

Ashley Tuomi Shares Personal Message on Infant at Work Policy

Category: News

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Hi my name is Brendyn Alexander Smallwood and tomorrow I wil be 3 weeks old. Today is my first day of work at American Indian Health and Family Services of South Eastern Michigan!

Because of an infant at work policy, I am able to return to work after just three weeks from giving birth. This policy was implemented in 2011, before I started working for American Indian Health and Family Services. Even though I did not create the policy, I immediately saw the benefit of the program. There have been a number of employees who have used this program successfully in the last five years. Today, I begin my adventure of returning to work with my son.

I'm not going to sugar coat things and say that our program is perfect or that there are zero distractions with an infant at work, but so far from what I have seen the benefits outweigh any of the negatives. I also have to say that we are in the process of revising our program and policies to fix some of the programs that we have come across.

Some of the benefits include: Getting the employee back quicker (As in my case- although most people still take a longer leave than I did), bonding doesn't stop because the parent has to go back to work, retention increases, higher morale, and in many cases increased breastfeeding rates.

The reason that I am sharing this today, is that I want to encourage other organizations to look at the possibility of creating an infant at work policy. I would love to share our policy and have a conversation with your leadership about the possibility of implementing the program. There are also a lot of resources available online including the Parenting in the Workplace Institute (<https://www.babiesatwork.org>)