



Accreditation and Approval Review Committee
on Education in Human Lactation and Breastfeeding
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National Network of Health Career Programs in Two-Year Colleges

The Accreditation and Approval Review Committee on Education in Human Lactation and Breastfeeding (AARC) participated in the NN2 Annual Conference in Cheyenne, Wyoming in September, 2011. Judi Lauwers, who will take over as AARC's Executive Director in January, presented an informative breakout session on the lactation consultant profession and their journey toward academic preparation.

AARC is one of the newest review committees for CAAHEP, the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs. AARC's competency-based curriculum and general education requirements are available on their website. The lactation consultant credential has been offered since 1985 by the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners.

There are more than 22,000 lactation consultants worldwide with the IBCLC credential. Half of all IBCLCs are in the U.S., with 84% of them entering the profession with an associate degree or greater. Their backgrounds are mostly in health care, including RNs (80%), dietitians, physicians, childbirth educators and midwives. IBCLCs are employed predominantly in hospitals (68%), public health (15%), private practice (15%) and physician offices (7%). IBCLC wages range from \$21 to \$50 per hour depending on work setting.*

Currently, lactation consultant education is provided predominantly by clinicians through independently operated programs. A small number are affiliated with universities and range from a 3-credit distance course through a 4-year degree. AARC's goal is to introduce lactation consultant programs into the community colleges throughout the U.S. The health education courses required by lactation consultants mirror those of other allied health students. Clinical instruction can occur in facilities with which colleges already have existing relationships. The lactation consultant curriculum can be offered through a certificate program for health care professionals who seek an add-on credential, or it can be integrated into an associate degree program.

Several promotion initiatives contribute to increased demand for employing IBCLCs through promotion of increases in breastfeeding incidence and duration. The World Health Organization and UNICEF Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative promotes experienced help for new mothers. Increasing the incidence of breastfeeding is on the radar of Joint Commission and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Surgeon General's 2011 Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding includes increasing the number of Baby-friendly Hospitals and ensuring access to IBCLCs for mothers. Employers are being encouraged to provide lactation rooms for their employees. All of these initiatives will raise breastfeeding rates and increase employment options for IBCLCs. Results of a needs assessment study will be available in late 2011 to reflect the potential for job placement of graduates. Results will be posted on the AARC website.

To learn more about lactation consultant programs, contact judi@ilca.org or visit the AARC website at www.aarclactation.org.

*Statistics are from a 2011 survey conducted by the United States Lactation Consultant Association.