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Questions About LEAARC Evaluation

What kinds of evaluation does LEAARC provide?

LEAARC recognition indicates that programs meet or exceed minimum criteria through a formal, non-governmental, peer-review process of voluntary self-evaluation. LEAARC evaluates education at three levels:

1. Recognition of breastfeeding courses
2. Approval of lactation courses
3. Recommendation of academic lactation programs for CAAHEP accreditation

What is required for recognition of a breastfeeding course?

Breastfeeding courses recognized by LEAARC contribute to the preparation of breastfeeding counselors and educators. Courses seeking LEAARC recognition must have been in operation for a minimum of one year and have been offered more than one time. The course must offer a minimum of 40 contact hours and teach how to assist families in the normal course of breastfeeding, through providing support and education. The course provider must comply with the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly regulations, and must ensure that the provisions of the Course Recognition Criteria are met. Course providers complete an application detailing course goals and outcomes; resources; faculty information; curriculum; business practices; resource assessment; and student assessment.

What is required for approval of a lactation course?

LEAARC Approved programs are taught by independent educators and contribute in part to the preparation of students who wish to enter the Lactation Consultant profession. LEAARC approval assures students that the course covers the topics identified in the IBLCE Detailed Content Outline and that it is taught by qualified faculty. Beginning January 1, 2017, all LEAARC Approved courses will provide 90 hours of didactic instruction in lactation management. A 90-hour LEAARC Approved lactation course provides the didactic instruction required for certification as an International Board Lactation Consultant. The course has existed for more than one year, has been offered more than one time, and the primary faculty are IBCLC certified. The course provider must comply with the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly regulations, and must ensure that the provisions of the Course Recognition Criteria are met. Course providers complete an application detailing course goals and outcomes; resources; faculty information; curriculum; business practices; resource assessment; and student assessment.



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What is required for a program to become accredited?

CAAHEP accredited programs are taught through post-secondary academic institutions and provide all requirements for students who wish to enter the Lactation Consultant profession through Pathway 2. LEAARC serves as a review committee for The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). Pathway 2 programs seeking accreditation submit their application to LEAARC. LEAARC reviews the program, conducts a site visit, and submits a recommendation on accreditation to CAAHEP. See *Questions About Accreditation and CAAHEP* for more information about the process for accreditation.

Questions About Accreditation

What is accreditation ... and why is it important?

Accreditation is an effort to assess the quality of institutions, programs and services, measuring them against agreed-upon standards and thereby assuring that they meet those standards. In the case of post-secondary education, there are two kinds of accreditation. Institutional accreditation helps to assure potential students that a school is a sound institution and has met certain minimum standards in terms of administration, resources, faculty and facilities. Programmatic (or specialized) accreditation examines specific schools or programs within an educational institution (e.g., the law school, the medical school, the nursing program). The standards by which these programs are measured have generally been developed by the professionals involved in each discipline and are intended to reflect what a person needs to know and be able to do to function successfully within that profession. Accreditation in the health-related disciplines serves a very important public interest. Along with certification, accreditation is a tool intended to help assure a well-prepared and qualified workforce providing health care services.

My university is already accredited so why would we need additional accreditation?

The college being accredited as an institution is different from having a particular program, specific to a profession, that is accredited within the college. CAAHEP requires that any CAAHEP accredited program be provided at an accredited institution. CAAHEP accreditation provides another layer of accreditation specific to the program (in this case Lactation Consultant) that will prepare a graduate for a specific profession.

What is CAAHEP?

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) is the largest programmatic/specialized accreditor in the health sciences field. In collaboration with its Committees on Accreditation, CAAHEP reviews and accredits more than 2000 educational



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programs in 28 health science occupations across the United State and Canada. Prior to 1994, accreditation in most of these disciplines was a function of a Committee within the American Medical Association (AMA). When the AMA decided to turn over accreditation of these programs to another entity, CAAHEP was born. CAAHEP is a broad-based membership organization with five categories of membership.

CAAHEP Membership Categories:

Organizational members: Each of these organizational members is entitled to appoint one commissioner to represent the interests and concerns of that organization:

Category 1: Sponsoring Organizations – ILCA and IBLCE are the two sponsoring organizations for LEAARC

Category 2: Committees on Accreditation – CAAHEP refers to these as CoAs. The Committees on Accreditation (CoA) represent the actual profession and are CAAHEP's experts in evaluating and working with programs. The Lactation Education Accreditation and Approval Review Committee (LEAARC) is the CoA for the Lactation Consultant profession.

Category 5: Associate Member Organizations

Educational program sponsors:

Category 3 is comprised of the schools, colleges and universities that maintain accredited programs.

Allied health graduates and the general public:

Category 4 includes members from accredited programs and the public. This representation in the CAAHEP system is an acknowledgement that the society to be served by the graduates of our accredited programs has an important role to play in the decisions about accreditation.

I saw that there is a specified amount of time a program must be in existence for LEAARC Approval of a course; is there one for accreditation?

There is no specified amount of time a program must be in existence. A new program is eligible for accreditation as long as they satisfy the standards.

What is a learning domain?

As stated in the CAAHEP Standards, learning domains are cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills), and affective (behavior).



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The LEAARC Approval process is for didactic programs only. Am I correct that accreditation requires clinical experience as well?

That is correct. The program must provide both didactic and clinical instruction.

The outcomes assessment requires data on "national/international credentialing examinations performance." How can we acquire that information if we can't get it from the certification board?

The International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners has agreed to release this information only for the Pathway 2 academic programs that have gone through the accreditation process.

What is the outcome if a collegiate program decides not to pursue this accreditation? Would the student still be eligible to sit for the certification exam?

Although program accreditation through CAAHEP is voluntary, the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners requires that a Pathway 2 program be accredited in order for the program's graduates to qualify for the exam through Pathway 2. This requirement applies only to Pathway 2, not to Pathway 1 or Pathway 3.

How do we know if we are ready for accreditation?

Prior to applying for accreditation, you can review the Standards and Guidelines for the profession located on the LEAARC website. All CAAHEP accredited programs for lactation consultants must comply with the Standards and Guidelines, which include a curriculum that provides students with a broad base of support coursework to serve as a foundation for lactation consultant practice and the core competencies for lactation consultant practice.

Am I correct that the director of an accredited program does not need to be an IBCLC nor recertified?

The people who plan and teach the lactation curriculum must be an IBCLC. This applies to both the didactic and clinical content. A program director who serves as an administrator and does not oversee the educational content does not need to be an IBCLC.

How is a "one-year program in lactation" defined? Is this an academic year or a calendar year? Are there minimum credits?

While CAAHEP's minimum for accreditation is one year, what you really need to look at are the Standards and Guidelines on the LEAARC website. With all the general education college courses and the lactation curriculum (both didactic and clinical) the program will probably be closer to two academic years.



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We aren't clear on whether we could require the general education content prior to the student's entry into the program.

Those are the kinds of decisions the college makes. The CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines are intentionally broad enough to leave those kinds of administrative decisions to the discretion of the college.

What types of fees are associated with accreditation?

Once accredited by CAAHEP, CAAHEP charges an annual institutional fee (currently \$450). This fee is for the institution and is NOT based on the number of CAAHEP accredited programs an institution has. In addition, LEAARC has fees for the accreditation process as well as an annual fee. After the first year of accreditation an \$800 Annual Accreditation Services Fee will be due.

Current fees for initial accreditation are:

- \$400 Registration Fee due with Request for Accreditation Services
- \$1000 Self-Study Report Fee due with SSR report
- \$1800 Site Visit Fee due with SSR report

What is the process for a program to become accredited?

To become accredited, a program must successfully complete a CAAHEP Request for Accreditation Services (RAF), and an on-site review. To begin the accreditation process, complete the CAAHEP Request for Accreditation Services form located on the [CAAHEP website](#) and submit it to LEAARC.

LEAARC will contact your program and forward materials about accreditation fees, the self-study document and the comprehensive on-site review. Once a program has successfully completed these steps, LEAARC will forward an accreditation recommendation to the CAAHEP Board of Directors for the Board to vote on.

These are the individual elements of the application process:

1. **Self-Study:** The program does its own analysis of how well it measures up to the established Standards.
2. **On-Site Evaluation:** A team of site visitors travels to the institution to determine how accurately the self-study reflects the status of the program and to address any questions that arise. This is a peer review process and often, after the formal part of the site visit is concluded, team members will share ideas for how a program can be strengthened or improved.



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3. **LEAARC Review and Recommendation:** LEAARC will review the report from the site visitors. If there are areas where the program fails to meet the Standards, these "deficiencies" will be identified and progress reports will be requested to assure that each program continues its efforts to fully comply with all Standards. LEAARC will develop a recommendation and send it to the CAAHEP Board of Directors.
4. **CAAHEP Board of Directors:** The CAAHEP Board of Directors will act on the recommendations forwarded from LEAARC, 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).
5. Immediately following the meeting of the CAAHEP Board of Directors (in which the program was presented), a letter will be sent to the President of the institution and copied to both the Dean and the 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.

How long does the accreditation process take?

After receipt of the Self Evaluation Report, the accreditation process may take up to one year. This time period can vary based on the overall readiness of the program, the quality of the self-study document, and the scheduling of the on-site review.

Does CAAHEP accreditation expire?

With the exception of initial accreditation, CAAHEP accreditation does not expire. Initial accreditation is for 5 years. At the end of the 5-year initial accreditation period, a program may be awarded continuing accreditation or its initial accreditation may be allowed to expire. Once a program has received continuing accreditation, accreditation remains in place until the CAAHEP Board of Directors votes otherwise. CAAHEP policy does currently require a comprehensive review at least once every 10 years. The CAAHEP Board of Directors reserves the right to place a program on probation or withdraw accreditation at such time that the program no longer meets CAAHEP Standards and has been appropriately notified.

What reporting is required?

Accredited programs are required to file an annual Report of Current Status with LEAARC. The report will include outcomes assessment data, action plan for improvement, and any major changes in the program. Outcome measures such as graduation rate, graduate employment rate, and employer comments regarding the competencies of program graduates are a few examples of the critical measures LEAARC will evaluate. You are also required to report any changes in key personnel within ten business days.