



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Regarding the Code of Professional Conduct for IBCLCs

### **Why is IBLCE putting out a new Code of Professional Conduct (CPC)?**

As it is a best practice for credentialing bodies, IBLCE periodically reviews its policies and procedures. IBLCE has written this CPC to encompass professional behaviors for which the IBCLC can be held accountable. IBLCE disseminated a draft of the document for public comment and the IBLCE leadership carefully reviewed stakeholder feedback.

Additionally, IBLCE is writing a companion document that will define the highest standards of conduct that IBLCE encourages of IBCLCs.

### **Why is the new document called the “Code of Professional Conduct” rather than the “Code of Ethics”?**

Professional conduct encompasses ethical behavior, and is a broader and stronger term. Recent discussions regarding the best practices in many similar organizations led to this term which provides a structure for expected professional behavior.

### **What does the CPC state about the WHO Code?**

As set forth in the introductory section of the CPC, IBLCE recognizes that a crucial part of an IBCLC’s duty to protect mothers and children is adherence to the principles and aim of the [International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes](#) hereafter referred to as the WHO Code and subsequent relevant documents of the World Health Assembly. The WHO Code’s core purpose is to emphasize the importance of maintaining the practice of breastfeeding, and of reviving the practice where it is in decline, as a way to improve the health and nutrition of infants and young children. IBLCE believes this core purpose of promoting the health of infants and children is a vitally important social cause and is very supportive of the aims of the WHO Code.

It is also important to note that IBLCE Board members and staff are currently expected, and have been expected for many years, to adhere to the WHO Code.

### **Is it unethical for an IBCLC to work for an infant formula company?**

IBLCE was founded to recognize with a professional credential, those who protect, promote and support breastfeeding. However, from a legal perspective IBLCE cannot prohibit, or pursue ethical sanctions, against a certificant who chooses to work for an infant formula company.

The CPC companion document will detail the highest standards of behavior that IBLCE encourages IBCLCs to follow, but which IBLCE cannot legally enforce.

**I am an IBCLC and the hospital at which I work expects me, as part of my job, to give to patients discharge packages which include infant formula. If I do so, is this an ethical violation of the IBLCE Code of Professional Conduct?**

IBLCE is extremely supportive of hospitals and other institutions which promote, and stress the importance of, breastfeeding. IBLCE is the co-sponsor of the [IBCLC Care Award](#) which recognizes facilities which promote and support breastfeeding.

At the same time, the fact that a hospital or another workplace expects its staff to make formula available in such a manner does not constitute an ethical violation by an IBCLC of the IBLCE Code of Professional Conduct. An IBCLC who finds her/himself in such a situation may encourage the hospital to consider the implications of patients associating the IBCLC with the endorsement of a formula company. The IBCLC's professional integrity is vital to her/his well-being and job satisfaction, as well as professional standing within the IBCLC community.

**I am an IBCLC and a formula manufacturer is sponsoring a presentation and luncheon at the hospital at which I work. Is it unethical pursuant to the IBLCE Code of Professional Conduct for me to attend this presentation and eat the sponsored lunch?**

It is not a violation of the IBLCE Code of Professional Conduct to attend this presentation and eat the sponsored lunch. Whether you choose to participate in these activities is a personal decision you must make independently for yourself.

**Why are there new procedures for ethics' matters?**

As indicated above, it is a best practice to periodically review policies and procedures. IBLCE reviewed its procedures with respect to ethics complaints and elected to streamline the same.

**How does the Code of Professional Conduct relate to the new ["Minimizing Commercial Influence Policy"](#) recently disseminated by IBLCE?**

Put simply, the Code of Professional Conduct applies to those who hold the IBCLC credential. The "Minimizing Commercial Influence Policy" applies to those who are seeking IBLCE Continuing Education Recognition Points (CERPs) for an educational activity or activities.

The IBLCE "Minimizing Commercial Influence Policy" represents an important step forward as, by adopting the policy, IBLCE joined many other healthcare groups working towards the minimization of commercial influence on professional education. It is also important to note that prior to the recent adoption of this policy, IBLCE had no policy which set forth in such a detailed manner limitations on commercial influence of educational activities receiving CERPs.