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## **Vaccination for Lactation Care Providers**

The United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) strongly advocates for lactation care providers to be treated as essential healthcare providers in the allocation of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Lactation care is an essential public health service that should not be delayed and must continue to be provided throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states, “During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to ensure that people who are breastfeeding or who desire to breastfeed continue to have access to this support,” and that “In-person support may be necessary to effectively support some breastfeeding dyads.” These key statements coupled with the widespread recommendation to continue breastfeeding or chestfeeding regardless of COVID status, support the need for lactation care providers to continue their work.

The nuanced nature of lactation support can require in-person contact with the lactating parent and infant for an extended period of time. While in most cases this can be done while wearing a face covering, the increased exposure due to the inability to maintain social distancing puts lactation care providers at heightened risk. Just as birth workers who are delivering babies are unable to turn away COVID positive patients, lactation care providers must continue seeing and supporting these families.

While USLCA recognizes the need for a strategized distribution of the vaccine based on risk, we strongly urge for lactation care providers working directly with lactating parents and babies be included in the same dissemination tier as birth workers, including, but not limited to: OB/GYN physicians, OB and NICU nurses, and midwives, regardless of work setting.

**CDC:** <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/maternal-or-infant-illnesses/covid-19-and-breastfeeding.html>