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Celebrity Breastfeeding and the United States Lactation Consultant Association

RALEIGH, N.C. --- Somehow it is news that one celebrity is breastfeeding a two-year-old and another "refuses" to breastfeed. The royals are not immune from infant feeding hype as speculation surrounds Kate Middleton. Will she or won't she? That breastfeeding regularly tops tabloid headlines speaks volumes about our cultural conflicts. Breastfeeding is seen as healthy and good...but potentially scandalous if it takes place in public or beyond infancy. Breastfeeding is viewed as good mothering...but may "ruin" the idealized female body.

The American Academy of Pediatrics takes the stand that breastfeeding is not a lifestyle choice, but an important public health initiative. It is the desire of the United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) that every woman have the opportunity to be fully informed about breastfeeding so that she may make the best decision for herself and her family. Women need to know that it is not breastfeeding, but rather pregnancy itself that changes breast latitude and longitude. Women need to know that breastfeeding offers significant protection from breast and ovarian cancer and reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. And they need to know that breastfeeding offers their children protection from a host of illnesses and chronic diseases such as ear infections, obesity, respiratory infections, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and even some childhood cancers. And once they do make the decision to breastfeed their babies, women need support to do so. A study published in the journal *Pediatrics* found that only a third of women meet their own breastfeeding goals.

A British study recently concluded that breastfeeding may help children climb the social ladder. The child of Prince William and Kate Middleton is unlikely to have difficulty with that climb. Children of celebrities have a head start, too. USLCA is concerned for the children whose mothers don't make headlines. We support the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and Michelle Obama in their call for more Baby-Friendly Hospitals so that breastfeeding gets off to a good start. And we urge Congress to continue funding for breastfeeding peer counselors through the Women, Infant, and Children's (WIC) supplemental food program so that the most vulnerable women and children are more likely to benefit from the health, cognitive, emotional, and social perks of breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding support comes from employers, businesses, families, and health care providers. Mother-to-mother counseling and encouragement is invaluable. But when designing breastfeeding support policies and programs and when help in overcoming challenges is needed, International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC) are the ones to call. In the maze of breastfeeding helpers, only the IBCLC is required to demonstrate completion of specific college-level, health sciences courses, complete ninety hours of education specific to lactation, and spend hundreds if not thousands of hours in clinical practice before sitting for a rigorous international exam. For healthy mothers and babies, for climbing the social ladder, for the health of the nation, breastfeeding is worth the IBCLC. For more information or to find an IBCLC in your area, visit www.uslca.org.

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