

Who's Who?

An at-a-glance look at lactation support in the United States

The U.S. Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) exists to support the advancement of the lactation profession and lactation care providers for the health of families across the country.

Breastfeeding support ranges from basic encouragement and emotional support to guidance and assistance with complex clinical situations, all of which play a vital role in providing care to families. The varied categories of lactation care providers differ greatly in terms of training and experience. Recognizing these differences can be confusing to both families as well as allied healthcare team members. The descriptions in the chart below are a helpful aid in better understanding the categories of lactation care providers.

USLCA is an effective and leading national advocate for the lactation profession; a trusted source for information and education for professionals and families; and the organization where all members of the lactation provider community feel welcome and have the opportunity to network, learn and advance their careers. USLCA is founded on the belief that every family in every community should have access to breastfeeding support and care they need from experienced and qualified lactation care providers. For more information, visit www.USLCA.org.

Members of the lactation care community at every level dedicate their time, experience and expertise to the same goal: to provide families everywhere, regardless of circumstance, access to professional lactation care as a foundation for a lifetime of optimal health and wellness.

Lactation Provider Categories

	Prerequisites	Training Required	Scope of Practice
Consultant <i>(International Board Certified Lactation Consultant, IBCLC®)</i>	Recognized health professional or satisfactory completion of collegiate level health sciences coursework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90 hours of lactation-specific education • College level health science courses • 300-1000 clinical practice hours • Successful completion of a criterion-referenced exam offered by an independent international board of examiners. 	Provide professional, evidence based, clinical lactation management; educate families, health professionals and others about human lactation.
Counselor/ Educator <i>(i.e. Certified Lactation Counselor, Certified Breastfeeding Educator, etc.)</i>	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20-120 hours of classroom training • Often includes a written exam or “certification” offered by the training organization 	Provide education and guidance for families on basic breastfeeding issues.
Peer <i>(i.e. La Leche League, WIC Peer Counselor, etc.)</i>	Personal breastfeeding experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18-50 hours of classroom training 	Provide breastfeeding information, encouragement, and support to those in their community.

Lactation Care Provider Credentials

TITLE	TRAINING TIME	DESCRIPTION
International Board Certified Lactation Consultant® (IBCLC®)	90 hours lactation specific education, 300-1000 clinical practice hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 college level health professional courses (14 academic credits) • 6 health related continuing education courses, • Pass a criterion-reference exam <p>The International Board Certified Lactation Consultant possesses the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to provide quality breastfeeding assistance to babies and mothers. IBCLCs specialize in the clinical management of breastfeeding which includes: preventive healthcare, patient education, nutrition counseling, and therapeutic treatment.</p> <p>Source: https://iblce.org/step-1-prepare-for-ibclc-certification/</p>
Certified Lactation Specialist Course (CLSC)	45 hours	Designed for the aspiring lactation consultant or nurses, physicians, midwives, dietitians, breastfeeding assistants or others desirous of improving their knowledge base and skills in working with the breastfeeding dyad. This certification is a stepping stone to the IBCLC credential. Source: https://lactationeducation.com/clsc
Certified Breastfeeding Specialist	45 or 90 hours	In operation since 1990, this evidence-based, online lactation management course covers up-to-date clinical best practices and all topics from the IBLCE Detailed Content Outline and LEAARC curriculum. This self-paced program is taught by 25+ experienced and dedicated lactation consultants, authors, researchers, and educators. Education is provided through webinars and interactive learning sessions. Both the 45 and 90 hour courses earn a Certified Breastfeeding Specialist certificate, to be used as a stepping stone to IBLCE certification. Source: www.lactationtraining.com
Lactation Educator Counselor	45 hours	This university based program trains participants to be Lactation Educator Counselors. Lactation Educator Counselors are typically entry level practitioners and deal primarily with the normal process of lactation. This course is the required prerequisite to the Lactation Consultant course. Source: http://breastfeeding-education.com/home/elec-2/
Breastfeeding Counselor (BFC)	10-14 months, Provide 30 hours of support	2-3 day workshop, self-evaluation, one written paper & case studies, read and review 5 books, submit one survey on breastfeeding support available in your community, open book online tests (multiple choice) to cover physiology & anatomy. Source: https://childbirthinternational.com/portfolio/breastfeeding-counselor-training/
Breastfeeding Educator Certification (BEC)	120 hours online training	Qualified to teach, support, and educate the public on breastfeeding and related issues and policies. Workbook activities, required reading materials, attend 8 breastfeeding meetings, research paper, submit a class presentation, work for clients in their community. Prepares for the IBCLC exam. 120 hours includes 50 hours of health science and 75 hours self-directed study/mentorship Source: www.birtharts.com/lactation-educator-certification.htm
-Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC)	45 hours	“This comprehensive, evidence-based, breastfeeding management course includes practical skills, theoretical foundations and competency verification.” Certification is accredited by the American National Standards Institute.
-Advanced Lactation Consultant (ALC)	90 hours	Some, but not all, certificate holders may have college level academic coursework. Some, but not all, certificate holders may demonstrate 150 hours of supervised clinical experience and a nursing or bachelor’s degree.
-Advanced Nurse Lactation Consultant (ANLC)	90 hours	ANLC are licensed nurses as a pre-requisite to the examination. Source: https://www.alpp.org/
WIC Peer Counselor	30-50 hours, Varies by state, some states have quarterly training	Peer counselors are mothers who have personal experience with breastfeeding and are trained to provide basic breastfeeding information and support to other mothers with whom they share various characteristics, such as language, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. In WIC, peer counselors are recruited and hired from WIC’s target population of low-income women and undergo training to provide mother-to-mother support in group settings and one-to-one counseling through telephone calls or visits in the home, clinic, or hospital. Refer mothers to IBCLCs who have challenging questions and concerns. Source: https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/become-wic-peer-counselor
Certified Lactation Educator (CLE)	20 hours total, some have 8 hours clinical	Qualified to teach, support, and educate the public on breastfeeding and related issues. Complete course training, attend support group meetings, observe consultation or videos, review research studies and other requirements, including a test. Source: http://www.cappa.net/lactation-educator
La Leche League Leader (volunteer)	Training is self-paced. Usually 4-12 months.	Has successfully breastfed an infant for at least 12 months, is familiar with research and current findings dealing with breastfeeding, offers practical information and encouragement to nursing families from pregnancy through weaning via one-on-one help and monthly meetings. Includes 50 – 90 hours of guided study including communication skills and completion of a series of case studies based on common situations. Source: https://www.llli.org/get-involved/
Baby Café Breastfeeding Counselor (BCBC)	About 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A prescribed mentored curriculum volunteering at weekly Baby Café meetings for approx 100 meetings, with 30-60 hrs self-study • Usually an experienced breastfeeding mother with strong profession-oriented interest and links to the community • Has an understanding of national health-related impacts of breastfeeding and challenges mothers face in achieving breastfeeding goals • Demonstrates ability to offer routine lactation support; trouble shoots a wide variety of breastfeeding issues from newborn to weaning <p>Source: http://www.babycafeusa.org/</p>
Breastfeeding for Professionals training	20 hours	This comprehensive 20 hour breastfeeding training is for any birth professional who assists new parents with their breastfeeding journey. Doulas, nurses, midwives, OBGYN’s, childbirth educators etc. This interactive training covers all of the common concerns new parents have from latch, position issues, sore nipples, to thrush, mastitis, low supply and much more. We also address history, formula impacts, normal newborn behaviour, premies, medical issues and how to effectively counsel families. Source: https://honoringwomen.com/professional-trainings/breastfeeding-training/