

July 15, 2019

To Whomever it May Concern,

I recently had a rather traumatic experience that I hope other mothers won't have to go through in the future.

My name's Ashley. I'm 29 years old and a nursing mother. I gave birth to my daughter in March 2019 and she's been on breast milk since the day she was born. In June 2019, I found out I had a warrant in Douglas County, NE for not appearing in court. My original charge was driving without a driver's license. Once I found out, I made a plan to turn myself in. I live about 100 miles away so I had to get everything in order before making the trip. My plan was to turn myself in early enough Friday morning to be able to see the judge at 9 AM or 1 PM, and be back home by that night. It wasn't a big charge so I knew once I saw the judge, I'd be able to leave.

My plan didn't go accordingly. When I turned myself in I learned that I more than likely wouldn't be able to see the judge until that following Monday. Their jail has too many people to move that quickly. I left some breast milk stored in the freezer at home, but definitely not enough for three days. **I told just about everyone I had contact with while being booked in that I was nursing my baby back home and that she's going to need milk. No one was helpful. I kept just getting a "that sucks" kind of response. No one offered any helpful suggestions or advice.**

By the time I got to my cell, it had already been over four hours since I last pumped and my breasts were uncomfortable. I did the only other thing I could think of, I hand expressed my breast milk into my drinking cup and either flushed it down the toilet or dumped it down the sink. Not only is that a difficult process, but your hands and breasts get sore.

This was a hard, awkward process in itself. Hiding in my cell, sitting on my bed, my back facing the common area, bunkmate walking in our cell with my breasts out as I'm trying to express milk. But I did what I had to to make sure I didn't completely dry up during my stay.

To make matters even worse, I endured harassment from the other female inmates. By the next day, I had a lady stick her head in my cell while hand expressing milk and ask in a not-so-nice tone "What are you doing?" I explained to her that I have a baby at home that I feed and that if I don't do this, I'd dry up and have one angry baby. Then she had the audacity to say "And then you drink it?" I looked at her. "No, I don't drink it! I flush it!" She then had the nerve to tell me that I should cover myself or put a blanket up because everyone can see me "playing with my boobs". Firstly, I sat with my back away from everyone. Secondly, obstructing the view into the cell by covering the windows is against the rules. And thirdly, I'm not one that feels I have to cover myself when it comes to breastfeeding or pumping. But I'll admit I was completely uncomfortable doing it there.

I was stuck in this hell for little over three days. **My daughter's father ended up calling the jail. He explained the situation to the lady and tried**

to see if there was a way he could get milk from me because our daughter had ran out. The lady told him "I guess you'll just have to give her formula". I didn't learn about this until I got home and I was beyond angry at this point. Obviously, everyone at the facility lacked education on breastfeeding or breastfed babies. You can't just switch a baby from breast milk to completely formula. It messes with their stomachs and they'll end up throwing up.

To stop breastfeeding/pumping cold turkey is also not healthy for the mother. It's painful and you can get infections like mastitis. Denying a mother the right to pump isn't just a nuisance to her, you're putting her health at risk.

Naturally, my supply had dropped greatly in those three days. I was producing only an ounce every 2-3 hours verses 3 ounces. It takes a lot of time, commitment, and patience to get my supply back up. It still isn't where it was to this day, but I'm slowly getting there.

After my stay at Douglas County Corrections I suffered from emotional trauma from the treatment I endured and lack of respect for my family. This not only affected me, but also my daughter. I hope people can hear my story and learn something from it. **Being able to breastfeed isn't a privilege, it's a right. It may not be for everyone but it is how my family and I chose to live. If my workplace has to provide breaks in a clean, private area for me to pump, what gives Douglas County Corrections the right to tell me otherwise?**

To a better future,
Ashley D.