FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ILCA RELEASES POSITION ON BREASTFEEDING AND WORK

The International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA) announced today the release of its official position paper, “Position on Breastfeeding and Work,” calling on employers, policymakers, and organizations that serve new families to improve the support that new mothers need to continue breastfeeding.

According to Rebecca Mannel, president of the ILCA Board of Directors, “The benefits of breastfeeding have been widely known for many years now, which has resulted in the majority of women now making the choice to breastfeed. Yet many mothers struggle to continue breastfeeding once they return to work. Some mothers quit within their first few weeks back at work because of challenges within the worksite itself such as no privacy or break time for expressing milk. Other mothers quit before they even return to work because they assume they cannot continue breastfeeding due to their job. ILCA believes that a woman’s right to work should not interfere with her additional right to provide optimal nutrition for her children.”
According to Mannel, the steps to creating a supportive environment are simple and include allowing women to take needed breaks to regularly express milk every 2 or 3 hours, and a place to do so in privacy. Providing support and information to employees, along with information and access to International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) if concerns arise, has also been proven to make a difference.

“The benefits to employers are significant,” says Mannel. “The research is very clear that because breastfed infants are healthier, their mothers are not absent from work as often. The healthcare savings to the company and the savings from having workers stay at work can be significant to the business,” she says. In addition, employee retention is higher as breastfeeding mothers who are supported in the workplace are more likely to return to their jobs after maternity leave ends.

Several studies of companies providing corporate lactation programs have confirmed the cost savings. For example, one company, CIGNA, studied the impact of their lactation program which enrolled 343 employees, and found the program saved their company $240,000 in healthcare costs, $62,000 savings in prescriptions annually, and an annual savings of $60,000 in lower employee absenteeism rates.

Mannel says that a growing number of companies are beginning to implement similar programs. Yet the practice is not widespread. Mannel believes that with greater education about the benefits, more employers will establish policies and practices that
allow breastfeeding employees to continue breastfeeding as long as they wish. Many state
and national governments (including a dozen U.S. states) now provide laws that
encourage or require employers to provide workplace accommodations for breastfeeding.
ILCA’s position on working and breastfeeding is available as a free download at their
website at: www.ilca.org.

ILCA, the professional association for International Board Certified Lactation
Consultants (IBCLCs) and other healthcare professionals who serve mothers and babies,
provides a user-friendly “Find a Lactation Consultant Directory” of available IBCLCs
worldwide who can assist new mothers, employers, and local organizations with lactation
related issues. To access an IBCLC in your community, or to learn more about
promoting, protection, and supporting breastfeeding, visit the ILCA website at
www.ilca.org, or contact the ILCA Office at info@ilca.org, or (919) 787-5181, ext. 209.

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