



IBLCE®

*International Board of
Lactation Consultant Examiners*

**INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF LACTATION CONSULTANT EXAMINERS® (IBLCE)
ADVISORY OPINION - FRENULOTOMY**

IBLCE has received several inquiries regarding the appropriateness of an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant® performing frenulotomies. As is a common practice of certification boards on matters of significance, IBLCE is issuing an advisory opinion on this matter.

Frenulotomy is a surgical procedure intended to remedy a physical situation “tongue tie,” in which the lip or tongue has limited mobility. In the care of tongue tie or ankyloglossia, tissue under the tongue is cut to alleviate symptoms that can lead to difficulty in breastfeeding. Frenulotomies are generally performed by licensed health care practitioners. Frenulotomy is not expressly covered in the IBLCE Scope of Practice or Clinical Competencies for the Practice of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants. The Scope of Practice does specify that IBLCE certificants have the duty to uphold the standards of the IBCLC profession by “working within the legal framework of the respective geopolitical regions or settings.” Accordingly, frenulotomy is not an authorized procedure for IBLCE certificants unless they are separately licensed or authorized to perform frenulotomies in the applicable jurisdiction. However, IBLCE cannot prohibit the performance of frenulotomies where such activity is permitted for practitioners in a particular country or jurisdiction of practice. Given this background, the question has arisen as to whether performance of frenulotomies would be subject to disciplinary action under the IBLCE Code of Professional Conduct.

Given the complexity of this matter posed by the global presence of IBLCE certificants and the serious nature of this issue and potential consequences, IBLCE has investigated this issue and sought guidance from appropriate professionals and regulators. For example, in the United States, frenulotomies must generally be performed by licensed healthcare professionals. Also, in the United Kingdom, IBLCE has recently received written guidance from the Department of Health indicating that frenulotomies should only be carried out by registered healthcare professionals trained to do so. It is not practical to review the laws of all countries or jurisdictions where IBLCE certificants are located and IBLCE cannot make a blanket statement as to the permissibility of such procedures by IBLCE certificants because of the potential variation of the laws and regulations of different countries or jurisdictions.

Thus, in determining the appropriateness of the performance of frenulotomies by an IBCLC, the analysis is contingent upon whether an IBCLC holds a formal license, training, and/or permission from the health authorities in the country or jurisdiction in question to conduct frenulotomies. This is not a matter subject to disciplinary action by IBLCE unless the practice is not authorized or prohibited in a particular country or jurisdiction. If the practice is not permitted for IBLCE certificants to perform in certain countries or jurisdictions, then such activity may be considered outside of the Scope of Practice and may be an appropriate subject of a complaint under the IBLCE Code of Professional Conduct.

In the event of such a complaint, IBLCE will expect to be provided with information about the legality and permissibility of such a procedure in the relevant country or jurisdiction. Any such complaints must follow in detail the requirements of the IBLCE Code of Professional Conduct and accompanying procedures. Questions may be addressed to the IBLCE International Office at international@iblce.org