

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT

United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC)

2025 M Street, NW, Suite 800

Washington DC 20036

(202) 367-1132

info@usbreastfeeding.org

Audrey Naylor, USBC Chair

naylor@wellstart.org

**UNITED STATES BREASTFEEDING COMMITTEE URGES SUPPORT OF
BREASTFEEDING IN AFTERMATH OF KATRINA**

In the aftermath of one of the nation's worst natural disasters, the United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC), an organization of more than 40 national health care, professional, and government organizations, has issued the call to support breastfeeding mothers in their decision to give their infant the healthiest start in life possible.

Dr. Audrey Naylor, chair of the USBC, says that breastfeeding is the most important way to protect infants from a host of significant health concerns, especially critical in emergency situations where safe and sanitary water is not available, when transportation is limited, and disease abounds.

"Research is clear," says Dr. Naylor, "that even in the best of situations, breastfeeding helps protect infants from illnesses such as ear infections, respiratory infections, and diarrhea. In emergency situations, the safety net that breastfeeding provides babies, who are the most vulnerable in a crisis, is profound."

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The USBC urges all mothers who are currently breastfeeding to continue for as long as possible to protect their infants from infection and disease, and encourages pregnant women to breastfeed once their infant is born. The USBC further encourages health care and emergency relief workers to assist women to continue breastfeeding their infants.

According to Naylor, this can include measures as simple as providing a “safe haven” or private area for women to breastfeed and receive counseling in large shelter environments, and helping women access the support of lactation consultants and other breastfeeding experts in the community. Both the International Lactation Consultant Association (www.ilca.org) and La Leche League, International (www.lalecheleague.org) provide knowledgeable support personnel. Physicians from the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine and the American Academy of Pediatrics can also offer needed assistance to induce or continue lactation.

For more information about infant and young child feeding in emergencies, use the link on the USBC website home page at www.usbreastfeeding.org. In addition, the USBC has published an issue paper, “Benefits of Breastfeeding,” available to the general public on the website at www.usbreastfeeding.org. The paper provides documented evidence of the importance of breastfeeding to the health of infants and mothers alike.

For more information about resources available to support working mothers with breastfeeding, contact the USBC at (202) 367-1132, or at info@usbreastfeeding.org.