

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR LAMAZE® INTERNATIONAL CHILDBIRTH EDUCATOR PROGRAMS

Thank you for your interest in seeking Lamaze International Childbirth Educator Program Accreditation. Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Programs are known for their excellence and new program sites are welcome.

LAMAZE MISSION & PHILOSOPHY

Lamaze International is the most recognized name in childbirth education, and our program is the oldest and most comprehensive program of its kind. Highly respected, Lamaze International sets Best Practice Standards for Childbirth Education. The mission of Lamaze International is to promote, support and protect normal birth through education and advocacy. Lamaze envisions a world of confident women choosing normal birth. Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Programs prepare and mentor childbirth educators who will advance the mission and vision of the organization. Integral to the program is our fundamental philosophy of birth:

- Birth is normal, natural and healthy.
- The experience of birth profoundly affects women and their families.
- Women's inner wisdom guides them through birth.
- Women's confidence and ability to give birth is either enhanced or diminished by the care provider and place of birth.
- Women have a right to give birth free from routine medical interventions.
- Birth can safely take place in homes, birth centers and hospitals.
- Childbirth education empowers women to make informed choices in health care, to assume responsibility for their health and to trust their inner wisdom.

PROGRAM GOAL

The goal of the Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program is to provide the knowledge and skills needed to achieve the seven competencies essential for practice as a childbirth educator. Once students have successfully completed a Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program, they are eligible to sit for the Lamaze International Certification Exam. The Lamaze International Certification Program is the only childbirth education certification program accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).

A Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educator:

- Promotes the childbearing experience as a normal, natural, and healthy process which profoundly affects women and their families.
- Assists women and their families to discover and use strategies to facilitate normal, natural and healthy pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, and early parenting.
- Helps women and their families understand how complications and interventions influence the normal course of labor and birth.
- Provides information and support that encourage attachment between babies and their families.
- Assists women and their families to make informed decisions for childbearing.
- Acts as an advocate to promote normal, natural, healthy and fulfilling childbirth experiences for women and their families.
- Designs, teaches, and evaluates a course in Lamaze preparation that increases a woman's confidence and ability to give birth.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS OF A LAMAZE ACCREDITED CHILDBIRTH EDUCATOR PROGRAM

The Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program combines both academic and practical learning experiences in a comprehensive course of study. While each program has unique qualities, the foundation of all programs is the *Lamaze International Childbirth Educator Program Study Guide* and the learning activities outlined within.

Program Directors are given flexibility when developing Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Programs, and individual programs may determine their program design within guidelines set by Lamaze International.

The key program components are:

- Three birth observations, including at least one normal birth;
- Observation of a complete series of childbirth education classes taught by an LCCE educator (if not available, an alternative needs to be agreed upon);
- Attendance at a program seminar;
- Completion of a childbirth education course design;
- Student-teaching a series of Lamaze childbirth education classes under the supervision of an LCCE educator (if not available, an alternative needs to be agreed upon);
- Completion of reading and learning activities in the *Lamaze International Study Guide*.

Traditionally, programs provide supervision of all aspects of the students' key program components. All key components are highly recommended for all students and may be required of most students by the Program Director in order to meet the goals and objectives of the Lamaze Childbirth Educator Program. While all students are required to attend a program seminar and to complete the reading and learning activities that help them to achieve the objectives in the *Lamaze International Study Guide*, Program Directors are given the flexibility to waive some of the other key program components for students with background experience that makes some learning activities unnecessary. For example, many labor and delivery nurses, doulas, and midwives have extensive experience with normal birth and may not need to observe three additional labors and births. This flexibility also encourages Program Directors to incorporate some or all of the outside learning activities into the actual seminar or classroom portion of the program.

WHO CAN APPLY TO START A LAMAZE ACCREDITED CHILDBIRTH EDUCATOR PROGRAM?

In order to apply to establish a Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program, the applicant must:

- Complete the mentoring program to become an approved Program Trainer (procedure outlined below).
- Submit with this application a letter of recommendation from the Program Director of a Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program attesting to the applicant's capability to manage all phases of a Lamaze Childbirth Educator Program.

Requirements for Program Trainers

Program Trainers are the instructors responsible for teaching the bulk of the content presented in the seminar or classroom portion of the program. Each Program Trainer must meet the minimum requirements outlined below. Program Directors preparing trainers for their own programs may require additional qualifications.

Minimum Requirements for Program Trainers

- Current LCCE educator;
- Current professional or provider membership with Lamaze International;
- Support for the mission, vision, and philosophies of birth and parenting of Lamaze International;
- Experience teaching childbirth education classes
- Successful completion of a mentoring program which includes:
 - Observing one complete Lamaze Childbirth Educator Seminar
 - Successfully co-teaching at least one Lamaze Childbirth Educator Seminar under the supervision of an experienced approved Trainer
- FACCE status recommended.

In order to maintain status as an approved Program Trainer, the trainer must maintain her LCCE credential; maintain her membership in Lamaze International; maintain her commitment to the Lamaze mission, vision, and philosophies; and attend a full Lamaze International annual conference and Lamaze Program Trainers meeting (held at the annual conference) at least once every three years. (Note: For international Program Trainers for whom attending the annual conference at least once every three years is a hardship, alternative methods of staying up-to-date and connected may be arranged with the Chair of the Program Accreditation Committee.)

PROGRAM DIRECTORS

A Program Director is the person responsible for all aspects of administering a Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program. Some Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Programs are administered by two co-directors. All Program Directors are automatically members of the Program Directors Committee of the Lamaze International Education Council and elect a representative to serve on the Education Council Governing Body as the Program Director Committee Chair.

MENTORING PROCESS FOR NEW PROGRAMS

Lamaze International is committed to mentoring prospective programs and orienting prospective Program Trainers. The basic mentoring process is outlined below. Already established Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Programs are encouraged to develop more extensive plans for mentoring new programs.

- An LCCE educator or group of LCCE educators contact(s) Lamaze International expressing interest in developing a Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program. (Interested LCCE educators may also contact programs directly, without contacting the Lamaze office first. Once an established program enters into a mentoring relationship with a prospective program, the established program should let the office know, who will in turn, notify the Program Accreditation Committee Chair.) Motivated, experienced LCCE educators at the prospective program are identified to begin process to become Program Trainers.
- A list of mentor programs is provided to the prospective program by Lamaze International.
- The prospective program contacts the list of mentor programs to determine which best fits the needs of the prospective program. An agreement is reached between the prospective program and its chosen program to mentor prospective Program Trainers.
- Once at least one of the LCCE educators has been approved as a Program Trainer, she will work with the Program Director who is mentoring her to put together a plan for developing and administering a new Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program. The mentee should grade some course designs from the seminars that she observes and co-teaches under the supervision of her mentor. In addition, the mentor should share her system and guidelines for managing candidates

with the mentee. Once the mentoring Program Director is confident that the applicant has the skills to teach a seminar on her own, grade course designs on her own or supervise the grading of course designs by other trained LCCE educators, and to administer the new program, she will write a letter of recommendation (which will be included in this application).

- The prospective new Program Director will then complete this application and submit it to the Program Accreditation Committee.
- The Program Accreditation Committee will either approve the application or inform the applicant of additional information or activities which must be provided before the application can be approved.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT LAMAZE ACCREDITED CHILDBIRTH EDUCATOR PROGRAMS

Eligibility for Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Programs

Program Directors may determine student eligibility criteria for admission to their programs. Once students are accepted into a Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program they are referred to as “candidates.” Please see Attachment I - *Pathways to Certification* to view the sets of criteria approved by Lamaze International. Programs are expected to customize their programs based on their eligibility requirements.

Seminar or Classroom Portion of the Program

Each seminar must include a minimum of 20 hours of classroom instruction. (One contact hour equals 60 minutes of instruction.) As part of this Program Accreditation Application, applicants will be required to complete continuing education information about their seminar. (See application form.)

The core curriculum for all Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Programs is the current *Lamaze International Study Guide*. The recommended readings and learning activities are designed to help the candidate meet the objectives. If a candidate already has the knowledge necessary for a certain objective, then she does not *have* to read the recommended reading or do all the recommended learning activities.

The seminar should be interactive with a variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of various types of learners. Content should help prepare students to teach a Lamaze childbirth education series that includes the essential content listed in the Appendix of the current *Study Guide* and to achieve the seven competencies of a Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educator.

In addition, the seminar must cover:

- Lamaze mission, vision, and philosophies;
- Lamaze six care practices that support normal birth;
- Lamaze standards;
- Lamaze Code of Ethics;
- Information about and (at least a little) preparation to sit for the Certification Exam.

Student-to-Trainer Ratios at the Seminar or Classroom Portion of the Program

For the entire seminar, the recommended student to trainer ratio is 10 to 1. For the entire seminar, the student to trainer ratio will be no more than 15 to 1. An exception to this rule is made when a prospective Program Trainer is co-teaching a seminar; in this case, the experienced Program Trainer must be present during the time that the prospective Program Trainer is teaching. Only approved Lamaze International Program Trainers and prospective trainers who are doing their student teaching may be used to meet the required student to trainer ratio. Additional LCCE educators who are auditing/helping with small group work may not be used to meet the required ratio. Also, guest speakers and/or experts brought in to teach certain topics may not be used to meet the required student to trainer ratio.

At the discretion of the Program Director, students who are not candidates in the Lamaze Childbirth Educator Program may also attend the seminar. These students could be experienced childbirth educators who plan to sit for the open Certification Exam; LCCE educators who need contact hours for recertification; or others seeking continuing education credits. The same ratio of 15 students to 1 program trainer applies.

Seminar Certificate

Program Directors must request seminar completion certificates from the Lamaze Administrative Office. These certificates have the correct wording for the contact hour approval. (They are also lovely.) If a Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program wants to provide more than 20 hours of continuing education credit for the seminar, the Program Director must complete and submit an application for Lamaze contact hours to the Lamaze Administrative Office and provide a separate CE certificate of attendance for those additional hours.

Post-seminar Activities

After the seminar, most candidates will need to complete their course designs and student teaching. Once all components of the program have been completed (or waived according to components completed at the seminar and/or experience), the Program Director will discuss the candidate's progress with the candidate. Once a candidate believes that she has met all the goals and objectives of the program as outlined in the *Study Guide*, and she has successfully participated in the seminar, she will complete and sign the *End of Program Self-Assessment Form* in the Appendix and submit it to the Program Director. If the Program Director agrees that the student has met all the goals and objectives of the Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program, the Program Director will sign the *Program Completion Form*. The Program Director will include documentation as to any key program components that were waived and the rationale for the waiver in the candidate's file.

If a Program Director requires completion of additional key program components, she must agree to provide guidance and evaluation of those key components for the candidate. Once these additional key program components are successfully completed and the candidate has completed and signed the *End of Program Self-Assessment Form*, the candidate will submit all final paperwork to the Program Director. The Program Director will then sign the *Program Completion Form*.

Once the *Program Completion Form* has been signed by the Program Director, the candidate is eligible to apply to take the *Lamaze International Certification Exam*.

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

If the day-to-day management of candidates is handled by a Program Coordinator (hired by, or working for, a Program Director) rather than the Program Director, then the Program Director is responsible for making sure that the Program Coordinator receives all pertinent communications from Lamaze International. The Program Director is also responsible for making sure the Program Coordinator has the training and skills to monitor a candidate's progress through the program (if she is doing so). It is recommended that Program Coordinators be members of Lamaze International.

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION APPLICATION FEE SCHEDULE

Each Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program operates independently and determines its own tuition fees. The fee structure for program accreditation is as follows:

- Non-refundable new Program Accreditation Application fee = \$250
- Initial Program Accreditation fee = \$175 (due upon program approval)
This initial \$175 fee is applied to the year in which the program is approved.

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION APPLICATION PROCESS

Eligible Lamaze International Childbirth Educator Program Accreditation applicants include such provider entities as universities, colleges, Lamaze International chapters, hospitals, other community-based organizations, and Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educators who successfully complete the mentoring process to become approved Program Trainers. All applicants must embrace the Lamaze International mission and philosophies of birth and parenting and comply with Lamaze International's policies and standards. All applicants must agree to abide by the World Health Organization (WHO) Code on Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes and may not accept support of any kind from any agencies, organizations, or persons in violation of the Code. In addition, provider entities, such as hospitals, which may offer childbirth education classes, must be Lamaze Approved Providers. (Please see Attachment II – *Lamaze Provider Application*.)

The application process is a collaboration involving both the applicant and Lamaze International. To help you reach your goal of becoming a Lamaze Accredited Program, the Program Accreditation Committee Chair and the Lamaze International staff are available for consultation at each stage of the application process. Applications, which may be submitted at any time during the year, will be reviewed by the Program Accreditation Committee, which is appointed by the Education Council Chair.

The application review process takes approximately 60 days to complete and follows the process outlined below:

- Three (3) copies of completed application are submitted with all supporting materials to Lamaze International. (*Note: Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant and may be resubmitted when complete.*)
- Applications will be forwarded to Program Accreditation Committee Chair and another reviewer within seven (7) days of receipt.
- The reviewer will submit her appraisal to the Program Accreditation Committee Chair within 21 days of receipt.
- The Program Accreditation Committee Chair will summarize the appraisals and prepare a letter of response to the applicant within days of receipt of the reviewer's appraisals.

Upon approval of the program application, an accreditation agreement and license will be forwarded to the new Program Director to sign and return to Lamaze International (Attachment III) with the fee for that year.

PROGRAM REACCREDITATION AND FEES

Accreditation is conferred for a five-year period. To maintain Lamaze accreditation, Program Directors must submit:

- An *Official File: Childbirth Educator Seminar* report due within 30 days following each seminar;
- An annual summary due December 31st of each year (i.e., the report for 2008 is due December 31, 2008);
- An annual reaccreditation fee of \$175 due December 31st of each year for the following year (i.e., the reaccreditation fee for 2008 is due December 31, 2008);
- A Full Program Accreditation application due every five (5) years.

In addition to the program accreditation fees, the program pays a \$95 non-refundable reciprocity fee for each traditional candidate enrolled in the Childbirth Educator Program to Lamaze International. This fee covers the *Lamaze International Childbirth Educator Study Guide* for each student, marketing by Lamaze

International and supports the ongoing development and evaluation of the Lamaze Childbirth Educator Program. **Fees related to the program are set by the Education Council and are subject to change.*

Note: The *Official File: Childbirth Educator Seminar* reports are required so that Lamaze International complies with requirements of the Virginia and California Boards of Nursing regarding the approval of nursing contact hours. If programs fail to submit these forms, Lamaze International's ability to grant nursing contact hours for Lamaze programs could be jeopardized.

Programs are required to submit three (3) collated copies of a complete, updated *Lamaze International Application for Childbirth Educator Program Accreditation* every five years.

In addition to the updated application, programs seeking reaccreditation must answer the following questions:

- 1) *During the last five years, did you have any grievances filed against you?*
- 2) *If you did have any grievances filed against you, how were they resolved?*

Please be sure to keep copies of all summaries and reports for your files.

The Program Accreditation Committee will review all annual reports and full *Lamaze International Application for Childbirth Educator Program Accreditation* reports. Any tardy *Official File: Childbirth Educator Seminar* reports, annual summaries, or five-year *Lamaze International Application for Childbirth Educator Program Accreditation* reports will be assessed a \$200 late fee.

Incomplete Annual Summaries and Lamaze International Application for Childbirth Educator Program Accreditation

The Committee may require supplemental materials should they determine that the summary/application was not complete when submitted or if additional information is needed to complete the review. Supplemental materials are due to Lamaze International within 60 days of the program's receipt of the request. If the additional information is not submitted within the designated days the program enters default status.

Program Default

A program is in default when it has not complied with reaccreditation deadlines and has not been granted an extension by the Program Accreditation Chair. A program in default may not accept new students. To regain accreditation, the program in default must submit a request for an extension detailing its plan to restore its program accreditation, as well as the \$175 reaccreditation fee and a \$200 late fee. The Program Accreditation Committee Chair will review the extension request. Extensions are granted for 90 days and do not alter the schedule of subsequent summary and report dues dates.

Program Probation

A program may be placed on probation if the Program Accreditation Committee receives complaints and verifies that the program is violating major philosophical tenets of Lamaze International such as handing out formula samples at a childbirth educator seminar or is violating important program accreditation guidelines such as the required student-to-trainer ratio at a seminar. A program placed on probation may not accept new students. To regain accreditation, the Director of the program placed on probation will work closely with the Chair of the Program Accreditation Committee to develop a plan to reestablish accreditation.

CHANGE OF AFFILIATION

Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Programs are either institution-sponsored (i.e. university, hospital, Chapter, etc.) or independent. The four types of program affiliation changes are:

- Institution-sponsored program to new institution-sponsored program,
- Institution-sponsored program to independent program,
- Independent program to institution-sponsored program,
- Independent program to new independent program,

Should a Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program wish to change its affiliation, it must first request approval from Lamaze International. The request must include three collated copies of the following:

- A complete *Lamaze International Application for Childbirth Educator Program Accreditation* that details any modifications to the program caused by change of affiliation. If there is no change to a particular section of the application, the applicant may simply state “no change.”
- A letter from the previous sponsor acknowledging the change of affiliation.
- For institution-to-institution or independent-to-institution changes of affiliation only:
Descriptive brochures, a catalog (if applicable), and an overview of the new institution must be submitted illustrating specifically that its mission is in concert with the Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program.
- For college/university institution affiliations only:
If the new institution is a college or university, please provide evidence that it is regionally, nationally or internationally accredited by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation or by the Association of Universities and Colleges, or by another internationally accepted accreditation agency.
- For hospital affiliations only:
Please attach a copy of Lamaze International Provider status for that hospital.
- For hospital/medical-center/chapter institution affiliations only:
If the new institution is a hospital, medical center or chapter of Lamaze International or other approved sponsor, the merits of the proposal will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Program Accreditation Committee.

Please be sure to keep a copy of the letter and documents submitted to request a change in affiliation for your files. The program will be considered as provisionally accredited from the date the request is received at Lamaze International until a response to the request is issued.

CHANGE OF PROGRAM DIRECTOR

When a Program Director decides to retire and desires that her program should continue, she must submit a letter of recommendation to the Program Accreditation Committee at least 60 days before her retirement date. In this letter, she must verify that her chosen successor is a Program Trainer, and that her chosen successor has the skills necessary to manage a Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Program. The Program Accreditation Committee will evaluate the recommendation and determine if the successor meets the necessary qualifications within 30 days of receipt of the letter.

PROGRAM CLOSING POLICY

The time frame each program allows for candidate completion should be communicated in writing to all candidates upon acceptance to the program and should be in that program’s policy statements. When a program director plans to close her program, she must follow her enrolled candidates for the time

specified in her program guidelines, or until she has signed the *Program Completion Form* for the candidate. If the director is unable to perform this duty herself, she must appoint someone else involved in her program OR she must arrange with another Program Director to mentor her candidates until the specified time they were given to complete the program. The closing Program should compensate the sister program if at all possible and is responsible for paying the full accreditation fee for the upcoming year if candidates have not completed the Program in the agreed upon time frame.

If a program closes suddenly due to circumstances beyond their control, the Program Director Chair will be responsible for obtaining a list from the Washington office of any remaining candidates and disperse them among other Program Directors in an equitable manner. The new Program can determine the deadlines and time frames they will accept, being no shorter than the date given the candidate upon acceptance.

- Attachment I: *Pathways to Certification*
- Attachment II: *Lamaze Approved Provider Application*
- Attachment III: *License and Agreement*
- Attachment IV: *Annual Report for Lamaze Accredited Childbirth Educator Programs*