

IBCLC Achieves Licensure in Rhode Island

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As of June 1, 2015, Rhode Island will be the first state to provide licensure for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC). General Laws of Rhode Island Chapter 23-13.6 entitled "*Lactation Consultant Practice Act of 2014*" will provide a license for the IBCLC. Through the efforts of the Rhode Island Breastfeeding Coalition (RIBC) and legislative champion Senator Gayle Goldin, the distinct role of the IBCLC has been recognized by Rhode Island state law as the only credential able to practice under the title of "lactation consultant".

As the first state to ban formula bag giveaways in hospitals, and now to license lactation consultants, the USLCA applauds Rhode Island as a leading state in helping to promote breastfeeding. We are thankful for the support of the Rhode Island General Assembly for passing this legislation last year that was introduced by Senator Gayle Goldin, former Governor Lincoln Chafee in signing the bill into law, and current Governor Gina Raimondo and the Rhode Island Health Department in implementing the rules and regulations for licensure.

A lactation consultant is a health care professional specializing in the clinical management of breastfeeding. The International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) is the credential that is internationally recognized as the gold standard for lactation care. The IBCLC has completed college-level courses in the health sciences, at least 90 hours of lactation-specific education, up to 1000 or more clinical hours, and successfully completed a rigorous criterion-referenced exam. The IBCLC practices in hospitals, clinics, physician offices, private practice, workplace lactation programs, and with online tele-health programs.

The United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA) has worked tirelessly to integrate the IBCLC into the healthcare system. Central to this goal is licensure of the IBCLC as it is a pre-requisite for reimbursement for services under Medicaid and private insurance companies. State Michael Fink and Denise Fenick of the RIBC, "Licensure to us means more access to IBCLCs for childbearing women as well as an increase in professional status."

New mothers need all kinds of breastfeeding support, including mother-to-mother support that is available through La Leche League, Breastfeeding USA, and WIC peer counselors. The Rhode Island statute will not preclude anyone from offering breastfeeding support, but will ensure that only those qualified as an IBCLC will practice as lactation consultants. "It is important for all breastfeeding mothers to be able to access the right kind of help at the right time and receive the level of care that they need. We are hopeful that licensure for the IBCLC will help to make that happen." says Alisa Sanders, president of the United States Lactation Consultant Association (USLCA).

Rhode Island's Fenick and Fink explain that "licensure for Lactation Consultants has been part of our state's strategic plan for breastfeeding families." Ongoing licensure efforts continue in over 60% of the states across the country. USLCA hopes to see more states join Rhode Island and license the IBCLC to reduce disparity in care and increase access to care for all mothers. .

For additional information contact USLCA, 202-738-1125 or info@uslca.org. www.uslca.org.
