



IBLCE® Advisory Opinion on Education for IBCLC Eligibility and Recertification

Background

In the August 2020 edition of the *IBLCE® Briefing*, IBLCE affirmed its support of the aims of the World Health Organization (WHO) *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* (1981) and subsequent World Health Assembly (WHA) resolutions.

As part of that communication, IBLCE stated the following:

Effective 2022, IBLCE will not accept *any* educational credits earned from that time forward for certification/recertification from companies whose products fall within the scope of the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* (e.g., infant formula, bottles and teats), breast pump companies, pharmaceutical companies, entrepreneurs who market breastfeeding and baby items such as nipple creams, baby slings, strollers, breastfeeding pillows or nursing stools.

Since that time, IBLCE has received a number of enquiries from IBCLCs and breastfeeding support counsellor organisations regarding the inclusion of entities in this policy that are not in violation of their obligations pursuant to the World Health Organization *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* and subsequent resolutions and who market items such as nipple creams, baby slings, strollers, breastfeeding pillows, or nursing stools, which are items that may be used to promote or complement the support and protection of breastfeeding.

As is a common practice of certification boards on matters of significance, IBLCE is issuing an Advisory Opinion on this matter. This Advisory Opinion is meant to provide guidance to candidates earning lactation specific education required for eligibility for the IBCLC

certification as well as IBCLCs earning continuing education required for recertification as an IBCLC.

Advisory Opinion

IBLCE reviewed enquiries and comments related to its August 2020 communication pertaining to earning education for eligibility for the IBCLC certification or for recertification for the IBCLC and concludes that some are well-taken and revises the policy set forth above in the August 2020 *IBLCE Briefing* as follows:

Effective 2022, IBLCE will not accept *any* educational credits earned from that time forward for lactation specific education for eligibility for the IBCLC certification or for continuing education toward IBCLC recertification from companies whose products fall within the scope of the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* (e.g., infant formula, bottles, and teats). This is inclusive of manufacturers, distributors, and marketers of such products.

IBLCE's intention is to support the aims of the WHO Code through its own policies yet acknowledge that products such as nipple creams, baby slings, strollers, breastfeeding pillows, or nursing stools do not violate the aims of the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* and subsequent resolutions and may be used to support and promote breastfeeding.

However, IBLCE also cautions that some entities which do not meet their obligations pursuant to the WHO Code and/or subsequent resolutions, along with those who have commercial interests that can potentially exploit vulnerable families, are, at times, using increasingly creative tactics to engage in marketing their products such as through the use of affiliated "educational" entities, research grants, and complex legal structures.

IBLCE encourages all educational providers to carefully reflect on their commercial relationships and be completely transparent with their students/participants/attendees about the extent and role of any commercial relationships they may have with manufacturers or distributors of any item covered by the WHO Code and subsequent resolutions.

Those individuals working towards the IBCLC certification and those holding the IBCLC certification are encouraged to ask questions of those providing education and, when in doubt, to seek further information from the organisers and/or sponsors of educational activities.

An addendum to this Advisory Opinion follows to provide illustrative examples of how this Advisory Opinion is to be implemented.

Addendum to IBLCE® Advisory Opinion on Education for IBCLC Eligibility and Recertification

Example 1: A small breastfeeding alliance, with a limited budget, organises an educational event sponsored by a breast pump company that also distributes formula. The alliance cannot afford the speakers or the costs of the event without this sponsorship.

Any educational hours earned from this activity will NOT count toward eligibility for the IBCLC nor toward recertification as they are subsidised by an entity that is not WHO Code compliant.

Example 2: An IBCLC in private practice sells breastfeeding support products, such as nipple creams and breastfeeding pillows, which are manufactured and marketed by companies meeting their obligations under the WHO Code and subsequent resolutions. The private practitioner also offers education for IBCLCs.

Education in this instance may count toward IBCLC eligibility or recertification as the marketing and sale of such products does not violate the WHO Code; however the IBCLC should disclose any such commercial relationships both *before* the educational session and at the commencement of such a session. Additionally, so as to minimise bias with breastfeeding families, the private practitioner should advise in writing that she makes these products available but that they are not required and may be obtained elsewhere.

Example 3: A free training event is offered at a hospital and is sponsored by an educational institute affiliated with a corporation which does not meet its obligation pursuant to the WHO Code and subsequent resolutions.

Such education will not count toward IBCLC eligibility or recertification.