

Who's Who in Lactation Care

What is a Lactation Consultant?

'Lactation consultant' is a commonly recognized term when talking about breastfeeding support, but it can cause confusion. It's often used as a general term for any person who helps with breastfeeding. There are many different levels of education and experience when it comes to breastfeeding support, and the term 'lactation consultant' doesn't tell you what kind of care someone can provide. If someone says they are a lactation consultant, it's a good idea to ask for their specific credential. That way, you know what they're qualified to do and what kind of help they can provide.

In Iowa, we are working to use clearer terms so families can better understand who is supporting them. It's helpful to think of three main types of lactation support:

- International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLCs)
- Breastfeeding/Lactation Educators or Counselors
- Breastfeeding Peer Supporters

What is Scope of Practice?

A professional's scope of practice means the specific type of care they are trained and allowed to provide. In lactation care, the organization that issues the lactation credential determines what its scope of practice includes, based on its education and hands-on experience. Professionals can only deliver care within their scope of practice because they have been trained and tested in this level of care. Professionals should not provide care outside of their scope of practice. Knowing someone's scope of practice helps families understand what kind of support a lactation professional can offer and when someone may be offering information they are not trained to give. If you are concerned that someone is working outside of their scope of practice, you can contact the organization that issued the credential.

	International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) – Gold Standard	Lactation Education/Counselor	Breastfeeding Peer Support
Common Credentials	<u>International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)</u>	<p>Several credentials fall into this category, but the most common in Iowa are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) • Certified Lactation Specialist (CLS) • Certified Breastfeeding Specialist (CBS) 	<p>WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor (BFPC)</p> <p>La Leche League Leader (LLLL)</p>
Education	<p>14 college-level health science courses.</p> <p>95 hours of specific lactation education.</p> <p>300-1000 supervised clinical practice hours.</p> <p>Must pass an independent, internationally recognized, comprehensive board certification exam.</p>	<p>Varies by program.</p> <p>20-95+ hours of breastfeeding training, but no other college-level education is typically required.</p> <p>No supervised, hands-on experience required prior to receiving the credential. Some may require a written exam.</p>	<p>Varies by program.</p> <p>Basic breastfeeding training and communication skills..</p>
Scope of Practice	<p>Manage complex breastfeeding concerns.</p> <p>Can examine the baby's mouth for anything that might affect breastfeeding.</p> <p>Determine how much milk a baby needs and see how well they are transferring breastmilk.</p> <p>Help with concerns that have not been fixed with basic breastfeeding support and education.</p>	<p>Provides basic breastfeeding support and education.</p> <p>Limited scope of practice to help with complex breastfeeding concerns.</p> <p>*Must refer to an IBCLC when it is outside their scope of practice.*</p>	<p>Peer-to-peer breastfeeding support that is based on personal breastfeeding experiences.</p> <p>Listens to clients' concerns, answers basic breastfeeding questions, and supports families.</p>