



A couple walks past a baby care room in Beijing's Forbidden City. Recently, a public discussion was sparked over whether dads should be allowed to fulfill their child care responsibilities in such rooms. — IC

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A debate surrounding access to public baby care rooms in Shanghai highlights the dynamics of modern parenting. The issue: Should fathers caring for infants be allowed in the rooms?

The public discussion was triggered by a Shanghai father, who uploaded a video arguing that dads also have child-care responsibilities. They might also need to use a baby care room to, say, change diapers.

It was a call to recognize that parenting has become a more shared endeavor, but it also raises concerns about the privacy and comfort of breastfeeding mothers who use such public facilities.

Some people point out that breastfeeding is a principal purpose of the rooms and needs to remain of paramount consideration.

Others have suggested that the needs of both fathers and mothers can be met by partitioning baby care rooms into functional zones that would allow men to use the facilities without violating the privacy of breastfeeding women.

Between 2017 and 2019, there were reports of men intruding on the privacy of women using baby care rooms in different Chinese cities, raising concerns about privacy and misuse.

Creating separate areas would provide exclusivity for breastfeeding women while opening up areas for diaper-changing and formula preparation to parents of both sexes.

Several shopping centers in Shenzhen, a city in South China's Guangdong Province, have set up two separate baby care rooms — one for mothers and infants

# PUBLIC BABY CARE ROOMS: great for mothers, vexing for fathers



— Hellorf

only; the other allowing access for fathers.

China updated its family planning law in 2021, highlighting the need to facilitate infant care and breastfeeding in public areas and in workplaces with higher concentrations of female workers.

Shanghai, in response, has established

1,634 baby care facilities in various public locations, tripling the number from 2017. At the same time, over 4,000 employers have equipped workplaces with such facilities.

Some sites, however, have simply designated regular restrooms as baby care facilities, creating an uncomfortable, inconvenient venue for

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At Shanghai Railway Station, the baby care room is integrated into a “family restroom,” where fathers can enter, but parents have to ask staff members to open it.

Some baby care facilities in Shanghai, like those at the Hall of the Sun mall in Hongkou District, offer ideal features, according to a Shanghai Daily survey of several sites.

They provide spacious areas, each accommodating two small infants simultaneously for diaper changes. What sets them apart is the provision of a lockable, private breastfeeding room, ensuring mothers' privacy.

By contrast, the baby care room at Daning Jiuguang Center in Jing'an District partitions a breastfeeding area merely with curtains, which lack the same level of security as lockable doors.

The physical design of these rooms is crucial to providing privacy and safety. Surveillance at the entrance and call buttons enhance security.

Furthermore, the absence of clear regulations and penalties for unauthorized entry into baby care rooms remains a significant concern. Legal safeguards are essential.

The establishment of safe baby care rooms in public spaces reflects respect for women and children, and embodies the concept of humane public services. But we shouldn't leave fathers out of the equation.

Segregated areas for breastfeeding mothers is a pretty obvious solution. It's just a matter of developing the resolve to make it a commonplace practice in baby care rooms.