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### Fathers: The Unsung Heroes of Breastfeeding

**Morrisville, NC-** The United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) recognizes June as a month to celebrate fathers. Bringing home a new baby can be a very challenging and happy occasion. Bringing up a child is one of the most important tasks in a person's life. When there is a combined effort to parent between two partners the effort becomes almost effortless. A father's breastfeeding support in the first few days after arriving home can be a positive beginning in a family's journey together.

One of the most popular questions most new moms and dads ask at the first meeting with the IBCLC (Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultant) is "when can dad feed the baby, I want him to feel involved." Feeding, while an important activity is only one of many ways in which a father can be present in his baby's life. Newborns need to be held, comforted, changed, burped, bathed, spoken to and loved. Holding a newborn skin to skin is a gift that any dad can give his child. Studies show that skin-to-skin contact given by anyone caring for a newborn will make the baby feel more secure, stabilize heart and respiratory rate, provide the newborn with warmth, and help breastfeeding go well. This simple act helps newborns transition to life outside the womb.

Knowledge is power. When dad is well versed in the demands and physical and emotional impact breastfeeding has on the family, he is better equipped to be supportive. Attending breastfeeding classes and reading books on breastfeeding will help dad assist with positioning and other aspects of breastfeeding. Asking questions when mom is with the IBCLC, and helping to deflect visitors with unhelpful advice while in the hospital and at home, will help the mother's efforts. Dad's participation in the first few weeks of breastfeeding in all these ways will help mom and baby get off to a good start with feedings.

USLCA president, Laurie Beck, RN, MSN, IBCLC praises all fathers that are supportive of their breastfeeding partners. "One of the best things a father can do for his child is to love its mother." says Beck.

Knowledgeable professional breastfeeding support can be obtained from lactation consultants with the IBCLC credential (International Board Certified Lactation Consultant). To locate lactation consultant for assistance with breastfeeding go to <http://www.uslca.org>.