



Scenarios for Ways to Handle a Nursing in Public Harassment Incident

The following are scenarios demonstrating a situation where a mother has been asked to cover up, move to another location, or leave a business due to breastfeeding in public. Each scenario proposes steps that the mother can take to resolve the situation proactively and immediately.

When an employee or business owner asks a mother to nurse in the restroom or a dressing room

First ask the person these questions:

“Are you asking me to leave because I am breastfeeding?” or,

“Are you asking me to move to the bathroom (or other location) [or cover up] because I am breastfeeding?”

If the answer is ‘no, I just thought you would be more comfortable there,’ thank them for their concern and let them know that you are perfectly comfortable where you are.

If the answer is ‘yes’, calmly and assertively tell the person, “The law protects my right to breastfeed anywhere my baby and I are authorized to be present, therefore, it is against the law to deny me this right.”

If you have the state’s breastfeeding law card on hand, this would be a great time to show that person. Hopefully that will solve the situation immediately. If not, follow the steps outlined on California’s Laws that Protect and Enforce a Mother’s Right to Breastfeed in Public ([link](#)) to handle the situation in conjunction with the Nursing in Public Task Force and/or the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

When an employee or business owner asks a mother to cover up while breastfeeding

Calmly and assertively state, “My baby prefers not be covered up while I breastfeed her. We enjoy watching each other while she feeds. Also, did you know that the law protects my right to breastfeed anywhere I am authorized to be?” If you have the state’s breastfeeding law card on hand, this would be a great time to show that person.

If the employee or business owner asks again for the mother to cover up, ask the following question: “Are you asking me to move to the bathroom (or other location) [or cover up] because I am breastfeeding?”



If the answer is 'yes', calmly and assertively tell the person, “The law protects my right to breastfeed anywhere my baby and I are authorized to be present, therefore, it is against the law to deny me this right.”

If you have the state’s breastfeeding law card on hand, this would be a great time to show that person. Hopefully that will solve the situation immediately. If not, follow the steps outlined on California’s Laws that Protect and Enforce a Mother’s Right to Breastfeed in Public ([link](#)) to handle the situation in conjunction with the Nursing in Public Task Force and/or the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

When an employee or business owner asks a mother to cover up or move because another customer feels uncomfortable seeing her breastfeed

First ask the person the following question:

“Are you asking me to move to the bathroom (or other location) [or cover up] because I am breastfeeding?”

If the answer is ‘no, but some of the other customers are uncomfortable seeing you breastfeed,’ you can let the employee or business owner know that it would be helpful for him/her to inform the uncomfortable patron that it is your right to breastfeed there and that he/she could move to another spot if it truly bothers him/her.

If the answer is 'yes', calmly and assertively tell the person, “The law protects my right to breastfeed anywhere my baby and I are authorized to be present, therefore, it is against the law to deny me this right.”

If you have the state’s breastfeeding law card on hand, this would be a great time to show that person. Hopefully that will solve the situation immediately. If not, follow the steps outlined on California’s Laws that Protect and Enforce a Mother’s Right to Breastfeed in Public ([link](#)) to handle the situation in conjunction with the Nursing in Public Task Force and/or the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

When an employee or business owner asks a mother to leave the place of business

First ask the person these questions:

“Are you refusing to serve me because I am breastfeeding?” or,
“Are you asking me to leave because I am breastfeeding?”



If the answer is 'yes', calmly and assertively tell the person, "The law protects my right to breastfeed anywhere my baby and I are authorized to be present, therefore, it is against the law to deny me this right." If you have the state's breastfeeding law card on hand, this would be a great time to show that person.

If the mother is STILL asked to leave, follow the steps outlined on California's Laws that Protect and Enforce a Mother's Right to Breastfeed in Public ([link](#)) to handle the situation in conjunction with the Nursing in Public Task Force and/or the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

When a customer says a discriminatory comment to a nursing mother

Calmly and assertively state, "Breastfeeding is the healthiest way to feed a child and there are laws to protect my right to breastfeed anywhere I choose." If you have the state's breastfeeding law card on hand, this would be a great time to show that person.

If a mother is cited for indecent exposure

Calmly and assertively state, "It is upsetting that I am being cited for indecent exposure; breastfeeding is the healthiest way to feed a baby. The act of a mother breastfeeding a child should not be considered lewd, indecent, immoral, or unlawful conduct. The law protects my right to breastfeed anywhere my baby and I are authorized to be present, therefore, it is against the law to deny me this right." If you have the state's breastfeeding law card on hand, this would be a great time to show that person.

If you are still cited for indecent exposure, follow the steps outlined on California's Laws that Protect and Enforce a Mother's Right to Breastfeed in Public ([link](#)) to handle the situation in conjunction with the Nursing in Public Task Force and/or the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

If there is a lurking customer

Calmly and assertively tell the person, "Ma'am/Sir, I am currently feeding my child and would appreciate if you stopped lurking about."

Calmly and assertively tell the person, "Ma'am/Sir, I am currently feeding my child and would appreciate privacy." (However, this may lead to the person stating, "then you shouldn't do that here.")

Disclaimer: Nothing on this site should be interpreted as legal advice. We are not attorneys. We are breastfeeding advocates. The purpose is to educate our community about the laws that protect a mother's right to breastfeed in public, as well as provide supporting documents for mothers when a nursing in public harassment incident must be remedied.

