

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## LACTATION CONSULTANTS ASSIST KATRINA VICTIMS WITH BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

As the world grapples with ways to support the unspeakable numbers of families affected by the recent devastation of Hurricane Katrina, members of the International Lactation Consultant Association are stepping forward to engage in a unique response – supporting breastfeeding families.

International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) in evacuee areas such as Baton Rouge, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio are assisting breastfeeding families at shelters and providing information on the importance of breastfeeding to expectant mothers. IBCLCs are health care professionals with specialized skills in teaching and supporting breastfeeding, and are ideal members of emergency volunteer teams assisting pregnant women, mothers, infants, and young children.

ILCA's position paper, "Position on Infant Feeding in Emergency Situations," is available as a free download on its website, [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org), and provides

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recommendations to humanitarian aid workers involved in feeding infants and children. It is a poignant reminder of the vital importance of promoting, protecting, and supporting breastfeeding, particularly during emergency situations when water and food sources are scarce or contaminated, travel is difficult, and the threat of famine and disease become a sobering reality. Detailed technical guidance on infant feeding in emergencies can also be found on the website of the Emergency Nutrition Network, [www.emnonline.net/ife/index.html](http://www.emnonline.net/ife/index.html).

According to Suzanne Cox, ILCA President, “Breastfeeding provides a sanitary, safe, and consistently available food source. It also contains important anti-infective properties that protect infants from malnutrition, diarrhea, and other diseases that commonly arise during an emergency situation.”

Cox called upon relief organizations and media at the local, regional, national, and international levels to emphasize breastfeeding as a vital component in infant health and survival during the current emergency. She urged hospitals providing childbirth services to those displaced by Katrina to make extra efforts to promote and support breastfeeding among new mothers who will be discharged into shelters or other situations where a lack of breastfeeding can seriously undermine the health of the baby and the mother. Cox added that emergency shelters caring for pregnant women, new mothers, infants and young children should expedite access of IBCLCs to families in need of assistance with breastfeeding. Such assistance could include getting breastfeeding well established,

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helping mothers to continue breastfeeding or reestablishing their breastmilk supply if they have already weaned.

Cox notes that even in areas where breastfeeding is common, sudden emergencies can disrupt the breastfeeding relationship. Pregnant and lactating women need safe spaces, or safe havens, so that they may receive rations, water, and a relative sense of security and support.

“For many families torn apart by this tragedy, breastfeeding is the best hope they have for continuing to nourish and sustain their infants and young children, and to protect them from further disease,” says Cox. “International Board Certified Lactation Consultants are credentialed health professionals with the skills necessary to promote and support breastfeeding and to protect it from the lure of inappropriate substitutes.”

In addition to its “Position on Infant Feeding in Emergencies” paper, the ILCA website provides a user-friendly “Find a Lactation Consultant Directory” of available International Board Certified Lactation Consultants worldwide who can assist new mothers or local organizations with lactation. To access an IBCLC in your community, or to learn more about breastfeeding in emergency situations, visit the ILCA website at [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org), or contact the ILCA Office at [info@ilca.org](mailto:info@ilca.org) or (919) 787-5181, ext. 209.

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