know you need to respect the time when somebody's in there. And, then the other thing that she had mentioned was having the pod in a place that's close to a facility where she can go to, you know, wash out the equipment. It's potentially a little uncomfortable to be walking through the barracks with, you know, all your equipment and stuff so. You know, those are some things that hopefully other departments can learn from.

You want to make sure that you have this, whether you have a Mamava pod or you have a designated space. It can't be like somebody's office that you're kicking them out of the office. I mean, that's uncomfortable for the person who's being kicked out of the office. It's also super uncomfortable for the nursing mom to be like, 'Oh, I'm sorry to kick you out. I know you have a meeting coming up, but I need to get in here now.'

So, those are all really important things to make sure that you have those things and that you're really encouraging a supportive workplace culture around nursing moms. I think it's, in our department, it was such an unusual thing like it hadn't come up before and it was just a new thing for us.

So, we now are at a point where we actually have two pregnant moms and I think this is the first time in our department's history that we've had two pregnant females at the same time. So, we've had women since 1976, and I'm encouraged that this is sort of some evidence that our department is catching up with the times and supporting our women.

So, that's kind of the quick information about what our solution was. And, if you have any questions, I am happy to answer them.