
Standards of Practice for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants

Preface

[The International Lactation Consultant Association®](#) (ILCA®) is the professional association for the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant® (IBCLC®) and other health care professionals who care for breastfeeding families. The [International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners®](#) (IBLCE®) is the [independently-accredited](#) international certification organization conferring the IBCLC credential.

Standards of practice are a set of guidelines that define the tasks and skills the IBCLC should be able to perform in the course of fulfilling the duties of the profession. Standards of practice describe what is considered [“best practice”](#) by the profession to ensure a consistent quality of performance that protects public health, safety and welfare.

Standards of practice:

- promote consistency by encouraging a common systematic approach;
- are sufficiently specific in content to guide daily practice;
- provide a recommended framework for the development of policies and protocols, educational programs, and quality improvement efforts; and
- are intended for use in diverse practice settings and cultural contexts.

ILCA recognizes the certification conferred by the IBLCE as the international professional credential for allied health care providers in breastfeeding and human lactation. ILCA recognizes the [unique role and impact](#) the IBCLC brings to the health care team serving the breastfeeding family. In all interactions with clients/patients, families and other health care professionals, the IBCLC should adhere to these practice-guiding documents:

- this voluntary ILCA Standards of Practice for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants;
- the mandatory [IBLCE Code of Professional Conduct for IBCLCs](#);
- the mandatory [IBLCE Scope of Practice for International Board Certified Lactation Consultant \(IBCLC\) Certificants](#);

- the mandatory [IBLCE Clinical Competencies for the Practice of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants \(IBCLCs\)](#); and
- the [International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, and all subsequent, relevant World Health Assembly Resolutions](#), as it applies to health workers, whether it is legislated (mandatory) or not (voluntary).

Standard 1. Professional Responsibilities

The IBCLC has a responsibility to maintain professional conduct and to practice in an ethical manner, accountable for professional actions and legal responsibilities.

- 1.1 Adhere to these ILCA Standards of Practice, the IBLCE Code of Professional Conduct, the IBLCE Scope of Practice and the IBLCE Clinical Competencies
- 1.2 Comply with obligations of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and all subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions
- 1.3 Maintain an awareness of conflict of interest in all aspects of work, especially when involved in recommendation or commercial distribution of breastfeeding supplies, equipment and services
- 1.4 Act as an advocate for breastfeeding women, infants, and children
- 1.5 Assist the mother in maintaining a breastfeeding relationship with her child
- 1.6 Participate in continuing education to maintain and expand knowledge and skills for IBCLC practice
- 1.7 Undertake periodic and systematic evaluation of one's clinical practice
- 1.8 Support and promote well-designed research in human lactation and breastfeeding, and base clinical practice, whenever possible, on such research

Standard 2. Legal Considerations

The IBCLC is obligated to practice within the laws of the geopolitical region and setting in which the IBCLC works. The IBCLC must practice with consideration for rights of privacy and with respect for matters of a confidential nature.

- 2.1 Work within the policies and procedures of the institution where employed, or if self-employed, have identifiable policies and procedures to follow
- 2.2 Explain applicable fees prior to providing care

- 2.3 Obtain informed consent from all patients/clients prior to:
 - assessing or intervening;
 - reporting relevant information to other health care professionals;
 - taking photographs, audio-visual, digital or electronic recordings for any purpose; and
 - seeking publication of information associated with a consultation.
- 2.4 Protect patient/client confidentiality at all times
- 2.5 Maintain records according to legal and ethical practices of the geopolitical and work setting

Standard 3. Clinical Practice

IBCLC practice focuses on providing clinical lactation care and management. This is best accomplished by promoting optimal health through collaboration and problem-solving with the patient/client and other members of the health care team. The role of the IBCLC includes:

- assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation of care in a variety of situations;
 - anticipatory guidance and prevention of problems;
 - complete, accurate, and timely documentation of care; and
 - communication and collaboration with other health care professionals.
- 3.1 Assessment
 - 3.1.1 Obtain and document an appropriate history of the breastfeeding mother and child
 - 3.1.2 Systematically collect objective and subjective information
 - 3.1.3 Discuss all assessment information with the mother and document as appropriate
 - 3.2 Plan
 - 3.2.1 Analyze assessment information to identify issues and/or problems
 - 3.2.2 Develop a plan of care based on identified issues
 - 3.2.3 Arrange or refer for follow-up evaluation where indicated
 - 3.3 Implementation
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- 3.3.1 Implement the plan of care in a culturally sensitive and acceptable manner
- 3.3.2 Utilize translators as needed
- 3.3.3 Exercise principles of optimal health, safety and universal precautions
- 3.3.4 Provide appropriate oral and written instructions and/or demonstration of interventions, procedures and techniques
- 3.3.5 Facilitate referral to other health care professionals, community services and support groups as needed
- 3.3.6 Use equipment appropriately:
 - refrain from unnecessary or excessive use;
 - assure cleanliness and good operating condition;
 - discuss the risks and benefits of recommended equipment including financial considerations;
 - demonstrate the correct use and care of equipment; and
 - evaluate safety and effectiveness of use.
- 3.3.7 Document and communicate to health care providers as appropriate:
 - assessment information;
 - suggested interventions;
 - instructions provided;
 - evaluations of outcomes;
 - modifications of the plan of care; and
 - follow-up strategies.

3.4 Evaluation

- 3.4.1 Evaluate outcomes of planned interventions
- 3.4.2 Modify the care plan based on the evaluation of outcomes

Standard 4. Breastfeeding Education and Counseling

Breastfeeding education and counseling are integral parts of the care provided by the IBCLC.

- 4.1 Educate parents and families to encourage informed decisions about infant and child feeding
- 4.2 Utilize a pragmatic problem-solving approach that is sensitive to the learner's educational level, culture, questions and concerns

- 4.3 Provide anticipatory guidance (teaching) to promote optimal breastfeeding practices and minimize the potential for problems or complications
- 4.4 Provide positive feedback and emotional support for continued breastfeeding, especially in difficult or complicated circumstances
- 4.5 Share current, evidence-based information and clinical skills in collaboration with other health care providers

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