

Interviewee Name: Lauren Reyes

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

Lauren has 5 kids, was breastfed and breastfed her own children. She owns a company that provides lactation care in both inpatient and outpatient settings. “Breastfeeding wasn’t done in my community in the Bronx. It was lost generationally. My mom was 19, heard that breastfeeding was important so she sought out information on her own at a La Leche League meeting. She also helped try to acquire donor milk for her brother when he wasn’t tolerating formula.

Lauren has a background in WIC peer counselor, is an IBCLC, and started a private practice called Breastfeeding Success. She wanted to close the gap between those families who didn’t quite qualify for WIC, but couldn’t afford private practice lactation services. They were able to expand during the pandemic and add jobs instead of laying people off. Lauren has been working to provide opportunities for people who want to get into the perinatal field. This includes: providing paid internships, and finding ways to provide a foundation for community health work.

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

We have to make sure we are making opportunities for all that want to be involved. Sometimes that looks like removing barriers. We need to look at training, help in applying for jobs, assuring that families who want care will get it. We need to be paying attention to who is getting hired etc.

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?

We need to work with more non-profits to help remove barriers so more people can get into the lactation profession. How can we look outside of ourselves to figure out the best way to accomplish this?

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

We need to make sure we don’t inadvertently create a bias in our hiring process.

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?

As a profession, we need to make sure all feel welcome, not only IBCLC’s. There is a place for everyone.

5. 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?

Recently, we had some very upset charge nurses. There was a power dynamic challenge with a new system to “tag” the breastmilk. The nurses didn’t want to participate and leadership had to

get involved to point out the patient safety issues. Getting all stakeholders together to discuss the curbs and gutters with the task at hand ultimately improved the process.

6. 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'm here to learn so I might not know. During the pandemic, we've seen a lot of people lose their jobs. This is seen as an "extra" cost for many and I'm guessing we are losing memberships. We need to show people the value in membership. How can we get c-suite execs coming to USLCA to find out how to staff and get their hospital to look good? We can utilize members of the business community. We need to show others how the lactation profession can be lucrative if we do it right.

At this time, Lauren pointed out that she handles a multimillion dollar budget every year and is very comfortable with the financial aspect of care.

7. 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?

As a lactation business owner, we need to reach out to people who employ lactation professionals convince them to provide these services to their employees. We should help figure out how to get these companies to pay for employees to join their professional organizations.