

Who's Who?

A glance at breastfeeding support in the United States

Lactation support is often needed to help mothers initiate and continue breastfeeding. There are many kinds of help available for breastfeeding mothers including peer counselors, certified breastfeeding educators and counselors, and lactation professionals such as the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC®).

Breastfeeding support is valuable for a variety of reasons, from encouragement and emotional support to guidance and assistance with complex clinical situations. Mothers benefit from all kinds of support, and it is important to receive the right kind at the right time. The breastfeeding support categories listed below each play a vital role in providing care to mothers and babies.

Breastfeeding Support Types	Prerequisites	Training Required	Scope of Practice
Professional <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.
Certified <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.



Breastfeeding Support 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>http://iblce.org/certify/eligibility-criteria/</p>
Certified Lactation Specialist	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. http://www.lactationeducationconsultants.com/course_clsc.shtml
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. www.lactationtraining.com
Certificated 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. http://breastfeeding-education.com/home/clec-2/
Breastfeeding Counselor	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. http://www.childbirthinternational.com/information/pack.html
Lactation Educator	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-deirected study/mentorship www.birtharts.com/lactation-educator-certification.htm
Community Breastfeeding Educator	20 hours	“Does not issue Lactation Consultant status. For community workers in maternal child health, focuses on providing services to pregnant women to encourage the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding.” From http://www.healthychildren.cc/maternal/infant.htm#maternal
-Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC)	45 hours	<p>“This comprehensive, evidence-based, breastfeeding management course includes practical skills, theoretical foundations and competency verification.” Certification is accredited by the American National Standards Institute.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>ANLC are licensed nurses as a pre-requisite to the examination.</p> <p>From http://www.talpp.org/</p>
-Advanced Lactation Consultant (ALC)	90 hours	
-Advanced Nurse Lactation Consultant (ANLC)	90 hours	
Baby Friendly Curriculum	Approximately 20 hours	Used by facilities to strengthen the knowledge and skills of their staff towards successful implementation of the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding.
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. https://lovingsupport.fns.usda.gov/content/about-wic-breastfeeding-peer-counseling
Certified Lactation Educator	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. http://www.icappa.net/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=638578&hhSearchTerms=%22lactation+and+educator%22
La Leche League Peer Counselor (volunteer)	18-20 hours	Have successfully breastfed their infants for at least 6 months. Program developed to provide support systems within targeted communities that will provide ongoing access to breastfeeding information and support. http://www.llli.org/llleaderweb/lv/lvaugsep99p92.html
La Leche League Leader (volunteer)	About 1 year of self-study training	An experienced breastfeeding mother, familiar with research and current findings dealing with breastfeeding, who offers practical information and encouragement to nursing mothers through monthly meetings and one-to-one help. http://www.lalecheleague.org/lad/tall/faq.html.#howlong
Baby Café Breastfeeding Counselor	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>http://www.babycafeusa.org/</p>