

Lactation Education Specialist Program Description

BreastfeedLA developed the 45-hour Lactation Education Specialist course in an effort to expand outreach and provide access to an inclusive environment for lactation education for underrepresented communities. BreastfeedLA saw the need for a culturally competent, intersectional, holistic, and financially accessible lactation course. There is a serious deficit of women of color birthing professionals, and even fewer women of color lactation consultants. It is pertinent especially that black women are equally represented in the birthing healthcare system, to combat rising maternal mortality rates and infant mortality rates in the black community. Current data from the CDC shows that black women are 3 to 4 times more likely than white women to die from childbirth related complications due to structural racism and biases. BreastfeedLA is dedicated to changing these outcomes by employing lactation educators of color to train and educate the new growing waves of lactation educators of color. The current program is led by Registered Nurse and IBCLC, Jadah Chatterjee and is co-taught with advanced trained Certificated Lactation Educated Specialists (CLES) from the Los Angeles community, with other professional designations ranging from IBCLC, Doula, Registered Dietitian, School Counselor to WIC Nutrition Assistants and Breastfeeding Peer Counselors. Instructors set the tone of the class by emphasizing respect toward each other's lived experiences and maintaining a safe and inclusive space throughout each session.

In addition to utilizing the most up-to-date scientifically based research regarding lactation, the curriculum incorporates the identification of barriers and disparities in the healthcare system that impact marginalized communities. These disparities are highlighted throughout the course in order to prevent continued discrimination and ignorance in future healthcare settings. Instructors also concentrate efforts toward changing common language used in lactation to incorporate broader terminology. As the definition of "family" continues to expand, emphasis on using inclusive language when providing care is interwoven through each session. BreastfeedLA recognizes and respects that not all birthing and lactating people identify as mothers or women.

BreastfeedLA also recognizes the growing need for Spanish speaking lactation workers. Future plans for the course include having the curriculum translated and taught in Spanish to increase the number of lactation educators and consultants within the Spanish speaking community. In addition to the 45 hour class, creation of an additional 45 hour curriculum to meet the 90 hour education requirement for the IBCLC exam is being developed for those participants who want to continue on to become IBCLC's.

BreastfeedLA's Lactation Education Specialist Training was created to provide opportunities for the lactation-specific education required for all individuals aspiring to pursue board-certification as IBCLCs and to supplement the training and education of existing healthcare professionals in the area of human lactation. The course curriculum was adopted by a LEAARC approved curriculum developed by California Advanced Lactation Institute. All concepts, skills, and education in human lactation are taught in accordance with the IBLCE Detailed Content Outline (www.iblce.org) and meet the standards for supporting breastfeeding practices advised by the World Health Organization, American Academy of Pediatrics, and Baby-Friendly USA.