

Accreditation Procedures for Lactation Consultant Education Programs

The Lactation Education Accreditation and Approval Review Committee (LEAARC) cooperates with the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) in the accreditation of educational programs in lactation consultancy. As a Committee on Accreditation for CAAHEP, LEAARC:

- Evaluates educational programs in relation to their compliance with the published *Standards and Guidelines for Lactation Consultant Educational Programs*.
- Formulates an appropriate accreditation recommendation following its evaluation of a Self-Study Report (SSR) and a site visit of the program.
- Forwards the accreditation recommendation to CAAHEP for final consideration and action.

SECTION A: CONDUCTING THE ACCREDITATION REVIEW

1. THE SPONSORING INSTITUTION

The accreditation process begins when an institution indicates that it wishes to seek CAAHEP accreditation of its program. The institution must meet the established criteria for a sponsoring institution. CAAHEP requires institutions applying for the accreditation of health science educational programs to be institutionally accredited by a recognized accrediting body or by a body otherwise acceptable to CAAHEP. The sponsoring institution must either award credit for the program or have an articulation agreement with an accredited post-secondary institution that awards credit.

2. APPLYING FOR INITIAL OR CONTINUING ACCREDITATION

Accreditation by CAAHEP is a voluntary process, and evaluation of a Lactation Consultant Program is undertaken only with specific authorization from the Chief Executive Officer of its sponsoring institution. The first step in applying for accreditation is submission of the online [CAAHEP Request for Accreditation Services](#) and a nonrefundable registration fee to LEAARC. LEAARC will then send accreditation materials to the program to begin the program's self-study process.

3. CONDUCTING A SELF-STUDY

A Self-Study Report (SSR) is required of programs requesting accreditation by CAAHEP. The institution has one calendar year to complete the SSR. The process will consist of an internal review and an analysis and assessment of the entire range of educational operations, including ancillary services that contribute to accomplishing objectives. The review is conducted by program faculty with input from administrators, students, employers of graduates, and others identifiable as representing the "broad community of interests." In addition to providing insights to the institution for self-improvement, the SSR forms the basis for an on-site review conducted by a team of LEAARC site visitors.

4. SUBMITTING THE SELF-STUDY REPORT (SSR)

Although the self-study conducted by the institution and program is comprehensive, the Self-Study Report need contain only enough documentation to substantiate compliance with the Standards. The report must contain a qualitative self-analysis summary based on application of the Standards and conclude with changes anticipated to strengthen the program. The SSR format follows the sequence of the *Standards and Guidelines for Lactation Consultant Educational Programs*. Some sections contain blanks to be filled in and boxes to check. Other sections will require narrative reports and supporting documents.

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The program will submit the SSR and SSR fee to LEAARC, along with the fee for the onsite evaluation. LEAARC will review the SSR for completeness and evidence of substantial compliance with all accreditation Standards. LEAARC may request clarification of information or additional documentation. When LEAARC determines that the SSR is sufficiently complete, a date for the site visit is finalized.

5. SCHEDULING AN ON-SITE REVIEW

The SSR is supplied to a team of site visitors well in advance of the onsite review to allow for a thorough understanding of the program. After the SSR has been evaluated, a site visit is scheduled for a mutually convenient time. Prospective site visitors receive orientation training and materials which stress objectivity, impartiality and confidentiality. Most site visits have two site visitors.

6. CONDUCTING THE ON-SITE REVIEW

LEAARC will send site visitors to observe, verify, and clarify evidence of the degree to which the program meets the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines*. Team members will prepare for the onsite review by studying the SSR in conjunction with the Standards and LEAARC instructions. During the site visit, they will review the facilities, reports, student records, and additional documentation. They will interview individuals and groups, such as the Chief Executive Officer of the sponsoring institution, the administrator(s) of the educational program, instructors, students, graduates, and support personnel. After all reviews and interviews, the team will analyze the results of the onsite review and conduct a summation conference with the institution to clarify findings and report on strengths and deficiencies of the program. They will submit a Site Visit Report to LEAARC with all the findings.

7. PROVIDING A FINDINGS REPORT TO THE INSTITUTION

Subsequent to the site visit, LEAARC will review the Site Visit Report and send a written Findings Report to the institution and the program. The Findings Report will indicate any potential citations and the program will be asked to submit a response for the findings within 60 days. Many of the potential citations may be resolved prior to submitting an accreditation recommendation to CAAHEP. Some may remain as citations and require a Progress Report after Initial Accreditation.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Efforts are made by all accreditation personnel in the peer review process to maintain confidentiality in the processing of information collected during the entire accreditation review. Printed materials such as the Request for Accreditation Services, Self-Study Report, and Site Visit Report are read only by members of the visiting team, the review committee, CAAHEP, and other authorized persons. CAAHEP considers all supporting documentation and reports to be the property of the sponsoring institution.

9. FEES FOR ACCREDITATION SERVICES

Accreditation fees underwrite a major portion of the expenses incurred by LEAARC for accreditation services. Please check with LEAARC to confirm the current fee, as fees may change at any time. All checks for these fees should be made payable to LEAARC and sent to 110 Horizon Drive, Suite 210, Raleigh, NC 27615 USA.

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a. Fees associated with Initial Accreditation

1) Registration Fee - \$500

A nonrefundable \$500 registration fee is due with submission of the CAAHEP Request for Accreditation Services (RAS) form. It covers establishing and updating the program record/file and LEAARC assistance with accreditation questions and preparation of the SSR. Following receipt of the completed RAS form and the required information, the program will be notified about proceeding with the accreditation process.

If the program is unable to submit the Self-Study Report within the required one year and requests an extension, the program will be assessed a \$500 extension fee for each year of extension.

2) Self-Study Report Fee - \$2000

The Self-Study Report is submitted on a USB drive to the Accreditation Manager. At that time, a \$2000 fee is due to LEAARC. The fee covers processing, reviewing, and commenting on the SSR as well as administrative costs of scheduling, reviewing and commenting on the site visit. Review of the SSR will begin after the fee is received.

3) Site Visit Fee - \$2500

Institutions are responsible for costs incurred by the site visitors in conducting the on-site review. A \$2500 fee is due at the same time as the Self-Study Report fee. If the actual costs for the site visit exceed US\$2500, the excess amount will be invoiced to the institution after the conclusion of the site visit.

b. Fees associated with Annual Accreditation

1) Annual Accreditation Services Fee - \$2200

After accreditation has been obtained, an annual accreditation fee of \$2200 is due each January 31st. The annual fee is for the upcoming calendar year and covers maintaining accreditation, processing the annual report, and processing other changes that may occur regarding the institution's accreditation.

Invoices for Annual Accreditation Services Fees will be distributed to Program Directors by e-mail no later than December 1st of each year and will be due by January 31st of the following year. Based on the month in which CAAHEP awards Initial Accreditation, the Annual Accreditation Services Fee will include the amount for the remainder of the initial calendar year and will be prorated as follows: *Mar-May=75%; Jun-Sep=50%; Oct-Nov=25%; Dec-Feb=0%*.

2) Annual Accreditation Services Late Fee – 10% of overdue fee

A late fee is assessed for Annual Accreditation Services fees received after the stated deadlines as described in the overdue notice.

First Overdue Notice: Programs that have not paid the fee by the due date will be sent an overdue notice requesting payment within 30 days. They are subject to a late processing fee of ten percent (10%) of the overdue accreditation fee amount.

Second Overdue Notice: Programs that have not responded by the due date and satisfied in full the amount designated in the first overdue notice will be sent a second notice by traceable shipping method requesting payment within 30 days.

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They are subject to an additional ten percent (10%) late processing fee and may be recommended to CAAHEP for Administrative Probation.

Third Overdue Notice: Programs that have not responded by the deadline and satisfied in full the amount designated in the second overdue notice will receive a third and final notice requesting immediate full payment with an additional ten percent (10%) late processing fee. The program may be subject to a recommendation of Withdrawal of Accreditation.

c. Annual Sponsoring Institution Fee

A separate Annual Sponsoring Institution Fee is invoiced by CAAHEP for payment by July 1. The institution pays only one fee regardless of the number of CAAHEP programs. Based on the month in which CAAHEP awards Initial Accreditation, programs will be invoiced for accreditation services for the remainder of the calendar year prorated on a quarterly basis as follows: *January=75%; March/May=50%; July=25%; after July=0%.*

SECTION B: DETERMINING THE ACCREDITATION AWARD

1. THE ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATION

LEAARC will evaluate the degree of the program's compliance with the Standards by studying the application documents, the Self-Study Report, the Site Visit Report, and all related documentation and correspondence. LEAARC will then formulate an accreditation recommendation and submit it to CAAHEP for final consideration and action.

The CAAHEP Board of Directors will act on the recommendation, assuring that due process has been met and that Standards are being applied consistently and equitably. The CAAHEP Board of Directors reviews accreditation recommendations six times per year (January, March, May, July, September, and November). Immediately following the meeting in which the program was presented, CAAHEP will send a letter to the President of the institution, copied to the Dean and Program Director, indicating the outcome of the meeting. If accreditation was conferred, a CAAHEP certificate of accreditation will be included in the program director's letter. If a Progress Report is required, the date will be indicated in the accreditation letter.

2. RECONSIDERATION OF THE ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATION

Should LEAARC submit an adverse recommendation of *Withhold*, *Involuntary Withdrawal*, or *Probationary Accreditation*, the program is informed in writing, by traceable shipping method, of areas that are deficient and what modifications are required to bring the program into compliance with the Standards. The program is given an opportunity to request reconsideration of the pending recommendation. A decision by CAAHEP for *Withhold of Accreditation* or *Withdrawal of Accreditation* shall be final unless a written request to appeal the decision is received by CAAHEP within thirty (30) days following the mailing of CAAHEP's notice to the sponsoring institution of its action.

SECTION C: STATUS OF ACCREDITATION

1. INITIAL ACCREDITATION

Initial Accreditation is the first status of accreditation granted to a program that has demonstrated substantial compliance with CAAHEP Standards. Initial accreditation is for a period of five years. At the end of Initial Accreditation, the program may be recommended for Continuing Accreditation or Probationary Accreditation. If no such recommendation is

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forthcoming, the Initial Accreditation will automatically expire. A program may request reconsideration of a LEAARC decision to allow Initial Accreditation to expire. However, LEAARC's final decision is not appealable.

2. CONTINUING ACCREDITATION

Continuing Accreditation is granted when a program is in substantial compliance with the accreditation *Standards* and remains in effect until due process has demonstrated cause for its withdrawal.

3. PROBATIONARY ACCREDITATION

Probationary Accreditation is a temporary status of accreditation granted when a program does not continue to meet accreditation *Standards* but should be able to meet them within the specified time.

4. WITHHOLD OF ACCREDITATION

Withhold of Accreditation is conferred when a program seeking initial accreditation is not in compliance with the accreditation *Standards*.

5. WITHDRAWAL OF ACCREDITATION – INVOLUNTARY

Involuntary Withdrawal of Accreditation is conferred when a program is no longer in compliance with the accreditation *Standards*.

6. WITHDRAWAL OF ACCREDITATION – VOLUNTARY

Voluntary Withdrawal of Accreditation is granted when a sponsoring institution requests that its program(s) be removed from CAAHEP. A sponsor may request voluntary withdrawal of accreditation from CAAHEP or of an application for accreditation at any time in writing by the Chief Executive Officer or an officially designated representative of the sponsor. The letter must include: last date of student enrollment, desired effective date of the voluntary withdrawal, and location where all records will be kept for students who have completed the program

7. INACTIVE STATUS

Inactive Status may be conferred if the sponsor requests inactive status for a program. The request must be submitted in writing by the Chief Executive Officer or an officially designated representative or the sponsor to CAAHEP indicating the desired date to become inactive.

- a. The program is not allowed to be advertised as CAAHEP-accredited during the time period in which the program is on inactive status.
- b. The sponsor must continue to pay all required fees to the LEAARC and CAAHEP to maintain its accreditation status.
- c. To reactivate the program the Chief Executive Officer or an officially designated representative of the sponsor must notify CAAHEP of its intent to do so in writing to both CAAHEP and LEAARC. The sponsor will be notified by LEAARC of additional requirements, if any, that must be met to restore active status.
- d. The maximum period for inactive status is two years. If the sponsor has not notified CAAHEP of its intent to re-activate a program by the end of the two-year period, CAAHEP will consider this a "Voluntary Withdrawal of Accreditation."

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8. ADMINISTRATIVE PROBATION

Administrative Probation may be conferred when the program does not comply with one or more of the administrative requirements for maintaining accreditation (see Standards and Guidelines, Appendix A, Section A.3), which include:

- a. Informing LEAARC and CAAHEP within a reasonable period of time (as defined by LEAARC and CAAHEP policies) of changes in Chief Executive Officer, dean of health professions or equivalent position, and required program personnel such as program director and/or medical director.
- b. Informing CAAHEP and LEAARC of its intent to transfer program sponsorship. To begin the process for a Transfer of Sponsorship, the current sponsor must submit a letter (signed by the CEO or designated individual) to CAAHEP and LEAARC that it is relinquishing its sponsorship of the program. Additionally, the new sponsor must submit a “Request for Transfer of Sponsorship Services” form. LEAARC has the discretion of requesting a new Self Study Report with or without an on-site review. Applying for a transfer of sponsorship does not guarantee that the transfer of accreditation will be granted.
- c. Promptly informing CAAHEP and LEAARC of any adverse decision affecting its accreditation by recognized institutional accrediting agencies and/or state agencies (or their equivalent).
- d. Agreeing to comprehensive reviews as scheduled by LEAARC in accordance with its policies and procedures. The time between comprehensive reviews is determined by LEAARC and based on the program’s on-going compliance with the Standards. However, all programs must undergo a comprehensive review at least once every ten years.
- e. Paying LEAARC and CAAHEP fees within a reasonable period of time, as determined by LEAARC and CAAHEP.
- f. Filing all reports in a timely manner (e.g., Self-Study Report, progress reports, and annual reports) in accordance with LEAARC policy.
- g. Agreeing to a reasonable on-site review date that provides sufficient time for CAAHEP to act on a LEAARC accreditation recommendation prior to the next comprehensive review period as designated by CAAHEP, or a reasonable date otherwise designated by LEAARC.

SECTION D: REQUIRED REPORTING

1. ANNUAL REPORT OF CURRENT STATUS

Accredited programs are required to file an Annual Accreditation Report by September 15 every year after initial accreditation. LEAARC reviews the report and engages in an accreditation dialogue commensurate with the performance of the program.

- a. Program information updated in the report includes major changes in the program during the year, including adding or deleting clinical affiliates; outcomes assessment data; analysis and action plan to improve sub-threshold performance on outcome assessments.
- b. In the case of sub-threshold performance (number, magnitude, and duration), LEAARC may request Progress Report(s) and other documentation as part of the accreditation dialogue.

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- c. Continued sub-threshold performance may result in an adverse accreditation recommendation to CAAHEP.
2. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES IN KEY PERSONNEL

A change of Program Director must be reported to LEAARC within ten business days. A current curriculum vitae documenting the qualifications (see Standards III.B.) of the person assuming the position and a letter of acceptance of the position must be included. The sponsoring institution will be advised when the change in the official listing has been made.
3. PUBLICATION OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMS
 - a. CAAHEP lists all accredited programs on its web site (www.caahep.org).
 - b. LEAARC provides a link to the CAAHEP site at its web site (www.leaarc.org).
 - c. Programs are required to report their outcomes annually on their institution website.