

The Certified Lactation Specialist – Scope of Practice

The Lactation Specialist education course focuses on training to eventually practice as a lactation consultant once the participant has completed the requirements to qualify for and has passed the international board exam. Therefore, along with the basics of lactation education, there is emphasis on assessment of mother and infant related to breastfeeding/chestfeeding/bodyfeeding, taking a history, assessment of a feed, identifying the etiology of lactation problems, and working with the mother to determine a plan of care and appropriate followup.

This program offers an end of course certification that is considered a stepping stone to the IBLCE credential. In order to receive this certification the participants must attend the entire five day program, complete the assigned out of class work, and pass the end of course, criterion-referenced exam. The CLS is not evaluated for clinical expertise; participants come to the course with varying degrees of experience working hands-on with breastfeeding/chestfeeding/bodyfeeding dyads.

Certified Lactation Specialists are expected to:

- Use evidence based practice (when available) while working with or teaching breastfeeding families
- Work within the scope of practice of any other credential they may hold, i.e. RN, RD, APRN, MD and other licensed health care professionals
- Continue with their education, recognizing that the CLS course is just the beginning of their lactation training.
- Advocate for breastfeeding/chestfeeding/bodyfeeding as the nutritional norm for infants and young children
- Advocate for nursing women and people as the normal extension of pregnancy and childbearing
- Perform appropriate lactation related, comprehensive physical assessments and histories of both lactating parent and child
- Observe a feeding and assess effectiveness of milk transfer
- Work with the lactating parent to determine a plan of care that includes appropriate feeding recommendations

- Assist the parent in maintaining their milk supply when they are separated from their infant/child
- Encourage and provide necessary followup
- Provide evidence based information about medications, herbs, alternative and complementary therapies, use of alcohol, tobacco and street drugs – their potential affect on parent, infant and milk supply
- Provide education and support to breastfeeding/chestfeeding/bodyfeeding families including anticipatory guidance regarding all aspects of infant/child feeding
- Work within the framework of the health care system in which they are employed – ie – hospital, WIC clinic, physicians offices or clinics, public health
- Use effective counseling skills and principles of adult learning when working with lactating families and health care staff
- Assist parents in meeting their personal lactation goals
- Adhere to confidentiality guidelines of the geopolitical region where they are employed (HIPAA in the US)
- Refer to an IBCLC when faced with breastfeeding/chestfeeding/bodyfeeding challenges beyond the CLS' experience or knowledge
- Refer parent and infant back to their own health care providers as needed and when further medical evaluation is warranted
- Refer parent to community resources as needed
- Send followup reports to the necessary maternal/infant HCPs and referring CLS/IBCLC if appropriate
- Work with experienced IBCLCs to improve their clinical skills

CLS Certificants are expected to NOT:

- Develop or work in a private practice by themselves until they become IBCLCs
- Misrepresent themselves as lactation consultants or equivalent to IBCLCs until they have qualified for and passed the IBLCE exam

Approved and adopted January 2014 by Lactation Education Consultants
 Edited January 2022 to include current inclusive language