



**Training Costs to Become an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)
for Employment in the California Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
and Public Health**

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An International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) is a professional member of the healthcare team who provides expert breastfeeding and lactation care in hospitals, clinics, and the community. They assist with issues including low milk supply, breastfeeding pain, mastitis, and plugged ducts. A Lactation Counselor or Educator, with less training, can offer support but only IBCLCs have completed the rigorous training required to become certified. IBCLCs train for 2-5+ years, and must complete 90 hours of lactation-specific education, 300-1,000 hands-on clinical hours, and a comprehensive examination. To maintain accreditation, IBCLCs must earn recertification every five years¹.

A recent study demonstrated that IBCLCs were positively associated with rates of exclusive breastfeeding at 6 months and continued breastfeeding at 12 months². The California Women, Infants, and Children Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program employs IBCLCs throughout the state, supporting ongoing breastfeeding for many low income families often unable to access this important service. WIC local agencies are serving the population of California families who often face challenges with receiving healthcare services and have lowered rates of breastfeeding. With the funds to educate more staff to

the IBCLC level, greater impacts can be made. In 2022, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) stated that the “short- and long-term medical and neurodevelopmental advantages of breastfeeding make breastfeeding, or the provision of human milk, a public health imperative”³. The AAP recommends exclusive breastfeeding for approximately six months after birth with continued breastfeeding, along with appropriate complementary food introduced at about six months, as long as mutually desired by the mother and child for two years and beyond.³

The breastfeeding initiation rate for the total US population is 83.9%³. Exclusive breastfeeding rates at 3 months are 46.3%, exclusive breastfeeding at 6 months drops to 25.8%, and any breastfeeding at 12 months is 35%³. The Healthy People 2030 goals are to increase the proportion of infants exclusively breastfed for 6 months to 42.4% and increase the proportion of infants who continue to breastfeed for 12 months to 54.1%⁴.

Significant sociodemographic and cultural differences exist regarding breastfeeding rates³. Breastfeeding initiation rates for White and Hispanic populations are much higher than for the African American population. Similar disparities in breastfeeding rates are seen among mothers with low income including participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), younger women, and those with a high school education or less.

Suboptimal breastfeeding is associated with a greater incidence of ear infections, inflammation of the intestine, and child deaths³. A national study found that breastfeeding was associated with a 21% reduced risk of post neonatal death for all infants and a 31% reduced risk for black infants³. Many pediatric disorders such as ear infections, acute diarrheal disease, lower respiratory illnesses, sudden infant death syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, childhood leukemia, diabetes, obesity, asthma and atopic dermatitis occur less frequently among children who were breastfed as infants. Mothers who breastfeed experience lower risk of Type 2 diabetes, breast, ovarian, and endometrial cancer, and hypertension³.

The International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE) establishes the requirements for becoming an IBCLC¹. There are three pathways to meet the requirements to apply to take the IBCLC exam. The pathways are designed to ensure that all applicants have a health sciences background, a minimum of 95 hours of lactation specific education, relevant clinical experience varying from 300-1,000 hours depending on the pathway and adhere to the Code of Professional Conduct. The three eligibility pathways permit individuals from a variety of diverse backgrounds to gain the knowledge and skills relevant to practice as an IBCLC.

Pathway 1 is the typical route if the WIC employee already is a recognized health professional. The Riverside University Health System- Public Health Branch, WIC Program Lactation Education Course “Grow our Own” is available online for WIC staff pursuing Pathway 1 or Pathway 3. Several other programs also offer the required lactation specific education.

Pathway 2 requires completion of a university or college-based accredited academic program in human lactation and breastfeeding. These programs include both didactic and clinical components and require health sciences education either as a prerequisite or earned concurrently.

Pathway 3 is the most common route taken by WIC staff, WIC participants including those from underserved populations, and other public health staff to become an IBCLC. This pathway allows the individual to use their work experience, while employed at WIC under the direct supervision of a pre-approved IBCLC, to meet the required lactation-specific clinical practice requirements. Instead of trying to schedule lactation consultations outside their work hours, they can focus on their WIC clients to obtain their clinical experience. Local WIC agencies can assist staff in meeting some of the six required health education subjects through continuing education courses as part of their employment.

Requirements and costs are outlined in the tables below.

Table 1: The Three Pathways to Meet Requirements for International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) Exam Eligibility

Requirements	<u>Pathway 1:</u> Recognized Health Professionals and Recognized Breastfeeding Support Counselors	<u>Pathway 2:</u> Accredited Lactation Academic Program including didactic and clinical experience	<u>Pathway 3:</u> Mentorship with an IBCLC (Direct supervision)
Description of Pathway	Must already be practicing as a “Recognized Health Professional” or through a “recognized breastfeeding	Requires completion of a university or college-based accredited academic program in	Involves a pre-approved, structured relationship between an applicant and IBCLC mentor

	support counselor organization” as defined by the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBCLE)	human lactation and breastfeeding	
Health Science Education Requirements <u>8 undergraduate courses</u> : Biology, Human Anatomy, Human physiology, Infant and child growth and development, Introduction to clinical research, nutrition, psychology or counseling skills, sociology or cultural sensitivity or cultural anthropology AND <u>6 continuing education courses</u> : Basic life support, medical documentation, medical terminology, occupational safety and security, ethics, universal safety precautions and infection control	A recognized health professional (Nurse, dietitian, midwife, physician, or other degrees in health sciences) typically has already met this requirement	14 subjects, outlined in the Health Science Education Guide (8 undergraduate classes and 6 continuing education courses). These may be included as part of the coursework	14 subjects, outlined in the Health Science Education Guide (8 undergraduate classes and 6 continuing education courses)
Lactation Specific Education Requirements (IBCLE approved) within 5 years of exam	95 hours, including 5 focused on communication	95 hours, including 5 focused on communication	95 hours, including 5 focused on communication
Lactation Specific Clinical Practice within 5 years of exam	1000 hours in an appropriately supervised setting, paid or unpaid, providing lactation care or education	300 hours of lactation specific clinical practice, directly supervised and part of the academic program	500 hours of lactation specific clinical practice directly supervised by an IBCLC. Must be verified prior to earning clinical hours

Table 2: Cost of Preparation for International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) Certification

<u>Pathway 1</u> Program for Currently Recognized Health Professionals and Recognized Breastfeeding Support Counselors	Cost	Timeline	Comments
<u>WIC "Grow Our Own" Lactation Consultant Prep Course</u>			
Lactation Education Course, Riverside University Health System- Public Health Branch, WIC Program			
Provides 105 hours of lactation specific education	Tuition: \$1,700	8-month course	-This course does not include the required health science education courses or clinical experience - Course currently is virtual using the Zoom platform -This course meets Pathway 1 and Pathway 3 requirements
Health Science Education Required Health Science Subjects: (If not previously taken) 8 College courses and 6 Continuing Education subjects	Community College tuition (14 subjects) \$1,932 Books: \$530 Subtotal: \$2,462 OR CA State University (CSU) tuition (8 subjects): \$8,640 AND	Varies	Pathway 1 Candidates may already have taken these courses <u>California Community College</u> 8 college courses, approximately 24 credits, \$46.00/credit = \$1,104 AND 6 subjects, approximately 18 credits (Community college courses or continuing education courses) at \$46.00/credit= \$828 Total- \$1,192

	Community College, 6 subjects: \$828 Books: \$530 subtotal: \$9998		OR <u>California State University</u> \$360/credit x 24 credits= \$8,640 AND 6 subjects, approximately 18 credits (Community college courses or continuing education courses) at \$46.00/credit= \$828 Total- \$9,468 Books- average \$38.00/class= \$532
IBCLE Examination fee and prep	\$860	varies	Exam prep course: \$200 Exam fee: \$660 Total: \$860
Total cost (Not including required lactation specific clinical practice hours)	Total \$2,560 (Health science courses completed previously) \$5,022 (Includes health science required subjects at a CA Community College) OR \$12,558 (Includes health science required subjects at a CSU)		Additional required clinical hours may be paid or unpaid

BreastfeedLA

Organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of infants and families through education, outreach, and advocacy to promote and support breast/chestfeeding

Step 1. Become a Lactation Education Specialist	\$0 or \$550	6-week online course, 45 hours of lactation training	They have a contract with a community college so the course will be free when taught through that community college
Step 2. Lactation Consultant Education	\$850	8-week online course, additional 50 hours of advanced and comprehensive education	The Early Bird price is \$795 Meets Pathway 1 and Pathway 3 requirements
Step 3. Clinical Lactation Training Program 1,000 lactation specific clinical practice hours	\$900- \$2,500	6-18 months	-Meets pathway 1 (1,000 hours) or Pathway 3 (500 hours) lactation specific clinical practice hours -Once admitted, students are paired with an experienced IBCLC mentor at a local healthcare facility in Los Angeles -Training is \$150/month
Health Science Education	\$2,462 or \$9,998	Varies	Pathway 1 Candidates may already have taken these courses Cost varies depending upon where it is obtained (See above)
IBCLE Examination fee and prep	\$860	Varies	Exam prep course: \$200

			Exam fee: \$660 Total: \$860
Total Cost	\$5,072-\$14,758		Cost range depends upon whether the health science education is from a community college or California State University and the time it takes to complete the clinical training
The B.L.A.C.K.Course.com			
Lactation and breastfeeding education by and for black people and those supporting black families			
The B.L.A.C.K Course Certified Blactation Educator/Accomplice Training	\$750	5-day course	45 hours of virtual instruction, qualifies towards the required 95 hours in Pathways 1, 2, or 3
Lactation Consultant Education	\$900	50 hours of advanced training	This part of the training is estimated to be available to the public in the second half of 2024
Health Science Education	\$2,462 or \$9,998	Varies	Pathway 1 Candidates may already have taken these courses Cost depends upon whether health education is completed at a community college or state university (See above)
IBCLE Examination fee and prep	\$860	Varies	Exam prep course: \$200

			Exam fee: \$660 Total: \$860
Total Cost Not including required lactation specific clinical practice hours. Clinical hours obtained on-the-job or in the community	\$4,972 or \$12,508		Total depends upon whether health education courses are taken at a community college or state university
<u>UC San Diego Extended Studies</u>			
Lactation Educator Counselor course (Prerequisite)	\$745	45 hours	
Lactation Consultant Education	\$1,195	95 hours	
Health Science Education	\$2,462 or \$9,998	Varies	Pathway 1 Candidates may already have taken these courses Cost varies depending upon where it is obtained (See above)
IBCLE Examination fee and prep	\$860	Varies	Exam prep course: \$200 Exam fee: \$660 Total: \$860
<u>Total Cost</u>	\$2,800 (Health science courses completed previously) \$5,262 (Health science education at a Community College) \$12,798 (Includes health science required)		Cost depends upon whether health education is completed at a community college or state university (See above)

	subjects at a CSU)		
California State University Northridge (CSUN) Comprehensive Lactation Education Training			
Lactation Education Training for non-CSUN students	\$1,040	10-week course held on Saturdays	95 hours including 5 hours focused on communication Virtual training
Health sciences education (Prerequisite)	\$2,462 or \$9,998		Cost depends upon whether courses are taken at a community college or CSU
IBCLE Exam fee and prep	\$860		
Total Cost (Not including required lactation specific clinical practice hours)	\$4,362 or \$11,898		
Indigenous Lactation Counselor (ILC) Training (no website for this, contact is Camie Goldhammer, camie@hummingbird-ifs.orgt)			
Lactation Education Training for Indigenous individuals only		45 hours	45-hour course qualifies towards the required 95 hours in Pathways 1, 2, or 3
Cost of 45-hour course	Free to individual as sponsoring agency pays		Sponsoring agency pays the fee, provides breakfast and lunch each day and training room logistics and cost. The fee currently is \$25,000 for approximately 40 individuals, but

			will increase in 2023. The current cost per individual is \$800-1,000
Pathway 2 Accredited Academic Lactation Programs	Cost	Timeline	Comments
<u>University of California San Diego Extended Studies</u>			
Lactation Education Counselor course (Prerequisite)	\$745	2 months (45 hours)	Must be completed prior to enrollment.
Lactation Consultant Education Distance Program Certificate	Tuition: \$7,500 Books: \$250 Certificate: \$95 Background check: \$250 Subtotal: \$8,095	9 months	Online program
Health Science Education (Prerequisites)	\$2,462 (CA Community college) OR \$9,998 (CSU)	Varies	-Must be completed prior to enrollment -Tuition estimates- see above
300 Lactation specific clinical practice hours	Included	Varies	
IBCLC Examination fee and prep	\$860	Varies	
<u>Total Cost</u>	\$12,162 or \$18,838		Cost depends on whether health sciences education classes are taken at a community college or CSU

<u>UC Davis Master of Advanced Study in Maternal and Child Nutrition</u>			
Lactation related classes	\$23,544 plus books, supplies, lab materials		-Offered by the UC Davis Department of Nutrition, in collaboration with UC Davis Continuing and Professional Education. -Part-time two-year program, in person or live broadcast -36 units at \$654/unit
Health Science Education (Prerequisite)	varies		
Clinical training	Included		
IBCLC Examination and prep	\$869		
Total Cost	\$24,413		
<u>Union Institute and University, Sacramento</u>			
Bachelor of Science with a major in Maternal Child Health: Human Lactation	\$66,400 Tuition and technology fee \$46,780 For WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselors	160 weeks	-\$545/credit x 120 credits -WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselors who qualify are granted 36 free elective credits. A copy of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Training Certificate and a letter from their supervisor verifying 560 hours as a WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor is required

Pathway 3 Structured Mentorship with a Credentialed IBCLC	Cost	Timeline	Comments
Lactation Specific Clinical Practice Hours Requires 500 supervised hours All Pathway 3 plans must be verified by IBLCE through an application process prior to earning clinical hours	Plan Verification Packet: \$100	Varies	-Hours may be paid or unpaid -Prior approval from IBCLE of IBCLC supervisor is required. Some IBCLCs have a fee for this to compensate for their time -May have several mentors but must have one chief mentor
Health Science Education	\$2,462 (Community college) OR \$9,998 (CSU)	Varies	Described above
Lactation Specific Education	\$1,595 OR \$1,770	4 months or more	Through BreastfeedLA OR "Grow Our Own" (see above)
IBCLC Examination Fee and prep	\$860	Varies	
Total Cost	\$5,017-\$12,728		Cost depends upon whether health science education is at a community college or state university and source of lactation specific education

Table 3: Summary of Expenses in the 3 Pathways to Becoming an IBCLC

Pathway	Organization	Total with Health Science Education Subjects from a Community College	Total with Health Science Education Subjects from a California State University	Lactation Specific Clinical Hours (Included in the program or not included and met through job or in the community)
Pathway 1- Recognized health professional				1,000 supervised hours required
	WIC "Grow Our Own"	\$5,022 (\$2,560 if health science subjects completed previously)	\$12,5588	Not including clinical hours
	BreastfeedLA	\$5,072-\$7,572	\$14,758	Including clinical hours Cost varies with time taken to complete clinical hours

	The B.L.A.C.K Course	\$4,972	\$12,508	Not including clinical hours
	UC San Diego Extended Studies	\$5,262 (\$2,800 if health science subjects completed previously)	\$12,798	Not including clinical hours
	CA State University Northridge	\$4,362	\$11,898	Not including clinical hours
	Indigenous Lactation Counselor (ILC) Training	Free to individual if sponsoring agency pays		Sponsoring agency pays \$25,000 for approximately 40 individuals
Pathway 2- Accredited lactation academic program				300 directly supervised hours required
	University of California San Diego Extension	\$12,162	\$18,838	Included
	Union Institute and University, Sacramento	-	\$66,400 \$46,780 for WIC Breastfeeding	Included with degree program Health education also included in degree program

			Peer Counselors who qualify	
	UC Davis Master of Advanced Study in Maternal and Child Nutrition		\$24,413 (Not including prerequisite health science classes)	Included with degree program
Pathway 3- Direct supervision from a pre-approved IBCLC				500 directly supervised, IBCLC supervisor verified prior to earning hours
	Structured mentorship with a credentialed IBCLC with prior approval	\$5,017	\$12,728	Included

Additional expenses not included above

Travel: Travel to take the IBCLC Exam especially from rural areas, approximately \$500.

Books: Additional Books to use in studying for the exam cost approximately \$300.

Additional possible costs: Childcare expenses, the need to adjust work hours, shoes and scrubs.

Recertification: The cost to recertify through continuing education credits (CERPS), as required every 5 years, is approximately \$1,200.

References

1. International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners.
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<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/150/1/e2022057988/188347/Policy-Statement-Breastfeeding-and-the-Use-of?autologincheck=redirected>
4. Healthy People 2030
<https://health.gov/healthypeople/search?query=Breastfeeding>