

## Questions & Answers Regarding New IBLCE Advisory Group

### **What led to the formation of this group?**

IBLCE® is a visionary organization and the leader in lactation professional certification. As a certification board, IBLCE has a variety of stakeholders: the public; certificants; employers; regulators and consumers. As a forward looking organization, IBLCE is constantly scanning the environment discerning trends, needs and ways to achieve its mission and advance its vision.

IBLCE's Strategic Plan, adopted several years ago with input by the IBCLC community, included new Vision and Mission Statements. IBLCE's Vision is "IBLCE is valued worldwide as the most trusted source for certifying practitioners in lactation and breastfeeding care." Also adopted at that time was the following Mission Statement: "IBLCE establishes the highest standards in lactation and breastfeeding care worldwide and certifies individuals who meet these standards."

The world, including the world of breastfeeding support for both consumers (the public seeking care as well as those seeking a professional certification to verify their knowledges, skills, abilities), is growing more complex. Over the last several years, there has been a great deal of discussion, but very little agreement, on various types of skilled lactation care. In the meantime, there has been confusion for the public as well as for those who seek a quality professional certification of a type different than the IBCLC®. The "alphabet soup" of various credentials is not constructive for the public or for IBCLCs.

IBLCE has both monitored, and attempted to influence, this conversation. Now, IBLCE, as the leader in lactation professional certification, will be defining appropriate levels of care. IBLCE believes there is a need for a *quality* professional certification which provides a different type of skilled lactation care, complementary to the care provided by an IBCLC.

A one-size-fits-all approach is no longer viable for the public and consumers and the confusion is negatively impacting the IBCLC certification as well.

### **Was the idea of a second professional lactation certification discussed in the past and abandoned?**

The general concept of a second credential was discussed approximately ten years ago. As noted above, the world, including the landscape of breastfeeding support, has only grown increasingly complex in the last ten years. Confusion has only increased over this time so clarity is now required.

Additionally, there was no evidence at that time to support the concept.

Now, there is evidence to support the need for a *quality* lactation support certification.

The fact that it may serve as a stepping stone credential to the IBCLC will further enhance the prestige and growth of the IBCLC certification.

## **What is the evidence to support the need for a quality lactation support certification?**

In 2016, IBLCE retained a professional firm to conduct a study and broad-based market analysis to evaluate existing needs, inclusive of the issue of if there was a need or demand for a skilled lactation support certification complementary to the IBCLC and what level of interest there was for such an offering.

IBLCE focused at this time on the U.S., perceiving possible demand in the U.S., noting that there was confusion in the marketplace in the U.S. and bearing in mind that the IBCLC was initially established in the US yet grew exponentially worldwide. However, IBLCE determined that in the event a second certification programme would be seriously considered, it would be developed from the beginning as an internationally relevant professional certification.

The task force working on this initiative with the team from the professional firm was comprised of IBCLCs, inclusive of IBLCE Board members, former IBLCE Board members and IBCLCs who had never served on the IBLCE Board as well as a public representative.

Two surveys were disseminated in July 2016, one to lactation support professionals and one to IBCLCs. IBLCE disseminated the first survey through a variety of outlets on social media as well as a direct email link shared with the then 12 US-based Lactation Education Accreditation and Approval Review Committee (LEAARC) approved course providers who were asked to share the survey link with their students. Both surveys indicated that IBLCE was exploring the possibility of creating a credential for those involved in lactation support, to complement the IBCLC credential and extend the reach of skilled lactation care and which might also be used as a stepping stone towards eligibility to earn the IBCLC.

With respect to the survey to lactation support professionals, IBLCE received 1,502 responses and an overwhelming 94.1% supported such a new credential while just 5.9% did not. Of those who indicated support for such a new credential, 94%, indicated they would seek this new credential.

IBLCE disseminated a separate survey to 14,511 IBCLCs in the U.S. through a direct email link via Constant Contact and disseminated one reminder message. 3,585 IBCLCs answered the survey. A clear majority of those responding to the question agreed that there should be such a credential (68.9%; n=2,412) while 31.1% (n=1,090) did not believe such a credential should be created. Of the 2,412 respondents who expressed support for a new credential, a majority, or 81%, believed that their colleagues in lactation support would seek such a credential.

Responses to both surveys went directly to the professional firm, rather than IBLCE for review and statistical analysis of results.

## **IBLCE has always had just one professional certification programme. Is a break from such tradition unusual?**

Not at all. Many certification boards have a number of different certification programmes. In fact, a certification board which offers only one certification is far less common than many years

ago. Many offer a number of credentials to meet a variety of public and consumer needs. Certification boards are responding to a dynamic and changing world.

**Why are only those who do not hold a professional certification in lactation being invited to participate?**

A number of IBCLCs will be involved in this initiative. This includes the IBLCE Board which is comprised of 11 IBCLCs, 1 Public Member as well as a healthcare researcher who has also served as a La Leche League Leader. Additionally, IBLCE anticipates having two seasoned IBCLC advisors involved in this initiative.

The Advisory Group itself, as is customary in professional certification, will be a representative group of peers who are the target practitioners.

**Are individuals from a variety of countries invited to submit their expressions of interest and résumés/CVs for consideration?**

Yes, absolutely. IBLCE is a truly global organization. As you know, IBLCE started in the US but now has a worldwide presence, specifically in 107 countries and its Board is almost certainly the most international in lactation, representing 7 countries with 6 of the 13 Board members from outside the U.S. Of the Board members which reside in the U.S., three are originally from outside the U.S. from countries as diverse as Mexico, Hungary and Dominica. IBLCE is very proud of its diversity and internationalism—we consider these to be great strengths!

IBLCE has already received a number of excellent expressions of interest and résumés/C.V.s from target practitioners and welcomes others through the due date of **Monday, July 17, 2017**.

**What is IBLCE doing to grow and strengthen the IBCLC credential?**

IBLCE has worked very hard and invested substantial resources, particularly over the last several years, to elevate the visibility of the IBCLC and to advance the IBCLC credential.

To name just a few of these major initiatives, in 2015 IBLCE retained a leading healthcare PR firm on a public relations campaign regarding the IBCLC which reached close to 9 million listeners and featured nine radio interviews.

Over the last 5 years, IBLCE has made it possible for its affiliated charitable organization, the Monetary Investment Lactation Consultant Certification (MILCC) to award well over \$100,000 in scholarships to aspiring and recertifying IBCLCs. Scholarship awards reached an all-time high in 2016, with 76 candidates all over the globe receiving support totaling over \$37,000. IBLCE has also provided MILCC with funding for a new programme, the Emerging Leaders in Lactation, for those who have demonstrated leadership potential, belong to groups historically underrepresented in the profession and its leadership and who may otherwise be unable to pursue

their IBCLC credential. This new programme, made possible by a donation by IBLCE to MILCC, will provide funding of \$5,000USD per year to aspiring IBCLCs.

IBLCE engages in a great deal of advocacy and policy work devoted to the IBCLC. It meets with Ministries of Health and governmental officials in a number of countries to highlight the importance and value of IBCLCs. IBLCE representatives have spent time on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. providing education regarding the important role IBCLCs play in the WIC program, the healthcare arena and other practice settings. IBLCE has supported the licensure initiative of the IBCLC, providing letters of support and investing resources in this important work.

In 2017, IBLCE announced a new Research Program, which seeks to generate evidence by researchers on the impact, outcomes, and capacity of the IBCLC with an emphasis on the professional identity of the IBCLC as well as to scale up the IBCLC worldwide. As previously announced, IBLCE plans to invest significantly in this important initiative with funding available up to \$150,000USD per year for three years, or a total of \$450,000.

IBLCE's marketing efforts are extensive and promote awareness of, and the great importance of, the IBCLC. IBLCE has promoted the IBCLC not only at lactation conferences which are clearly very important, but also at nursing, midwifery, peer support and other meetings worldwide.

In short, IBLCE has done a great deal to elevate the visibility and advance the IBCLC and plans on continuing to do so vigorously.