

# Code of Professional Conduct for IBCLCs

Effective: November 1, 2011

**Updated: September 2015, August 17, 2022, and May 1, 2023 to incorporate IBCLC Commission structure**

The International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners® (IBLCE®) serves the global public interest by advancing professional practice in lactation consultation and support through credentialing.

The IBCLC Commission is responsible for all essential certification decisions and activities with respect to the IBCLC certification programme inclusive of ethics and disciplinary matters.

A crucial part of an IBCLC's duty to protect families is adherence to the principles and aim of the [International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes](#) and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly's resolutions.

## Preamble

IBLCE and the IBCLC Commission endorse the broad human rights principles articulated in numerous international documents affirming that every human being has the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

Moreover, IBLCE considers that every child has the right to have access to human milk. Thus, IBLCE and the IBCLC Commission encourage IBCLCs to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct as outlined in:

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (Article 12)
- Council of Medical Specialty Societies [Code for Interactions with Companies](#)

To guide their professional practice, it is in the best interest of all IBCLCs and the public they serve, that there is a Code of Professional Conduct which:

- Informs both IBCLCs and the public of the *minimum* standards of acceptable conduct;
- Exemplifies the commitment expected of all holders of the IBCLC credential;
- Provides IBCLCs with a framework for carrying out their essential duties; and
- Serves as a basis for decisions regarding alleged misconduct.

## Definitions and Interpretations

1. For the purposes of this document, the Code of Professional Conduct for IBCLCs will be referred to as the "CPC".
2. IBCLCs will comply fully with the *IBCLC Disciplinary Procedures*.

3. For the purposes of the CPC, “due diligence” refers to the obligation imposed on IBCLCs to adhere to a standard of reasonable care while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm others.
4. The term “intellectual property” (Principle 2.5) refers to copyrights (which apply to printed or electronic documents, manuscripts, photographs, slides, and illustrations), trademarks, service and certification marks, and patents.
5. The exception to the statement “refrain from revealing any information” (Principle 3.1) means that, to the extent required, IBCLCs may disclose such information to:
  - (a) comply with a law, court or administrative order, or this CPC;
  - (b) protect the client, in consultation with appropriate individuals or entities in a position to take suitable action, when the IBCLC reasonably believes that a client is unable to act adequately in their own and their child’s best interest and there is thus risk of harm;
  - (c) establish a claim or defence on behalf of the IBCLC and the client, or a defence against a criminal charge or civil claim against the IBCLC based upon conduct in which the client was involved; or
  - (d) respond to allegations in any proceeding concerning the services the IBCLC has provided to the client.
6. “Misfeasance” describes an act that is legal but performed improperly, while “malfeasance” describes a wrongful act.

### **Code of Professional Conduct Principles**

The CPC consists of eight principles, which require every IBCLC to:

1. Provide services that protect, promote, and support breastfeeding.
2. Act with due diligence.
3. Preserve the confidentiality of clients.
4. Report accurately and completely to other members of the healthcare team.
5. Exercise independent judgement and avoid conflicts of interest.
6. Maintain personal integrity.
7. Uphold the professional standards expected of an IBCLC.
8. Comply with the IBLCE Disciplinary Procedures.

IBCLCs are personally accountable for acting consistently with the CPC to safeguard the interests of clients and justify public trust.

#### **Principle 1: Provide services that protect, promote, and support breastfeeding.**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 1.1 Fulfil professional commitments by working with families to meet their breastfeeding goals.
- 1.2 Provide care to meet clients’ individual needs that is culturally appropriate and informed by the best available evidence.

- 1.3 Supply sufficient and accurate information to enable clients to make informed decisions.
- 1.4 Convey accurate, complete, and objective information about commercial products.
- 1.5 Present information without personal bias.

**Principle 2: Act with due diligence.**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 2.1 Operate within the limits of the Scope of Practice.
- 2.2 Collaborate with other members of the healthcare team to provide unified and comprehensive care.
- 2.3 Be responsible and accountable for personal conduct and practice.
- 2.4 Obey all applicable laws, including those regulating the activities of lactation consultants.
- 2.5 Respect intellectual property rights.

**Principle 3: Preserve the confidentiality of clients.**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 3.1 Refrain from revealing any information acquired in the course of the professional relationship, except to another member of a client's healthcare team or to other persons or entities for which the client has granted express permission, except only as provided in the Definitions and Interpretations to the CPC.
- 3.2 Refrain from photographing, recording, or taping (audio or video) clients for any purpose unless the client has given advance written consent on their behalf and that of the child.

**Principle 4: Report accurately and completely to other members of the healthcare team**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 4.1 Receive a client's consent, before initiating a consultation, to share clinical information with other members of the client's healthcare team.
- 4.2 Inform an appropriate person or authority if it appears that the health or safety of a client or a colleague is at risk, consistent with Principle 3.

**Principle 5: Exercise independent judgement and avoid conflicts of interest.**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 5.1 Disclose any actual or apparent conflict of interest, including a financial interest in relevant goods or services, or in organisations which provide relevant goods or services.
- 5.2 Ensure that commercial considerations do not influence professional judgement.
- 5.3 Withdraw voluntarily from professional practice if the IBCLC has a physical or mental disability that could be detrimental to clients.

**Principle 6: Maintain personal integrity.**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 6.1 Behave honestly and fairly as a health professional.
- 6.2 Withdraw voluntarily from professional practice if the IBCLC has engaged in substance abuse that could affect the IBCLC's practice.
- 6.3 Treat all clients equitably without regard to ability/disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, sex, ethnicity, race, national origin, political persuasion, marital status, geographic location, religion, socioeconomic status, or age, within the legal framework of the respective geo-political region or setting.

**Principle 7: Uphold the professional standards expected of an IBCLC.**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 7.1 Operate within the framework defined by the CPC.
- 7.2 Provide only accurate information to the public and colleagues concerning lactation consultant services offered.
- 7.3 Permit use of the IBCLC's name for the purpose of certifying that lactation consultant services have been rendered only when the IBCLC provided those services.
- 7.4 Use the acronyms "IBCLC" and "RLC" or the titles "International Board Certified Lactation Consultant" and "Registered Lactation Consultant" only when certification is current and in the manner in which IBLCE authorises their use.

**Principle 8: Comply with the IBCLC Disciplinary Procedures.**

Every IBCLC shall:

- 8.1 Comply fully with the IBCLC Ethics & Discipline process.
- 8.2 Agree that a violation of this CPC includes any matter in which:

- 8.2.1 the IBCLC is convicted of a crime under applicable law, where dishonesty, gross negligence, or wrongful conduct in relation to the practice of lactation consulting is a core issue;
- 8.2.2 the IBCLC is disciplined by a state, province, or other level of government and at least one of the grounds for discipline is the same as, or substantially equivalent to, this CPC's principle;
- 8.2.3 a competent court, licensing board, certifying board, or governmental authority determines that the IBCLC has committed an act of misfeasance or malfeasance directly related to the practice of lactation consulting.