

State Capitol Etiquette

Nebraska Friends of Midwives
2009 Legislative Session

Dress

First impressions mean a lot, so we've got to be conscious of the image we project to senators and their staff. Dressing in a "professional" manner shows respect for legislators, and automatically makes them feel more familiar with and respectful of you. This means **no t-shirts, sweatshirts, jeans, or other very casual apparel**. We don't need everyone to wear suits, but **as close to business dress as you can accomplish within your wardrobe** would be good. As with all things in this process, don't take it personally, just think of it as part of the political game.

Children

Many, if not most of us, have small children that will often accompany us to the Capitol. It means a lot to the Senators that we put forth the effort to come with our little ones. However, they do expect the formal atmosphere of the Capitol to be upheld. As such, we cannot make any level of noise in committee hearings or other official proceedings. **If your child is restless, please go to the hallway before a disruption occurs.** There will often be a separate room available with closed-circuit coverage of the meetings.

Most of us are breastfeeding advocates in addition to being childbirth advocates, and nursing in public is an important right we stand up for every day. At the Capitol, we need to be particularly sensitive to the sensibilities of those who aren't familiar or comfortable with nursing babies and children. If you need to nurse a child, there are many alcoves and side halls that have comfortable seating. In those areas you can **nurse freely, but please always use discretion**, as a Senator could come down the stairs or around the corner at any time. Please **use a sling, blanket, etc., if you absolutely must nurse in the presence of a Senator**, staff member, in a committee hearing, or otherwise involved in business with non-NFoM members. Again, this is something we should not take personally, but instead remember that we always want to make the right impression at the Capitol, and courtesy to others' comfort level is part of that. If you are planning to attend a proceeding such as a meeting or committee hearing, try to nurse and feed your children beforehand so that it is less likely to be an issue. Of course, a nursing baby is better than a screaming baby. Let's just be sure to think ahead and set ourselves up for success!