



CLINICAL COMPETENCIES CHECKLIST

Much of the clinical practice of the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) consists of systematic problem solving in collaboration with breastfeeding mothers and other members of the health care team. This checklist includes most of the clinical/practical skills that an entry level IBCLC needs in order to be satisfactorily proficient to provide safe and effective care for breastfeeding mothers and babies. The list is designed to encompass common breastfeeding situations and the challenges that are encountered most frequently by lactation consultants. This checklist can help you identify areas where you have less experience or knowledge, and you are encouraged to try to focus your professional education on these aspects. Clinical instructors can use this checklist as an appropriate guide in providing individualised education.

IBLCE thanks ILCA and the IBCLCs from all over the world who worked on developing these Clinical Competencies.

COMMUNICATION AND COUNSELLING SKILLS

In all interactions with mothers, families, health care professionals and peers, the candidate will demonstrate effective communication skills to maintain collaborative and supportive relationships.

The candidate will:

- Identify factors that might affect communication (i.e., age, cultural/language differences, hearing or visual impairment, mental ability, etc.)
- Demonstrate appropriate body language (i.e., position in relation to the other person, comfortable eye contact, appropriate tone of voice for the setting, etc.)
- Demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to cultural differences
- Elicit information using effective counselling techniques (i.e., asking open-ended questions, summarising the discussion, and providing emotional support)
- Make appropriate referrals to other health care professionals and community resources

The candidate will provide individualised breastfeeding care with an emphasis on the mother's ability to make informed decisions.

The candidate will:

- Assess mother's psychological state and provide information appropriate to her situation
- Include those family members or friends the mother identifies as significant to her
- Obtain the mother's permission for providing care to her or her baby
- Ascertain mother's knowledge about and goals for breastfeeding
- Use adult education principles to provide instruction to the mother that will meet her needs
- Select appropriate written information and other teaching aids

HISTORY TAKING AND ASSESSMENT SKILLS

The candidate will:

- Obtain a pertinent history
- Perform a breast evaluation related to lactation
- Develop a breastfeeding risk assessment
- Assess and evaluate the infant's ability to breastfeed
- Assess effective milk transfer

DOCUMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITH HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The candidate will:

- Communicate effectively with other members of the health care team, using written documents appropriate to the location, facility and culture in which the candidate is being trained, such as: consent forms, care plans, charting forms/clinical notes, pathways/care maps, and feeding assessment forms
- Use appropriate resources for research to provide information to the health care team on conditions and medications that affect breastfeeding and lactation
- Write referrals and follow-up documentation/ letters to referring and/or primary health care providers that illustrate the candidate's ability to identify:
 - The mother's concerns or problems, planned interventions, evaluation of outcomes and follow-up
 - Situations in which immediate verbal communication with the health care provider is necessary, such as serious illness in the infant, child, or mother
- Report instances of child abuse or neglect to specific agencies as appropriate or legally required

SKILLS FOR THE FIRST TWO HOURS AFTER BIRTH

The candidate will:

- Identify events that occurred during the labour and birth process that may adversely affect breastfeeding
- Identify and discourage practices that may interfere with breastfeeding
- Promote continuous skin-to-skin contact of the term newborn and mother until the first breastfeed
- Assist the mother and family to identify newborn feeding cues
- Help the mother and infant to find a comfortable position for latching-on/attachment during the first breastfeed after birth
- Identify correct attachment
- Reinforce to mother and family the importance of:
 - Keeping the mother and baby together
 - Feeding the baby on cue - but at least 8 times in each 24 hour period



POSTPARTUM SKILLS

Prior to discharge from care, the candidate will observe a breastfeed and effectively instruct the mother about:

- Assessment of adequate milk intake by the baby
- Normal infant sucking patterns
- How milk is produced and supply maintained, including discussion of growth/appetite spurts
- Normal newborn behaviour, including why, when and how to wake a sleepy newborn
- Avoidance of early use of a dummy/pacifier and bottle teat
- Importance of exclusive breastmilk feeds and possible consequences of mixed feedings with cow milk or soy
- Prevention and treatment of sore nipples
- Prevention and treatment of engorgement
- SIDS prevention behaviours
- Family planning methods and their relationship to breastfeeding
- Education regarding drugs (such as nicotine, alcohol, caffeine and illicit drugs) and complementary remedies (such as herbal teas)
- Plans for follow-up care for breastfeeding questions, infant's medical and mother's postpartum examinations
- Community resources for breastfeeding assistance

PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

The candidate will be able to:

- Identify problems
- Assess contributing factors and cause
- Develop an appropriate breastfeeding plan in consultation with the mother
- Assist the mother to implement the plan
- Evaluate effectiveness of the plan

SKILLS FOR MATERNAL BREASTFEEDING CHALLENGES

The candidate will be able to assist mothers with the following challenges:

- Caesarean birth
- Flat/inverted nipples
- Thrush infections of breast, nipple, areola, and milk ducts
- Continuation of breastfeeding when mother is separated from her baby
 - Milk expression techniques
 - Maintaining milk production
 - Collection, storage and transportation of milk
- Cultural beliefs that are not evidence-based and may interfere with breastfeeding, (i.e., discarding colostrum, rigidly scheduled feedings, necessity of formula after every breastfeeding, etc.)

- Adolescent mother
 - Strategies for returning to school
 - Maintaining milk production
- Nipple pain and damage
- Engorgement
- Blocked duct and/or nipple pore
- Mastitis
- Breast surgery/trauma
- Overproduction of milk
- Postpartum psychological issues including transient sadness ("baby blues") and postpartum depression
 - Appropriate referrals
 - Medications compatible with breastfeeding
- Insufficient milk supply, differentiating between perceived and real
- Weaning issues
 - Safe formula preparation and feeding techniques
 - Care of breasts

SKILLS FOR INFANT BREASTFEEDING CHALLENGES

The candidate will be able to assist mothers who have infants with the following challenges:

- Traumatic birth
- 35-38 weeks gestation
- Small for gestational age (SGA) or large for gestational age (LGA)
- Multiple births
- Preterm birth, including the benefits of kangaroo care
- High risk for hypoglycaemia
- Sleepy infant
- Excessive weight loss, slow/poor weight gain
- Hyperbilirubinemia (jaundice)
- Ankyloglossia (short frenulum)
- Thrush infection
- Colic/fussiness
- Gastric reflux
- Lactose overload
- Food intolerances
- Neurodevelopmental problems
- Teething and biting
- Breast refusal/early baby led weaning
- Breastfeeding a toddler
- Breastfeeding through pregnancy
- Tandem feeding

(Continued over page)



CLINICAL COMPETENCIES CHECKLIST (continued)

MANAGEMENT SKILLS

The candidate will demonstrate the ability to:

- Perform a comprehensive breastfeeding assessment
- Assess milk transfer
- Calculate an infant's kilojoule and volume requirements
- Increase milk production

SKILLS FOR USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND DEVICES

The candidate will have up-to-date knowledge about breastfeeding-related equipment and demonstrate appropriate use and understanding of potential disadvantages or risks of the following:

- A device to evert nipples
- Nipple creams/ointments
- Breast shells
- Breast pumps
- Alternative feeding techniques
 - Tube feeding at the breast
 - Cup feeding
 - Spoon feeding
 - Eyedropper feeding
 - Finger feeding
 - Bottles and artificial teats
- Nipple shields
- Dummies/pacifiers
- Infant scales
- Use of herbal supplements for mother and/or infant

SKILLS FOR BREASTFEEDING CHALLENGES WHICH ARE ENCOUNTERED INFREQUENTLY

The following issues are encountered relatively infrequently, and may not be seen during the candidate's training. The entry-level lactation consultant would not be expected to be proficient in these situations, but should have the basic skills to assist the mother and infant while seeking guidance from a more experienced IBCLC.

Infant:

- Infant with tonic bite/ineffective/dysfunctional suck
- Cranial-facial abnormalities, such as micronathia (receding lower jaw) and cleft lip and/or palate
- Down Syndrome
- Cardiac problems
- Chronic medical conditions, such as cystic fibrosis, PKU, etc.

Mother:

- Induced lactation and relactation
- Coping with the death of an infant
- Chronic medical conditions, such as Multiple Sclerosis, Lupus, seizures, etc.

- Disabilities which may limit mother's ability to handle the baby easily, such as, rheumatoid arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, cerebral palsy, etc.
- HIV/AIDS: understanding of current recommendations

SKILLS FOR MEETING PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The candidate will demonstrate the following professional responsibilities:

- Conduct herself or himself in a professional manner, by complying with the IBCLC Code of Ethics for International Board Certified Lactation Consultants and the ILCA Standards of Practice; and by adhering to the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and its subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions.
- Practice within the laws of the setting in which she/he works, showing respect for confidentiality and privacy.
- Use current research findings to provide a strong evidence base for clinical practice, and obtain continuing education to enhance skills and obtain/maintain IBCLC certification.
- Advocate for breastfeeding families, mothers, infants and children in the workplace, community and within the health care system.
- Use breastfeeding equipment appropriately and provide information about risks as well as benefits of products, maintaining an awareness of conflict of interest if profiting from the rental or sale of breastfeeding equipment.

SITES FOR ACQUISITION OF SKILLS

The candidate may acquire clinical/practical skills in the following settings:

- Private practice IBCLC office
- Private practice, obstetric, paediatric, family or midwifery practice
- Child health clinics and domiciliary services
- Hospital
 - Lactation services
 - Birthing centre
 - Postpartum unit
 - Mother-Baby unit
 - Level II and Level III nurseries: Special Care Nursery, Neonatal Intensive Care Nursery
 - Paediatric unit
- Community nursing services
- Out-patient follow-up breastfeeding clinics
- Breastfeeding telephone counselling services
- Antenatal and postnatal breastfeeding classes
- Home births (if legally permitted)
- Volunteer community support group meetings