

Scope of Practice for the Certified Lactation Counselor® (CLC®)

The Certified Lactation Counselor® (CLC®) certification identifies a professional in lactation counseling who has demonstrated the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities to provide breastfeeding counseling and management support to families who are thinking about breastfeeding or who have questions or problems during the course of breastfeeding/lactation.

CLCs are individuals who have successfully completed a minimum of 52 hours of training based upon the footprint of the World Health Organization/UNICEF Breastfeeding Counseling Training Course; have passed a criterion-referenced examination administered by the Academy of Lactation Policy and Practice (ALPP); and have demonstrated the clinical competencies and skills required to provide safe, evidence-based counseling for pregnant, lactating, and breastfeeding women, including the:

- Ability to recognize one's own and others' attitudes, values, and expectations about infant feeding and healthy lifestyles.
- Ability to apply the concept of an individualized approach to counseling and management of breastfeeding, from preconception through weaning.
- Ability to use appropriate, effective, and client-centered communication skills.
- Ability to identify opportunities to offer information/education within the counseling encounter to women, the whole family constellation, and the community.
- Ability to assess physical and psychosocial aspects of the breastfeeding dyad.
- Ability to utilize reliable tools to assess affective/ineffective breastfeeding and milk transfer.
- Ability to incorporate evidence based approaches to practice and make appropriate referrals operating on the continuum of the health care team.
- Knowledge of programs, policies and legislation on state, national, and international levels that promote, protect and support breastfeeding.

ALPP develops and administers the CLC examination to assess the knowledge and skills that underlie competent practice in lactation counseling. The development, administration, and scoring of the CLC exam, after participants have met the skills competency requirements, promotes competency in lactation management, skills, and knowledge and thereby fulfills the mission of ALPP.

The purpose of the CLC certification is to protect the public by identifying individuals who are competent in lactation management skills and knowledge.

Many individuals who hold the CLC credential have other licenses and education, including nurses, peer counselors, doulas, dietitians, nutritionists, home visitors, physicians, midwives, occupational and speech therapy, mental health counselors, etc. Because of the diverse background and training of CLCs, this listing does not encompass activities that many CLCs may conduct under the umbrella of other licensure, training, or knowledge.

Knowledge and Competency of the CLC

CLCs have demonstrated the knowledge and skill to:

- Construct and maintain conditions that predispose mothers and babies to an uncomplicated breastfeeding experience through counseling, education, clinical management, and support.
- Monitor and evaluate behavioral, cultural, and social conditions predisposing mothers and babies to an uncomplicated breastfeeding experience.
- Assess for, monitor, and evaluate physical conditions that predispose mothers and babies to a complex breastfeeding experience.
- Monitor and evaluate behavioral, cultural, and social conditions that predispose mothers and babies to complex breastfeeding experiences.
- Provide needed evidence-based information regarding breastfeeding and medications, tobacco use, alcohol, and illicit drugs.
- Identify and advocate for aspects of breastfeeding management programs that facilitate optimal health outcomes.
- Assess breastfeeding using a multi-faceted approach.
- Use counseling skills and techniques that are supportive to breastfeeding mothers and babies, practicing in a clinically competent manner.
- Develop and advocate for public health strategies that serve to protect breastfeeding.
- Coordinate care consistent with standards of professional ethics and behavior.

Thus, CLCs have demonstrated readiness to:

- Promote breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding and care.
- Counsel and educate pregnant women and mothers regarding breastfeeding.
- Provide care supportive of the whole family constellation when providing counseling.
- Conduct comprehensive assessment of mother and child related to breastfeeding and human lactation

- Develop an evidence based care plan specific to the needs identified through assessment and counseling and implement it to help mothers meet their personal breastfeeding goals.
- Work collaboratively within the health care team.
- Assess the needs of women and babies who are at risk of, or currently experiencing, lactation difficulties, providing follow up care, and triaging referral to other care providers as needed.
- Adhere to the ALPP Code of Ethics and the professional standard within this code.