

This guide provides information about how to develop a Pathway 3 Plan. It is not intended as a guide about how to apply for the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant® (IBCLC®) professional certification or examination. For more information about applying for the certification and examination, please consult the <u>Candidate</u> <u>Information Guide</u>.

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I. What is IBLCE and the IBCLC Commission?

IBLCE®, or the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners®, is an independent international credentialing body whose mission is to serve the global public interest by advancing professional practice in lactation consultation and support through credentialing.

A. Contact Information

IBCLC Commission
International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE)

Phone: 703-560-7330

www.iblce.org

IBLCE has customer service in several locations. Certificants may reach the location that serves their country of residence by using the contact information found on the IBCLC Commission website.

II. The IBCLC Commission

The IBCLC Commission is the governing body administering the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant[®] (IBCLC[®]) certification programme and has authority and responsibility for all essential certification activities, including certification and recertification requirements.

III. Purpose of this Guide

The Pathway 3 eligibility pathway is distinguished from the other IBCLC eligibility pathways by requiring the applicant to complete a clinical practice mentorship under the direct supervision of IBCLCs who serve as mentors. Individuals who would like to follow Pathway 3 must first submit a plan to IBCLC Programme staff specifying how they will complete the required *directly supervised* clinical practice hours in lactation and breastfeeding care.

Before the directly supervised clinical practice mentorship begins, staff must verify the certification status of the IBCLCs who will serve as mentors. The purpose of this guide is to assist individuals in developing their Pathway 3 Plans.

A. Key Dates

Pathway 3 Plan verification is valid for five (5) years. Individuals with verified Pathway 3 Plans must meet *all* IBCLC certification programme eligibility requirements in place at the time of applying for the examination.

B. Application and Other Related Forms

The Pathway 3 Plan Verification Packet (application) is available in the same languages as the examination. Visit the IBCLC Commission website and locate your language. English, Chinese Traditional, Danish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish applications are available in the online credential management system.

Plans must be verified by IBCLC Programme staff before the applicant begins to accumulate the required minimum of 500 directly supervised clinical practice hours.

Once approved, a notification of Pathway 3 Plan verification will be sent by email to the applicant and the Chief Mentor. Please allow two weeks for verification of your Pathway 3 Plan to be completed.

Pathway 3 Plan applications may be submitted year-round. There is a fee for application verification and the amount can be found in the IBCLC Programme Fee Guide.

C. Applying for the IBCLC Examination

In addition to a minimum of 500 hours of directly supervised clinical practice in lactation care, Pathway 3 applicants must also complete education in the health sciences, education that is specifically about human lactation and breastfeeding, and five (5) hours of education focused on communication skills. For more information about the Health Sciences Education and Lactation Specific Education requirements, please consult the *Candidate Information Guide*.

Important! Application for the IBCLC certification must occur within the five years immediately following verification of the Pathway 3 Plan.

IV. Directly Supervised Clinical Practice

Pathway 3 clinical practice hours must be directly supervised by mentors who are currently certified IBCLCs in good standing. Direct supervision is defined as a gradual, three-phase process:

- Phase 1: Observation of IBCLC Mentor(s) Begins with line of sight observation of the IBCLC mentor engaged in practice AND/OR direct observation through use of a secure technology platform which facilitates synchronous two-way audio and visual communication.
- Phase 2: Transition to Clinical Practice Includes clinical practice experience
 under the direct observation and guidance of the IBCLC mentor who is physically
 in the room with the applicant OR through the use of a secure technology platform
 which facilitates synchronous two-way audio and visual communication until the
 skill is mastered.
- Phase 3: Supervised Independent Practice Culminates with independent practice by the applicant, with the IBCLC mentor either physically nearby to assist if needed OR available via a secure technology platform which facilitates synchronous two-way audio and visual communication.

Only those hours spent completing directly supervised clinical practice that involves interaction with breastfeeding families may be counted toward the required 500 hours minimum. Hours of clinical experience obtained prior to Pathway 3 Plan verification; hours obtained outside of the Pathway 3 Plan through work or volunteer experience; hours simply observing IBCLCs who are not mentors; and/or hours spent in completing alternative learning activities will not be counted toward fulfilling Pathway 3 requirements.

Please see the <u>Candidate Information Guide</u> and the <u>Interim Guidance</u> for additional information regarding the use of technology to meet clinical practice requirements.

A. Phase 1: Observation of IBCLC Mentor(s)

Observation of the IBCLC mentor(s) as described above must occur before the Pathway 3 applicant works directly with breastfeeding families.

• At the discretion of the supervising IBCLC, this observation may occur in conjunction with written assignments or coursework and may be undertaken before the Pathway 3 Plan is verified.

• Clinical observation of the IBCLC mentor **does not** count toward the minimum requirement of 500 directly supervised clinical practice hours.

B. Phase 2: Transition to Clinical Practice and Phase 3: Supervised Independent Practice

Practice obtained under Phases 2 and 3 of direct supervision **may be** counted toward the required 500 hours of directly supervised clinical practice. The directly supervised clinical practice may be undertaken only after the Pathway 3 Plan is verified.

Please Note: Due to the need to observe mentors and/or complete alternative learning assignments, completion of the Pathway 3 Plan will require more than 500 hours of the applicant's time. This should be taken into consideration when planning for the IBCLC credential application.

Actual practice by the applicant is required in Phases 2 and 3. This means that the applicant provides the care with the IBCLC mentor either in the room directly observing as the care is being delivered by the applicant or observing through use of a secure technology platform as described above which facilitates synchronous two-way audio and visual communication through either form of observation, either in person or via observation using technology with synchronous audio and visual components, the focus is on the mentor providing guidance and assistance to the applicant. The applicant should not be allowed to practise independently (Phase 3) until the IBCLC mentor(s) have determined that the applicant knows the limits of her/his knowledge and skill. Knowing when to ask for help is essential to the applicant's demonstration of the specialised knowledge required of IBCLCs.

Applicants are encoraged to pursue a variety of practice settings as part of the Pathway 3 mentorship, as this will provide the applicant with a broader range of experience related to the content areas on the *IBCLC Detailed Content Outline*. It is also important that applicants practise in settings that will give them an opportunity to work with breastfeeding families across the chronological spectrum from pre-conception through weaning. Directly supervised clinical practice hours must be accumulated in every duty listed on the *Clinical Competencies for the Practice of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants*. These hours must be recorded on the *Pathway 3 Clinical Practice Hours Report* and verified by the Chief Mentor.

C. Record Keeping

It is important to keep accurate records of directly supervised clinical practice hours. When applying for the IBCLC examination, your application may be randomly chosen for audit. If your examination application is audited, you will be required to submit additional documentation. Keep an accurate record of your clinical practice by using the <u>Pathway 3 Time Sheet</u> and the <u>Pathway 3 Directly Supervised Clinical Practice Hours Report</u>. These forms can be found at the end of this document.

V. Applicant Responsibilities

Pathway 3 applicants must:

- Locate and contract with IBCLCs who will serve as mentors and choose one IBCLC to serve as the Chief Mentor.
 - o Pathway 3 applicants are advised to network within their community to locate experienced IBCLCs who are willing to serve as mentors. Neither the IBCLC Commission nor IBLCE maintains a list of IBCLCs willing to be mentors and so does not provide assistance in locating mentors.
 - Please Note: Neither the IBCLC Commission nor IBLCE is responsible
 or liable for the acts, conduct, or health-related experience or decisionmaking of any mentors.
 - Recommendation: Independently contracting with more than one mentor
 is advisable and gives the applicant the advantage of observing and
 learning from more than one experienced IBCLC.
 - Establish a business relationship with the IBCLCs who will serve as mentors. Neither the IBCLC Commission nor IBLCE reviews or approves the contractual terms, conditions, or financial arrangements with any mentors, but only determines whether the requirements of Pathway 3 and any other relevant policies are met.
 - Please Note: Any cost of mentorship varies and is part of the business relationship between the applicant and the mentors. Neither the IBCLC Commission nor IBLCE is responsible for the terms of this business relationship. Payment is not required for mentorship.
 - Meet the mentor's and the practice setting's requirements regarding applicable
 laws, regulations, policies, or other professional rules or guidelines for practice,
 professional liability insurance, immunisation certificates, health examination,
 etc. If the clinical supervision is provided via technology, this applies to both
 the mentor's and your own location.
 - Notify IBCLC Programme staff in writing if for any reason the applicant and/or mentor decides to terminate the plan prior to completion or if it

becomes necessary to add or change mentors.

o If adding or changing mentors becomes necessary, it is the applicant's responsibility to notify IBCLC Programme staff of the change and obtain a completed <u>Mentor Agreement Form</u> for any new mentors. Clinical hours with a new mentor will not count until the new mentor has been verified.

A. Professional Responsibilities

Pathway 3 applicants are expected to adhere to certain basic principles of professional and ethical practices, including but not limited to:

- Conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times, adhering to all principles of the <u>Code of Professional Conduct for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants</u>.
- Ensure that proper legal, regulatory, health, safety, and insurance standards and requirements are met at all practice settings.
- Complete written work promptly and in compliance with the mentor's requirements.
- Obtain express written permission from the client to observe, assist, and/or provide lactation care.
- Keep accurate records of the time spent completing the Pathway 3 Plan.
- Abide by any legal, regulatory, policy, or other requirements of the clinical placement site(s) where the directly supervised clinical practice in lactation and breastfeeding care is obtained as well as your own location.

VI. Mentor Responsibilities

One mentor must agree to serve as the primary supervisor (Chief Mentor) of the Pathway 3 Plan. The Chief Mentor is responsible for:

- Creating and executing a Pathway 3 Plan which covers all of the duties listed on the *Clinical Competencies for the Practice of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants*.
- Working together with the applicant to complete the Pathway 3 Plan Application form.
- Securing the practice settings in which the applicant will obtain the directly supervised clinical practice hours.
- Supervising the other mentors who are providing direct supervision of the applicant's clinical practice.

• Reporting the percentage of time each mentor provided direct supervision to the Pathway 3 applicant. This report must be submitted to IBCLC Programme staff when the Pathway 3 Plan is completed and is for the purpose of awarding Continuing Education Recognition Points (CERPs) to mentors.

IBCLCs who serve as Pathway 3 mentors are expected to demonstrate and model the highest professional standards in their clinical practice and in their professional behaviour according to the <u>Code of Professional Conduct for IBCLCs</u> (effective November 1, 2011 and updated May 2023), <u>Scope of Practice for International Board Certified Lactation Consultant®</u> (<u>IBCLC®</u>) <u>Certificants</u> (dissemination and effective date December 12, 2018), the <u>Clinical Competencies for the Practice of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants</u> (<u>IBCLCs</u>) (dissemination and effective date December 12, 2018) and the IBLCE <u>Advisory</u> <u>Opinion on Telehealth</u>. Their commitment must extend beyond the breastfeeding families to teaching the Pathway 3 applicant under their supervision. Each Pathway 3 mentor must:

- Be a currently certified IBCLC in good standing.
- Complete and submit a <u>Pathway 3 Mentor Agreement Form</u> to the applicant.
- Provide a period of time during which the Pathway 3 applicant observes their practice before allowing the applicant to provide direct clinical practice to breastfeeding families.
- Directly supervise the applicant's clinical practice and determine the degree to which the applicant has mastered the clinical skills being practised before permitting the applicant to practise independently.
- Log the clinical practice hours that the applicant has accumulated under their direct supervision by completing and signing a *Pathway 3 Time Sheet*.
- Assign additional learning activities, reading and/or written assignments to the applicant, as needed.
- Provide a reference for the Pathway 3 applicant, upon request.

Important! Relatives of the Pathway 3 applicant may not serve as mentors. It is a conflict of interest for a relative of the Pathway 3 applicant to be that applicant's mentor.

A. CERPs for Mentors

IBCLCs who serve as mentors for approved Pathway 3 Plans may receive CERPs for their service. For the purposes of CERPs allocation, each Pathway 3 Plan is eligible for a total

of 25 L-CERPs. Over any given five-year period of time, IBCLCs may acquire up to a maximum of 50 L-CERPs for their service as mentors to applicants who complete their approved Pathway 3 Plan.

CERPs will be allocated on the basis of the percentage of time each mentor provided direct supervision to the applicant following Pathway 3. The Chief Mentor will be responsible for reporting these percentages. Based upon this report, IBCLC Programme staff will notify the Chief Mentor of the number of CERPs each mentor earned.

VII. Pathway 3 Plan Development

The Chief Mentor is expected to work with the Pathway 3 applicant to develop a plan for covering all of the duties listed on the <u>Clinical Competencies for the Practice of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants</u>. Making provisions for practice in several settings is important to well-rounded education in the clinical competencies.

VIII. Alternative Learning Activities

The assignment of other activities such as literature research or watching instructional videos may be needed in order for applicants to be exposed to all of the clinical skills. These alternative learning activities may be necessary, but ONLY those hours spent in directly supervised clinical practice that involves direct interaction with breastfeeding families may count toward the required minimum of 500 hours. These alternative learning activities are intended as suggestions to applicants and mentors. Pathway 3 Plans may include other learning activities agreed upon by the mentor and applicant.

- Attend a childbirth conference, a seminar conducted by a professional association, or sessions presented by a lawyer, a dietician, or a human relations counsellor. These can be in person or online.
- Study the anatomy and physiology of the breast in detail, including how milk is synthesised.
- Learn about infant oral anatomy and development (or other topics) and write a report.
- Make a presentation to your colleagues on the biochemistry of human milk, or a similar challenging topic.
- Observe how an infant interacts with the birthing family in the immediate postpartum. Compare infants who have been exposed to medications in labor to those who have not.
- Attend a variety of peer-to-peer support meetings to observe mothers and babies

- and to learn more about the wide range of normal breastfeeding experiences. Observe the group counsellors, listen, ask questions, practise ethics, etc. These can be in person or online via a secure platform.
- Complete a professional ethics class or a seminar on health privacy issues relevant to your country, community, or practice setting. These can be in person or online.
- Observe, document, and interpret the normal growth, development, and breastfeeding behaviour of a single baby over a six-month period.
- Join a study group that critically reads peer-reviewed journal articles on breastfeeding to learn more about research techniques and evidence-based practice.
- Complete a Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) course. Review hospital
 guidelines on breastfeeding. Describe in which ways they are aligned or not
 aligned with best practices.
- Join your local professional lactation consultant organisation for support, information, and educational opportunities.
- Complete tests, quizzes, and/or projects related to reading or clinical practice hours.
- Participate in role-playing exercises. These can be in person or online.
- Complete hypothetical charting exercises and practice writing reports to the primary health care provider.
- Complete a series of training sessions in multicultural counselling skills.
- Communicate with other health professionals, both supportive of and resistant to breastfeeding programmes and practices.
- Observe and then describe the differences, both benefits and/or challenges, between working with families via telephone, telehealth with video/audio capability, or in-person.
- Dialogue with your mentors about difficult challenges such as helping mothers of babies with disabilities, unexpected birth trauma, neonatal death, child abuse, medical emergencies, etc.
- Participate in discussions about how to work with other health care professionals as an effective, professional, respected member of the lactation care team.

IX. Ongoing Pathway 3 Plan Evaluation

Periodic evaluation is essential to the Pathway 3 Plan. Challenging situations such as poor work habits, unprofessional behaviour, or poor clinical knowledge or counselling skills may arise between applicant and mentor. The Pathway 3 applicant and mentor(s) should have regular evaluation meetings.

Whether the evaluation occurs daily, weekly, bimonthly, or monthly, establishing a schedule of meetings for the purpose of working through such challenges is important. Although evaluation time **cannot** be counted toward the directly supervised clinical practice requirement, it is imperative that time for evaluation be planned.

X. Potential Financial Considerations

Pathway 3 applicants are individually responsible for locating, contracting, and, if applicable, making any payment arrangements with IBCLC mentors, but one mentor must agree to serve as Chief Mentor. It is strongly recommended that the applicant and mentor sign a written agreement before the mentoring services begin. Neither IBLCE nor the IBCLC Commission currently provides assistance in locating mentors, or provides contract, legal, or financial counseling, aid, or assistance.

Important! The agreement reached, and fulfillment of it, is the sole responsibility of the parties involved. Neither the IBCLC Commission nor IBLCE may serve as a negotiator, arbitrator, legal counsel, or collection agency for either the Pathway 3 applicant or mentor. Therefore, neither the IBCLC Commission nor IBLCE is responsible or liable in any way for business aspects of the Pathway 3 applicant's relationship with any mentor.

Any cost associated with mentorship varies and is part of the business relationship between the applicant and her/his mentor(s). The Pathway 3 applicant is also responsible for obtaining professional liability insurance, immunisation certificates, health exam, privacy consent, patient approvals, or any other license or approval required by the mentor practice setting and in one's own location. As is the case in preparing for any career, the Pathway 3 applicant must expect to incur expenses such as, but not limited to, textbooks, insurance, seminars and workshops, and mentor's fees.

XI. Frequently Asked Questions

Can I get credit for clinical practice accumulated prior to verification of my plan or may I use my on-the-job experience? No. Your plan must be verified before you begin accumulating the directly supervised clinical practice hours, and you may not combine on-the-job experience with directly supervised experience in order to meet the 500-hour requirement. You may observe your mentor(s) before the plan is verified, but you must wait for notification that your plan has been verified to begin counting the directly supervised clinical practice hours.

What is the Pathway 3 Application deadline? Pathway 3 Plan applications may be submitted year-round.

Can any portions of the Clinical Competencies for the Practice of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants be omitted? No. You are expected to demonstrate to your mentor that you are skilled in all the clinical competencies.

Where can I obtain the clinical experience? Hours may be accumulated in any setting which affords the opportunity for in-person or remote, directly supervised clinical practice in accordance with this guide. Appropriate supervised settings may include, but are not limited to, hospitals, birthing centres, physician's offices, public health clinics, and private lactation consultant practices. You are encouraged to obtain experience in a variety of settings.

My local hospital will not permit me to provide care to their patients. What can I do? Be sure to verify that the settings where you will be working with breastfeeding families will allow you to provide care. Some hospitals and clinics will allow observation by Pathway 3 applicants but will not allow the applicant to practise, even with the mentor supervision. You and your mentor will need to work together to find appropriate clinical settings that will allow you to provide care to breastfeeding families, not just observe them.

Can the required minimum 500 directly supervised clinical practice hours be reduced by experience or other means? No. All Pathway 3 applicants must complete the 500 hours of directly supervised clinical practice minimum requirement which may be in person or through use of a secure technology platform which facilitates two-way synchronous audio and visual communication. Through either form of observation, either in person or via observation using technology with two-way synchronous audio and visual components, the focus is on the mentor providing mentoring and guidance to the applicant.

Can the hours I spend observing IBCLCs at work be counted? No. You may count only those hours that you have spent actually providing lactation care under the direct supervision of your mentor(s).

Am I required to be a nurse or other health professional to qualify under Pathway 3? No. Individuals from a broad variety of backgrounds may qualify through Pathway 3.

My mentor works in a retail store which sells and rents breast pumps. May I count the practice hours I obtain while helping customers? No. Hours helping clients choose which products to purchase or rent cannot be used toward meeting the Pathway 3 requirements.

Can Pathway 3 be undertaken by anyone, anywhere in the world? Yes, with limitations. Certain local or regional laws and regulations may require that Pathway 3 applicants meet

other requirements besides those listed, referenced, or implied in this guide. It is the responsibility of the IBCLC mentors and applicants to understand and abide by the laws and regulations within the jurisdiction(s) in which services are both being observed and performed, including but not limited to any licensing or professional terms or conditions.

Can additional mentors be added to my Pathway 3 Plan? Yes. Once your Pathway 3 Plan is approved, it is possible to add additional mentors. Ensure that you get a signed <u>Mentor Agreement Form</u> from your new mentor(s). You must contact IBCLC Programme staff to add mentors and receive verification of the new mentor prior to earning clinical hours with this mentor.

XII. Forms

Pathway 3 Mentor Agreement Form

All mentors must complete a Pathway 3 Mentor Agreement Form and return the completed form to the Pathway 3 applicant. This form may be required in the case of an audit when applying for IBCLC certification.

Pathway 3 Applicant's Name	e:
Mentor Information	
First Name:	Last Name:
IBCLC Credential Number (L-Number):	Will you be Chief Mentor? □ Yes □ No
Street Address:	
City:	State/Province:
Postal Code:	Country:
Work Phone:	Home Phone:
Email:	
Current Place of Employment:	
good standing and I accept respons supervision for the above named Po comply with all requirements with I	ational Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) in sibility for providing clinical instruction and direct athway 3 Plan applicant. I agree to recognise, follow, and respect to Pathway 3 and all applicable laws, regulations, but not limited to the terms of this guide.
Mentor's Signature:	Date:
Printed Name:	

Applicant, please retain the completed form for your records and for fulfilling audit requirements when applying for the IBCLC certification.

Please return this completed form to the Pathway 3 Plan applicant.

Report of Pathway 3 Clinical Practice Hours

Please keep careful records. When applying for the IBCLC credential, your application may be randomly chosen for audit. *If your examination application is audited, you will be required to submit this document, along with other records.* Applicants who fail to comply with the terms of the audit will not be allowed to take the examination and will forfeit a non-refundable portion of the examination fee.

Pathway 3 Applicant's Name:
IBLCE Account Number (if applicable):
Chief Mentor's Name:
Chief Mentor's IBCLC Credential Number (L-Number):

A minimum of 500 directly supervised clinical practice hours must be documented on this report. Your mentors must verify completion of the clinical practice hours they directly supervised. Please complete the table below summarising the hours recorded on your <u>Pathway 3 Time Sheets</u> and then obtain your mentor's signature and date in the appropriate box.

	Number of Directly Supervised Clinical Practise Hours			
Mentor's Name	Hours Supervised In Person	Hours Supervised via observation using technology with synchronous audio and visual components	Mentor's Signature & Date	
Grand Total of Directly Su	pervised Clinical Practise Hou	ırs:		

Applicant, please retain the completed form for your records and for fulfilling audit requirements when applying for the IBCLC certification.

Pathway 3 Time Sheet

Make as many copies of this sheet as you need. Use the sheet to record your directly supervised lactation specific clinical practice hours. These records will be used to complete the Report of Pathway 3 Clinical Practice Hours (page 16). Retain the time sheets for your records; IBCLC Programme staff may request that you submit them as verification of the hours you reported.

Pathway 3 Applicant's Name:
IBLCE Account Number (if applicable):
Chief Mentor's Name:
Chief Mentor's IBCLC Credential Number (L-Number):

Date	Brief Description of Daily Clinical Practice	Supervised	Start Time	End Time
		□ In Person		
		□ Via Technology		
		□ In Person		
		□ Via Technology		
		□ In Person		
		□ Via Technology		
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		□ Via Technology		

Applicant, please retain the completed form for your records and for fulfilling audit requirements when applying for the IBCLC certification.

Application for CERPs Award to Pathway 3 Mentors

Chief Mentor's Name:				
Chief Mentor's IBCLC Credential Number (I	L-Number):			
Phone Number:	Email (required):			
D (1 2) P (2 N				
Pathway 3 Applicant's Name:				
IBLCE Account Number (if applicable):				
Please provide the requested informat approved Pathway 3 Plan.	tion for each mentor only after t	he mentee has c	ompleted the	
Name of Mentor	IBCLC Credential Number (L-Number)	% of time spent mentoring	L-CERPs Awardo	
Submit this completed form to your IB the basis of the information provided. To of the completed form will be emailed distribute copies of the CERPs award n form with the number of CERPs award document CERPs reported for recertification.	The number of CERPs awarded to the Chief Mentor. It is the C otification to all other mentors I ded will serve as the certificate	will be entered a Thief Mentor's re isted on the form	and a scanned copy esponsibility to n. This copy of the	
Signed Statement:				
I understand that as the Chief Mentor, I furthermore, I agree that CERPs will a mentors. I verify that the information pentors' activities.	only be awarded to mentors of v	verified Pathway	y 3 applicants or	
Mentor's Signature:	Da	te:		
Printed Name:				
For Internal Use Only Ch	ERPs assigned in the table above have	been verified by:		
Staff Name:	5	Date:		