

Interviewee Name: Kim Welvaert

Interview Panelist Name: Stacy Davis, Whitney Dula, Jackee Haak

Kim is a NICU RN, IBCLC. She currently lives in Otsego, MN and works in a NICU in St. Cloud, MN. Kim has experience in a variety of settings including both inpatient and outpatient settings. She was heavily involved in the Wisconsin Association of Lactation Consultants when living in Wisconsin and is now active in the Minnesota State Breastfeeding Coalition.

1. Describe your understanding of equity and diversity, and why it is important to this position?

I am on the committee for DEI in the MN breastfeeding coalition. One of my goals is to try to get each staff member to look at each family individually. I'm working on getting more gender inclusive language throughout my hospital.

2. What does it mean for you to have a commitment to diversity? How have you demonstrated that commitment, and how would you see yourself demonstrating it here?

A commitment to diversity means listening and not assuming I know what people need. I used to work with Lisa Brock, and she has helped me learn to facilitate listening to all groups of people.

3. How would you describe your current thinking about diversity, and how has your thinking changed over time?

I used to think that people who were "unsuccessful" in breastfeeding because they didn't try hard enough. I now know that is not the case. There are many different layers of care that families need. We should meet families where they are at, not where we think they should be.

4. Why do you think it's important to address diversity and equity issues in this position, and what are some ways you might do that?

In the role of the lactation consultant, you have to look at the whole family unit, find out what is most important to them and focus energies towards what they need. Pushing "your" goals on a family is not helpful.

5. How do you define racial equity? What does it mean for your work?

There is many levels of support, including spiritual, emotional and physical. I've worked with a large group of Somali families in Minnesota and Hmong families in Wisconsin. Identifying each group's wants and needs is important.

6. Can you tell us about a time in which you were a part of a committee or work groups in which there were different, passionately held opinions? How did you navigate this?

I had this experience in WALC. We all had to make pros and cons list during our ‘spirited’ conversations. In order to make progress, we needed to lay out our individual goals to see how they fell in with our strategic goals.

7. What are some of the biggest challenges that you feel USLCA faces and what role do you see yourself playing in meeting the challenge?

I was really proud of USLCA during the summer with the protests. They are not afraid to jump in and point out when things are wrong. I feel like I can offer the POV from a former La Leche league leader, NICU lactation consultant and member of various organizations.

8. USLCA members do not reflect the diversity of the population served. What do you think USLCA can/should do to address equity issues in our profession and in our association?

WALC provides scholarships for diverse women. I spent thousands of dollars and thousands of hours becoming an IBCLC and that is not feasible for all. We need to find ways to get more grants and scholarships.

Other important areas are education, information and advocacy. The staff that I work with are in their own bubble and are not always aware of how to support all families.

9. What does it mean for you to have a commitment to equity? How have you demonstrated that commitment, and how would you see yourself demonstrating it here?

When George Floyd was killed, I thought that I was pretty knowledgeable. I had to have some very hard conversations with my children. They had to teach me how to educate myself. I am making the commitment to learn.

10. What do you hope to gain from this position?

I’ve learned something valuable from every board I’ve ever been on. WALC has a very successful conference. I want a USLCA chapter in MN. I want to utilize the skills that I learn from USCLA on a local level.

11. If I were to ask your dearest friend to describe you, what would she/he say?

I’m a badass unicorn.” I’m goofy, silly and complex. I am introverted and tend to sit back and watch in new situations.