



Georgia Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition

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Breastfeeding Advocates Recognize Georgia Pediatricians

Atlanta- [The Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) and the [Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition](#) have certified the first class of *Breastfeeding-Friendly Pediatricians*. Launched in 2021, the program has received a robust response from Georgia's pediatricians and now counts 50 applicants. The enthusiastic participation of our first four certifiants has aided in developing a process which yields a certification which is both reasonable to achieve but also meaningful.

Rebecca Kolesky, MD, Dekalb Pediatric Center, Decatur. "I chose to be a part of the *Breastfeeding-Friendly Pediatrician Certification Program* to emphasize my commitment to helping my patients and families successfully breastfeed," she said. "As pediatricians, we see mothers more than any other medical professional in their child's first year of life. This gives us a unique opportunity to help troubleshoot issues plus give support and encouragement for breastfeeding."

Hiral Lavania, MD, IBCLC, One Family Pediatrics, Cumming. When asked why she participated in the program, she stated, "Breastfeeding is natural and safe; however, there are many times where barriers prevent women from initiating or continuing to feed their babies without supplementation. The pediatrician's role is to provide holistic care to each child. By providing lactation support, pediatricians can help increase breastfeeding duration and exclusivity."

Monica Moore, MD, of Premier Wellness, serves patients across the state in her virtual pediatric practice. "Staying relevant and up to date on current evidence-based medicine is extremely important to me and motivates me to constantly explore ways to grow personally and professionally. The breastfeeding certification program is an excellent opportunity to expand my fund of knowledge and provide the necessary tools to continue providing exceptional care to my patients," said Moore.

Donna Yeiser, MD, Columbus Pediatric Associates. "The *Breastfeeding-Friendly Pediatrician Certification Program* has allowed me to learn more and has provided me with valuable information and further resources for families in our practice. For me, a very important part of breastfeeding is the *empowerment* it gives a mother. It is a beautiful aspect of breastfeeding that is universal. As

pediatricians, we are uniquely able to develop trusting relationships and have close contact and frequent visits when families are most vulnerable. They may encounter problems and not know where or how to find resolutions. It is during this time that we can provide encouragement and support to help families develop strong breastfeeding foundations for long term outcomes,” said Yeiser.

It’s not as simple as “*breast or bottle?*” anymore. More and more families in Georgia are initiating breastfeeding- yet many pediatricians receive little lactation education. Research shows that medical training is deficient in preparing physicians to develop the knowledge base and clinical management skills to provide optimal support for breastfeeding families. Today’s parents are often well-informed about breastfeeding and may bring more questions to their pediatrician than in the past. Drs. Kolesky, Lavania, Moore and Yeiser have done important work to address these gaps and to improve their confidence and clinical knowledge.

Breastfeeding advocates from Georgia AAP Breastfeeding Committee and the Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition want to equip pediatricians to better support their patient families to meet AAP breastfeeding recommendations and more importantly, their own breastfeeding goals. While breastfeeding is an important public health issue, pediatricians provide care to individual families each day who need clinical guidance on breastfeeding and lactation issues. Hospitals in Georgia have been working hard to improve their practices, but especially during the pandemic, most stays are short and new parents are even more reliant on their pediatrician for support.

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The Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is the state association comprised of over 1,800 pediatricians and pediatric medical and surgical specialists; their mission is to improve the health and welfare of all the infants, children and adolescents in the State of Georgia.

The Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition is a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve and maintain the health of Georgia’s families by protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding, and making breastfeeding the cultural and social norm throughout Georgia.