

August is National Breastfeeding Month!

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By Claire Cutler Eden, IBCLC - Licensed Lactation Consultant

The theme for [National Breastfeeding Month](#) 2022 is ***Together We Can Do Great Things***- a celebration of the power of collective impact. The month starts off with [World Breastfeeding Week](#) August 1-7, which promotes a theme this year of ***Step Up for Breastfeeding: Educate and Support***. There is a groundswell in Georgia of collaborative efforts stepping up to help Georgia families meet their breastfeeding goals and to improve the health of Georgia's mothers and babies.

One of these projects is the [Georgia Perinatal Quality Collaborative's](#) new neonatal initiative, Optimizing Newborn Nutrition, focusing on supporting maternity care practices that optimize lactation, including in the NICU. Hospitals are encouraged to form interdisciplinary teams and to collaborate with community partners and providers as part of their learning collaborative groups and/or quality improvement teams.

You can personally answer this call to better educate and support your patients by signing up for the pre-conference workshop, **Hands-On Help to Optimize Newborn Nutrition**, being offered at the upcoming Georgia Perinatal Association's 35th Annual Conference. Register [here](#)!



Another wonderful example of collaboration is the partnership between the [Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition](#) and the [Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics](#) to establish a new ***Breastfeeding-Friendly Pediatrician Certification Program***. Launched in 2021, the program has received a robust response from Georgia's pediatricians and recently announced their [first cohort of certified pediatricians](#).

While more and more families in Georgia are initiating breastfeeding, many pediatricians receive little formal lactation education. Research shows that medical training is deficient in preparing physicians to develop the knowledge base and clinical management skills to [provide optimal support for breastfeeding families](#). Today's parents are often well-informed about breastfeeding and may bring more questions to their pediatrician than in the past. Drs. Kolesky, Lavania, Moore and Yeiser have done important work to address these gaps and to improve their confidence and clinical knowledge, including participation in the [EPIC® Breastfeeding Education Program](#)'s live webinars and [on-demand library](#).



Rebecca Kolesky, MD, Dekalb Pediatric Center, Decatur. “I chose to be a part of the *Breastfeeding-Friendly Pediatrician Certification Program* to emphasize my commitment to helping my patients and families successfully breastfeed,” she said. “As pediatricians, we see mothers more than any other medical professional in their child's first year of life. This gives us a unique opportunity to help troubleshoot issues plus give support and encouragement for breastfeeding.”



Hiral Lavania, MD, IBCLC, One Family Pediatrics, Cumming. When asked why she participated in the program, she stated, “Breastfeeding is natural and safe; however, there are many times where barriers prevent women from initiating or continuing

to feed their babies without supplementation. The pediatrician's role is to provide holistic care to each child. By providing lactation support, pediatricians can help increase breastfeeding duration and exclusivity."



Monica Moore, MD, of Premier Wellness, serves patients across the state in her virtual pediatric practice. "Staying relevant and up to date on current evidence-based medicine is extremely important to me and motivates me to constantly explore ways to grow personally and professionally. The breastfeeding certification program is an excellent opportunity to expand my fund of knowledge and provide the necessary tools to continue providing exceptional care to my patients," said Moore.



Donna Yeiser, MD, Columbus Pediatric Associates. "The *Breastfeeding-Friendly Pediatrician Certification Program* has allowed me to learn more and has provided me with valuable information and further resources for families in our practice. For me, a very important part of breastfeeding is the *empowerment* it gives a mother. It is a beautiful aspect of breastfeeding that is universal. As pediatricians, we are uniquely able to develop trusting relationships and have close contact and frequent visits when families are most vulnerable. They may encounter problems and not know where or how to find resolutions. It is during this time that we can provide encouragement and support to help families develop strong breastfeeding foundations for long term outcomes," said Yeiser.



Breastfeeding advocates from Georgia AAP Breastfeeding Committee and the Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition want to equip pediatricians to better support their patient families to meet AAP breastfeeding recommendations and more importantly, their own breastfeeding goals. While breastfeeding is an important public health issue, pediatricians provide care to individual families each day who need clinical guidance on breastfeeding and lactation issues. The

American Academy of Pediatrics also recently updated their breastfeeding guidance in their [2022 Statement on Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk](#), along with an accompanying [Technical Report](#) with additional references. These resources are freely available to all in Georgia who want to **Step Up for Breastfeeding** and Do Great Things, Together.

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