

Best Practice

- IBCLCs adhere to the *IBLCE Code of Ethics* and practice within the *Scope of Practice for IBCLCs*.
- IBCLCs are required to keep their knowledge and skills current. They must recertify every 5 years through continuing education or re-examination.
- IBCLCs function and contribute as members of the health care team and make appropriate referrals to other health care professionals and community support resources.
- IBCLCs possess the skills, knowledge and attitudes to provide competent and comprehensive lactation and breastfeeding care and education in routine and special circumstances across the chronological spectrum of pre-conception to early childhood.

IBLCE, the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners is the global authority that determines the competence of practitioners in lactation and breastfeeding care.

Founded in 1985, IBLCE is a non-profit organization whose Board of Directors represents broad professional, organizational and geographic interests. IBLCE's lactation consultant credentialing program is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies.

The IBLCE examination is the premier, internationally recognized measure of competence in lactation consultant practice. IBLCE aims to advance the health and well-being of mothers and children worldwide by improving the quality and increasing the number of practitioners in lactation and breastfeeding care.



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What is an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant?



IBLCE: The global authority that determines the competence of practitioners in lactation and breastfeeding care.

IBCLC: The essential credential in lactation and breastfeeding care.



The International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) credential identifies a knowledgeable and experienced member of the maternal-child health team who has specialized skills in breastfeeding management and care. IBCLCs have passed a rigorous examination that demonstrates the ability to provide competent, comprehensive lactation and breastfeeding care.

IBCLC is the only international credential in lactation consulting. Attainment of the IBCLC credential signifies that the practitioner has demonstrated competence to:

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- work together with mothers to prevent and solve breastfeeding problems
- collaborate with other members of the health care team to provide comprehensive care that supports, protects and promotes breastfeeding
- encourage a social environment that supports breastfeeding families
- educate families, health professionals and policy makers about the far-reaching and long-lasting value of breastfeeding as a global public health imperative.

Among those who become IBCLCs are nurses, midwives, dietitians, pediatricians, obstetricians, family physicians, speech, physical and occupational therapists, pharmacists, educators and experienced breastfeeding support counselors.

How do IBCLCs practice?

With a focus on preventive health care, IBCLCs encourage self-care, empowering parents to make their own decisions. IBCLCs use a problem solving approach to provide evidenced-based information to pregnant and breastfeeding women and make appropriate referrals to other members of the health care team.

Maintaining a collaborative, supportive relationship with clients, IBCLCs emphasize individualized family care, client autonomy, informed decision-making and optimal health care. By integrating cultural, psychosocial, physiological, nutritional, and immunological aspects of human lactation into practice, IBCLCs protect, promote and support breastfeeding within the community, workplace and health care system.

IBCLCs work in a variety of settings including hospitals, clinics, physicians' offices, neonatal intensive care units, human milk banks and private practice. Guided by the *Scope of Practice for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants*, and the *Code of Ethics for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants*, IBCLCs are expected to uphold the duty to:

- Preserve client/patient confidences
- Act with reasonable diligence
- Provide competent service
- Maintain personal integrity
- Report truthfully and fully to the health care system
- Uphold the standards of the lactation consultant profession
- Exercise independent professional judgment and avoid conflicts of interest
- Follow IBLCE disciplinary determinations

The privilege to hold the IBCLC credential is conditional and revocable for cause. Complaints about the conduct of individual IBCLCs are received and reviewed by the IBLCE Ethics and Discipline Committee as specified by the *IBLCE Disciplinary Procedures*.

Certification Criteria

To become an IBCLC, you must meet defined eligibility requirements in education and experience. The *IBLCE Exam Blueprint* specifies that the IBCLC shall demonstrate breastfeeding knowledge and management skills in disciplines that encompass the chronological spectrum from pre-conception through early childhood.

These disciplines include maternal and infant anatomy, physiology, endocrinology, nutrition, biochemistry, immunology, infectious disease, pathology, pharmacology and toxicology. In addition, IBCLCs must demonstrate knowledge and skill in infant/child growth parameters and developmental milestones, interpretation of research, breastfeeding equipment and technology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, ethical and legal issues, and public health.

IBCLCs must demonstrate continued competence to practice by recertifying every five years. They are expected to maintain and enhance knowledge and skills through appropriate and regular continuing education. Five years after passing the exam, recertification through fulfillment of continuing education requirements is permitted. Every ten years, recertification by examination is required.

Certification as an IBCLC protects the public by helping consumers identify qualified lactation consultants, increases consumer confidence through assurance that their breastfeeding care provider has met international competency standards and ensures a disciplinary process to follow in case of complaints.

Consumer satisfaction and safety depend upon recruitment and retention of outstanding health care practitioners. IBCLC certification demonstrates achievement of specialized knowledge and skill and requires continued learning and skill development. When making employment decisions, health care systems can feel confident in using IBCLC certification as a measure of excellence in lactation consulting practice.