Elena and Carlos are overjoyed with their baby girl, Rosita. Like most new parents, they have spent the first week spotting something new or familiar in every gesture or expression.

She has your eyes.

And she has your spirit!
Look at all this! How will you manage the cleaning, cooking and taking care of the baby until I come home?

My mother and sisters will help. Don’t worry.

Okay, but I’ll miss being here.

I know what you mean. I’m already worried about going back to work next month.

What’s the problem? Your family will feed the baby the milk you pump, right?

Oh yes, they want me to keep breastfeeding. But I haven’t heard back from work after I asked the manager for a place to pump and store my milk.

Elena has reason to worry. At that moment, across town, a tense conversation is taking place between her boss, restaurant owner, Miguel Garcia, and her supervisor, restaurant manager, Maria Oveda.

Señor Garcia, Elena returns in less than a month. She’s breastfeeding her baby and wants a place to pump and store her milk.

That sounds like a very personal matter, Maria. I really don’t think we should be talking about it.

I think we need to. Elena isn’t the only worker scheduled for maternity leave. This will just keep coming up.

Elena: The Journey Back to Work
Sr. Garcia, a hard-working businessman trying to maintain his restaurant in a tough economy, is clearly frustrated. He believes the matter has no business in the workplace.

But is this really our responsibility? Look around! We barely have enough room for all of our supplies.

I suppose we could shift things around in one of the storage rooms.

So they can spend all their time resting instead of working! No, it will be bad for business. You just have to tell her it’s impossible.

The next day...

I tried, Elena, but Mr. Garcia says there’s no room. Maybe you can pump before work or at night?

But to feed the baby properly I need to pump milk during the day!

I’m sorry, Elena.

Bothered by her talk with Sra. Oveda, Elena brings up the problem during a visit with two mothers she met at her WIC class.

But other women who work do this. There must be a way of working it out!

Elena: The Journey Back to Work
At first, they told me it was okay. Now they’ve started criticizing me for taking the time to pump. It’s been very hard. I feel as if I have to choose between breastfeeding my baby or my job! And we really need the money now.

I’m going to call WIC. Maybe they can help.

California law requires employers to give time and a proper space for mothers to pump their breast milk.

Surveys show that when companies provide pumping space and time for their employees, workers take fewer sick days and there is less employee turnover. Here are several studies you can show your boss.

So, I really don’t know what to do.

Elena visits the restaurant to share what she’s learned from WIC.

This is only temporary. At six months, the baby will start to eat some solid foods and I won’t need to pump as often.

This is really interesting information, Elena. Let me show this to Sr. Garcia.

Elena drops by the kitchen to say hello to her co-workers.

Hola, Elena! What are you doing here?

Elena drops by the kitchen to say hello to her co-workers.
This would help us all! Yes, I’m in my fifth month. I’m so worried I won’t be able to breastfeed after I come back to work. What can we do to help?

Well, now that you mention it . . .

After reading through WIC’s list of benefits to employers, and facing an enthusiastic group of workers organized by Elena, Sr. Garcia gives his support.

We only need a space about 4 x 5 feet wide. I can bring a mini fridge from home.

Okay, Okay! We’ll give it a try. Let’s look for a place.

I’ll make a sign for the door.

How about here? I think it’s the right size.

But a bathroom is not a clean place for pumping the baby’s milk. And there’s no outlet for a refrigerator or a pump.

But it is used sometimes. We need privacy.

What about this hallway? Hardly anyone uses it.
After some thought, Sra. Oveda suggests a small supply room. Will this do? We can move around the supplies and clean it up a little.

Sr. Garcia, Sra. Oveda, Elena and her co-workers pick a day to clear out the storage room. This will work! !

They brighten the room with posters, flowers and a comfortable chair. The change from ugly, old storage room is complete.

It seemed only right that Elena was the first to use the room just a month later.

Elena enjoys a quiet moment in the room, remembering the long road from confused mother-to-be to today’s confident mother. She hopes to share with her daughter someday all the lessons she’s learned.

Elena: The Journey Back to Work
Elena faces the room of nervous mothers. She knows exactly how they feel. And now, as a trained WIC Peer Counselor, she knows exactly what to tell them.

This is the start of a long, wonderful journey. Some of you may face challenges before your baby’s birth, some of you after. Always remember, you have the strength and love inside of you to do the best for your child. And we here at WIC will help you every step of the way.

With all the great training. You bet!

Today’s the big day, Elena. Are you ready?

Six months have passed and it is a smiling, excited Elena who greets her old WIC mentor outside the WIC center. Before, Elena had always come here for advice and aid. Now her purpose was very different.
At least two weeks before returning to school or work, begin building your supply of frozen breast milk by pumping between feedings.

When your baby is about 4 weeks old, ask a family member to feed your baby a bottle of breast milk. Your baby may not want a bottle from you. Be patient. If your baby refuses, try a different bottle or nipple.

If work does not have a designated room, look around for a clean, quiet area where you can comfortably pump.

Store your pumped breast milk in a refrigerator or an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack to keep the milk cool.

Talk with your child care provider about how to store, prepare and use breast milk.

Call your local WIC office for:

- Answers to your breastfeeding questions.
- Lessons on how to pump and store your breast milk.
- Tips on how to work with your child care provider on using breastmilk.
- Information on where to get a breastpump kit.

Employer accommodations:

*If you feel your employer is not providing adequate break time and/or a place to express milk as required by California Labor Code Section 1030, you may file a report/claim with the California Department of Industrial Relations Bureau of Field Enforcement (BOFE). See details at www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/HowToFileBOFEClaim.htm.*

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