



## Code of Professional Conduct for IBCLCs

**Effective:** November 1, 2011

**Updated:** September 2015

**Supersedes:** December 1, 2004 Code of Ethics for IBCLCs

The International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners® (IBLCE®) is the global authority that certifies practitioners in lactation and breastfeeding care.

IBLCE was founded to protect the health, welfare and safety of the public by providing the internationally recognized measure of knowledge in lactation and breastfeeding care through the IBLCE exam. Successful candidates become International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs).

A crucial part of an IBCLC's duty to protect mothers and children is adherence to the principles and aim of the [International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes](#) and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly's resolutions.

### Preamble

IBLCE endorses the broad human rights principles articulated in numerous international documents affirming that every human being has the right to the highest attainable standard of health. Moreover, IBLCE considers that every mother and every child has the right to breastfeed. Thus, IBLCE encourages IBCLCs to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct as outlined in:

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (Article 12)
- Council of Medical Specialty Societies [Code for Interactions with Companies](#)

To guide their professional practice, it is in the best interest of all IBCLCs and the public they serve that there is a Code of Professional Conduct which:

- Informs both IBCLCs and the public of the **minimum** standards of acceptable conduct;
- Exemplifies the commitment expected of all holders of the IBCLC credential;
- Provides IBCLCs with a framework for carrying out their essential duties;
- Serves as a basis for decisions regarding alleged misconduct.

### Definitions and Interpretations

1. For the purposes of this document, the Code of Professional Conduct for IBCLCs will be referred to as the "CPC".

2. IBCLCs will comply fully with the *IBLCE Disciplinary Procedures*.
3. For the purposes of the CPC, “due diligence” refers to the obligation imposed on IBCLCs to adhere to a standard of reasonable care while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm others.
4. The term “intellectual property” (Principle 2.5) refers to copyrights (which apply to printed or electronic documents, manuscripts, photographs, slides, and illustrations), trademarks, service and certification marks, and patents.
5. The exception to the statement “refrain from revealing any information” (Principle 3.1) means that, to the extent required, IBCLCs may disclose such information to:
  - (a) comply with a law, court or administrative order, or this CPC;
  - (b) protect the client, in consultation with appropriate individuals or entities in a position to take suitable action, when the IBCLC reasonably believes that a client is unable to act adequately in her own and her child’s best interest and there is thus risk of harm;
  - (c) establish a claim or defense on behalf of the IBCLC and the client, or a defense against a criminal charge or civil claim against the IBCLC based upon conduct in which the client was involved; or
  - (d) respond to allegations in any proceeding concerning the services the IBCLC has provided to the client.
6. “Misfeasance” describes an act that is legal but performed improperly, while “malfeasance” describes a wrongful act.

### **Code of Professional Conduct Principles**

The CPC consists of eight principles, which require every IBCLC to:

1. Provide services that protect, promote and support breastfeeding
2. Act with due diligence
3. Preserve the confidentiality of clients
4. Report accurately and completely to other members of the healthcare team
5. Exercise independent judgment and avoid conflicts of interest
6. Maintain personal integrity
7. Uphold the professional standards expected of an IBCLC
8. Comply with the *IBLCE Disciplinary Procedures*

IBCLCs are personally accountable for acting consistently with the CPC to safeguard the interests of clients and justify public trust.

#### **Principle 1: Provide services that protect, promote and support breastfeeding**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 1.1 Fulfill professional commitments by working with mothers to meet their breastfeeding goals.
- 1.2 Provide care to meet clients’ individual needs that is culturally appropriate and informed by the best available evidence.
- 1.3 Supply sufficient and accurate information to enable clients to make informed decisions.

- 1.4 Convey accurate, complete and objective information about commercial products.
- 1.5 Present information without personal bias.

### **Principle 2: Act with due diligence**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 2.1 Operate within the limits of the scope of practice.
- 2.2 Collaborate with other members of the healthcare team to provide unified and comprehensive care.
- 2.3 Be responsible and accountable for personal conduct and practice.
- 2.4 Obey all applicable laws, including those regulating the activities of lactation consultants.
- 2.5 Respect intellectual property rights.

### **Principle 3: Preserve the confidentiality of clients**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 3.1 Refrain from revealing any information acquired in the course of the professional relationship, except to another member of a client's healthcare team or to other persons or entities for which the client has granted express permission, except only as provided in the Definitions and Interpretations to the CPC.
- 3.2 Refrain from photographing, recording or taping (audio or video) a mother or her child for any purpose unless the mother has given advance written consent on her behalf and that of her child.

### **Principle 4: Report accurately and completely to other members of the healthcare team**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 4.1 Receive a client's consent, before initiating a consultation, to share clinical information with other members of the client's healthcare team.
- 4.2 Inform an appropriate person or authority if it appears that the health or safety of a client or a colleague is at risk, consistent with Principle 3.

### **Principle 5: Exercise independent judgment and avoid conflicts of interest**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 5.1 Disclose any actual or apparent conflict of interest, including a financial interest in relevant goods or services, or in organizations which provide relevant goods or services.
- 5.2 Ensure that commercial considerations do not influence professional judgment.

- 5.3 Withdraw voluntarily from professional practice if the IBCLC has a physical or mental disability that could be detrimental to clients.

**Principle 6: Maintain personal integrity**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 6.1 Behave honestly and fairly as a health professional.
- 6.2 Withdraw voluntarily from professional practice if the IBCLC has engaged in substance abuse that could affect the IBCLC's practice.
- 6.3 Treat all clients equitably without regard to ability/disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, sex, ethnicity, race, national origin, political persuasion, marital status, geographic location, religion, socioeconomic status, age, within the legal framework of the respective geo-political region or setting.

**Principle 7: Uphold the professional standards expected of an IBCLC**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 7.1 Operate within the framework defined by the CPC.
- 7.2 Provide only accurate information to the public and colleagues concerning lactation consultant services offered.
- 7.3 Permit use of the IBCLC's name for the purpose of certifying that lactation consultant services have been rendered only when the IBCLC provided those services.
- 7.4 Use the acronyms "IBCLC" and "RLC" or the titles "International Board Certified Lactation Consultant" and "Registered Lactation Consultant" only when certification is current and in the manner in which IBLCE authorizes their use.

**Principle 8: Comply with the IBLCE Disciplinary Procedures**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 8.1 Comply fully with the IBLCE Ethics & Discipline process.
- 8.2 Agree that a violation of this CPC includes any matter in which:
- 8.2.1 the IBCLC is convicted of a crime under applicable law, where dishonesty, gross negligence or wrongful conduct in relation to the practice of lactation consulting is a core issue;
  - 8.2.2 the IBCLC is disciplined by a state, province or other level of government and at least one of the grounds for discipline is the same as, or substantially equivalent to, this CPC's principle;
  - 8.2.3 a competent court, licensing board, certifying board or governmental authority determines that the IBCLC has committed an act of misfeasance or malfeasance directly related to the practice of lactation consulting.

