

*6 Steps to
Becoming a
Lactation Consultant*

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Webinar Overview and Description

Our live webinar, *Seven Steps to Becoming a Lactation Consultant* provides you with the steps you need to make your dream a reality. We'll begin with issues related to the early explorations of which pathway to pursue, and end with how to apply for the actual IBLCE exam.

This webinar is given LIVE so that you have an opportunity to ask questions and to interact! You may join by phone, or by computer.

- If you join by computer, check your speakers (to make sure they are on and the sound is audible) and your microphone so that you can ask questions.
- There is also a chat box where you may type in questions, and where we will provide links for you to visit later.

Target Audience

This 1-hour live webinar is designed for anyone who may be interested in becoming an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). The person who wishes to earn such a credential must meet the eligibility criteria for the IBLCE examination.

Webinar Goal

To take your next steps to becoming eligible to sit for the IBLCE exam.

Objectives and Outcomes

After completing this webinar, you will be able to:

- Gain clarity about how your past experiences influence your future journey.
- Based on your past experiences, select the “Pathway” that is the best fit for you.
- Determine how to acquire, count, calculate, and document your clinical experience hours.
- Describe requirements for the Healthcare Sciences courses
- By weighing the pros and cons, make an informed choice between two different approaches to obtaining the required 90 hours of lactation-focused education.
- Outline a plan for meeting YOUR 90 hours of lactation-focused education.
- Identify dates, locations, and the next steps to apply for the IBLCE Exam!

Course Agenda/Outline

1. Gaining clarity about your journey
2. The Pathways to IBLCE Candidacy: Selecting Your Pathway
3. The Clinical Experience Requirements
4. The Healthcare Sciences Requirement
5. The 90 Hours of Lactation-Focused (Academic) Education Requirement
6. Signing Up for the Exam!

This webinar will be approximately 1 hour in length.

Instructor

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1. Gain Clarity About Your Journey



For decades, research has shown that those who are aware of their facilitators, motivators, and barriers, and those who **WRITE their goals**, are more likely to achieve them!

What has inspired you to become an IBCLC?

Many people who attend this webinar tell us that they've wanted to get their IBCLC credential for years, but they haven't done so because of some barrier. Here's the thing, though. You need to be *aware* of your barriers before you can figure out how to remove them, or move through them, or move around them.



What barriers have you encountered?

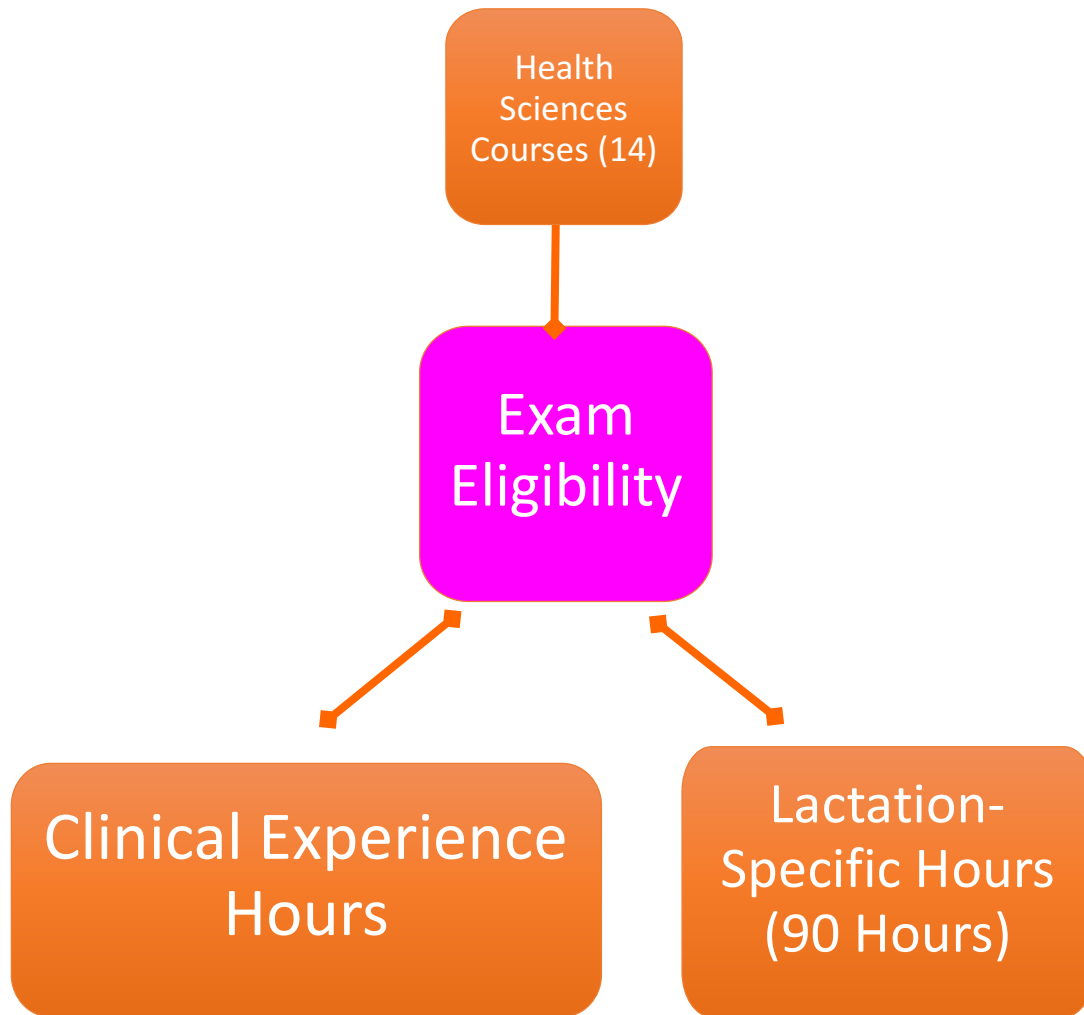
Taking your first steps toward earning your IBLCE credential is fun and exciting. It's a thriller to finally obtain your credential! But it can become very difficult in the "muddy middle" of your journey between starting and finishing. Do you feel passionate about doing this? Is this on your "bucket list" of things to do before you die? Can you think of some barriers that may persist—or others that might arise—and how you will deal with them?

Additional Notes...

"If you run into a road block, find a detour."
—Mary Kay Ash
(Mary Kay Cosmetics)

What is your past experience or credential? If you are a licensed healthcare professional, as defined by IBLCE, it will impact how you accumulate your clinical practice hours (and probably, the Pathway you choose. It will also affect whether you need to show documentation for the required healthcare sciences courses. (Meaning, all IBLCE exam candidates must complete the 14 healthcare sciences requirement, but those who are recognized as healthcare professionals are presumed to have completed these during their basic education, and therefore are not required to provide specific proof of having completed those courses.

If you are a nurse, a dietitian, or a physician, IBLCE recognizes you as a healthcare professional. However, IBLCE lists others, and, to be sure if your profession is listed, you should visit www.iblce.org for an accurate and up-to-date list.



To be eligible for the IBLCE examination, you need to meet all 3 of these requirements, regardless of what pathway you choose.

You must choose a Pathway. Next up, we will talk about the different requirements for Pathway 1, Pathway 2, and Pathway 3.

2. Select a Pathway That's Best for You

One of the most baffling elements of the IBCLC journey is the first decision you'll have to make: Which pathway to choose. There is no "right or wrong" pathway.

You may choose any of the three available pathways, as long as you meet the requirements for that pathway.

You may even meet the requirements for more than one pathway. But one will probably be a better fit for you than the others.

Keep in mind that the difference in the pathways is the clinical practice requirement. The who-what-where-how requirements (and their documentation) for the clinical practice are very different.



Pathway 1

Pathway 1 is best for candidates who are already working with breastfeeding families "within a supervision structure appropriate to their training." That's because clinical practice is seen to be basically independent.

Most of the people I help use **Pathway 1**; they already practice as a [Recognized Health Professional](#) or a [Mother Support Counselor](#) as defined by IBLCE.

If you are pursuing your IBCLC credential by Pathway 1, what three requirements will you need to complete?

Clinical Hours for Pathway 1

If you are going Pathway 1, how many clinical hours must you accumulate?

Give at least 4 examples of occupations that would be a "good fit" for Pathway 1.

Pathway 2

Pathway 2 is for candidates who attend an academic program. In the United States, this means candidates who obtain a college degree in lactation, typically finishing with a bachelor's degree in lactation. (If you are outside of the US, it may be slightly different.) Through their academic program, candidates obtain their health science education, their lactation-specific education, and their clinical hours.

Pathway 3

Pathway 3 is best for candidates who will complete their clinical experience under the supervision of a mentor. Although anyone may pursue any Pathway, candidates without a healthcare credential and little or no experience in a healthcare field are generally the best fit for Pathway 3. Some of the people we know who have chosen to pursue Pathway 3 who have attended our courses include: school teachers, lawyers, biologists, engineers, veterinarians, dental hygienists, chefs, and many more.

Clinical Hours for Pathway 3

At least 500 hours of directly-supervised lactation-specific clinical experience, completed within 5 years prior to exam application (This is far less than the 1,000 hours required for Pathway 1, but you can't begin to accumulate recognition for the hours until after IBLCE has approved the plan you submitted, and your mentor has observed you for an undetermined number of hours and cleared you to begin direct care. More on these details later when we address the requirements for clinical hours.)

3. Meet Your Clinical Experience Requirements

The Pathway you use to qualify for candidacy will strongly drive the requirements for your clinical practice experience. Here, we'll outline the who-what-where-when and other details to help you recognize what requirements you must meet, how to meet them, and how you will document your hours.

For All Pathways

Here, I'll describe details that apply to all clinical experience requirements. Later I'll describe details that are specific to each Pathway.

What

In order to count towards the IBLCE requirement, “clinical experience” is not limited to assisting a mother and baby with positioning and latch. Clinical experience can include

- talking with a pregnant mother about her feeding decision
- teaching a prenatal breastfeeding class
- answering a hotline or warm line with questions about breastfeeding
- leading a La Leche League support group
- helping the mother of a critically-ill infant to pump her milk
- much more.

Where

Most candidates tend to gain clinical experience in settings where they are already employed, or where they have become an intern. However, they may volunteer in any number of less structured settings. A word of caution, though. In order for those volunteered hours to be recognized, the candidate must either have a mentor, or she must be practicing “within a supervision structure that is appropriate to [your] training”. You may gain meaningful clinical experiences in a

- hospital
- physician's office
- WIC clinic or any outpatient clinic
- lactation consultant's private practice office
- community support group that meets in a mother's home
- much more

In my experience, most IBLCE candidates seem to get most of their clinical experience in a hospital. This is not surprising, since the hospital has—as I often like to call it—a “captive



audience.” That is, mothers are all in one place, and they need substantial help. So, a hospital is a good place to gain clinical experience.

When and How Many

In order to “count”, clinical hours must be accumulated within 5 years of the time that the person applies to take the IBLCE exam.

Note that these hours must have been accumulated *by the time you apply for the exam*, not by the time you actually sit and take the exam!!!

How to Calculate Hours

Full-time = 2080 hours per year

If all of your time is spent in breastfeeding activities (care, counseling, teaching, etc.) then you will have accumulated 2080 hours in one year. If you spend half of your time in those activities, and half of your time doing something else (not working, working with clients who do not have breastfeeding (whatever), then you have accumulated 1040 hours in one year.

Examples: Let’s say you are a childbirth educator at the local hospital. You teach a 2-hour breastfeeding class twice a week during 50 weeks of the year, then you have accumulated 200 hours in a year. If you do that for 5 years, you have accumulated 1000 hours.

Take a moment to calculate the clinical hours that you have accumulated already. To make it simple, use the calendar year and round numbers.

Do you work full time? If so, write down how many hours you work in a calendar year _____

What percentage of your time do you spend having clinical interactions related to breastfeeding? _____

How many hours per year “count”?

Multiply by the number of years you have done those hours. _____

The number of hours you could likely count towards your clinical requirement.



Pathway 1

Remember that although anyone may qualify for candidacy through any pathway, those who are already on the list of Recognized Healthcare Professionals are most likely to be on Pathway 1. (You may also use Pathway 1 if you are a La Leche League Leader.)

How

No supervision necessary. You are practicing on your own license.

How Many

1000 hours

If you work full-time, and if all of your hours pertain to breastfeeding, then you have exceeded the 1000-hour requirement in the one-year period.

Pathway 3

The person who is going Pathway 3 has a number of special issues to deal with:

Finding and working with mentor. Pathway 3 candidates must have at least a chief mentor; having several assistant mentors is a good idea.

Creating a plan: With the help of their mentor, Pathway 3 candidates must create a plan for how they will accumulate their clinical experience hours. This plan must be submitted to IBLCE before they start counting their clinical hours.

Completing special paperwork. Special paperwork must be used to document when and how they accumulated their clinical hours.

Other possible issues. Since most (but not all!) who are pursuing Pathway 3 are not recognized healthcare professionals, they need to document their completion of the 14 healthcare sciences courses.

4. Complete Your Healthcare Sciences Requirement

To be eligible to sit for the IBLCE exam, ALL candidates, regardless of their background or the pathway they use, must complete 14 healthcare sciences courses.

Healthcare Sciences: “College” Level Courses

You may take these either online or on site. You actually could do a college-equivalent type of thing, but that’s a little more complicated. See Marie’s blog on this.

1. Human Anatomy
2. Human Physiology
3. Biology
4. Growth and Development
5. Nutrition
6. Choose one: Introduction to Research OR Statistics
7. Choose One: Psychology OR Counseling OR Communication Skills
8. Choose One: Sociology OR Cultural Sensitivity OR Anthropology



Healthcare Sciences Courses: Take Anywhere

1. Basic Life Support (e.g., CPR)
2. Medical Terminology
3. Medical Documentation
4. Occupational Safety and Security
5. Universal Precautions
6. Ethics

Timeline

These healthcare sciences course are all “good” no matter how many years ago you took them! You simply must have completed the courses successfully.

The IBLCE does not specify whether you take these courses before or after any of your other clinical or educational requirements. (However, if you are working in a hospital, the hospital MAY require that you have these courses before you are allowed to be present in the clinical areas. Check to see!)

Documenting the Healthcare Sciences Courses

If you are a healthcare professional, as recognized by IBLCE, a copy of your state license is all you need to prove that you have completed these courses.

If you are not a healthcare professional, as recognized by IBLCE, you’ll need a transcript and/or a course certificate of completion to prove that you have completed these courses.

Getting my IBCLC - Pathway 1 Checklist

Projected Exam Date: _____ Application Due: _____

| Complete the Requirements | Done |
|--|------|
| Complete Health Science College Courses | |
| Complete Health Science Continuing Education Courses | |
| Complete 90 hours of Lactation-Specific Education | |
| Complete 1000 Lactation Clinical Hours | |
| Complete IBLCE Exam Application | |
| Exam Payment Made | |
| Prepare for the Exam | |
| Read IBLCE Rules | |
| Watch Pearson Vue Tutorials | |
| Have 2 Matching Forms of ID | |
| Get Exam Day Off | |
| Babysitter Scheduled | |
| Get Marie's 8-Week Study Guide & Start Studying | |

Getting my IBCLC Pathway 3 Checklist

Projected Exam Date: _____ Application Due: _____

Pathway 3 Plan Submitted: _____ Approved: _____

| Complete the Requirements | Done |
|--|------|
| Complete Health Science College Courses | |
| Complete Health Science Continuing Education Courses | |
| Find a Mentor (Name: _____) | |
| Complete & Submit Pathway 3 Plan | |
| Pathway 3 Plan Approved | |
| Complete 90 hours of Lactation-Specific Education | |
| Complete Supervised Clinical Hours | |
| Complete 500 Lactation Clinical Hours | |
| Complete IBLCE Exam Application & Make Payment | |
| Prepare for the Exam | |
| Read IBLCE Rules | |
| Watch Pearson Vue Tutorials | |
| Have 2 Matching Forms of ID | |
| Get Exam Day Off | |
| Babysitter Scheduled | |
| Get Marie's 8-Week Study Guide & Start Studying | |

My Plan to Meet Requirements for Healthcare Science Courses

The anatomy, physiology, biology, psychology and growth and development courses are mandatory. (“Growth and development” is usually a developmental psychology course.)

Three other requirements have a choice. Which will you choose?

- Choose one: Introduction to Research OR Statistics
- Choose One: Psychology OR Counseling OR Communication Skills
- Choose One: Sociology OR Cultural Sensitivity OR Anthropology

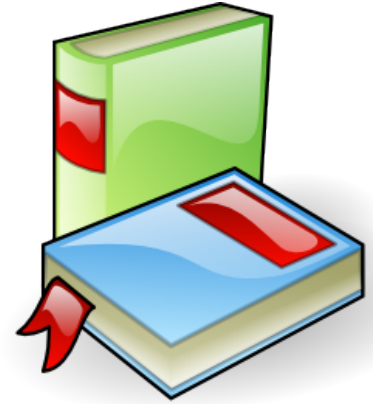
Remember, it does not matter how long ago you completed the healthcare sciences courses. There is no “good ‘til” date!

| Course | Complete? Yes/No | Need Proof? (Yes/No) | Where will I complete this course? |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Human Anatomy | | | |
| Human Physiology | | | |
| Biology | | | |
| Psychology | | | |
| Nutrition | | | |
| Intro to Research OR statistics (pick one) | | | |
| Psychology OR Counseling OR Communication | | | |
| Sociology OR Cultural Sensitivity OR Anthropology | | | |
| Basic Life Support* | | | |
| Medical Terminology | | | |
| Medical Documentation | | | |
| Occupational Safety & Security | | | |
| Universal Precautions | | | |
| Ethics | | | |

Usually available in your community. Try the local fire department, rescue squad, YMCA, or similar organization.

5. Earn 90 Hours of Lactation-Focused (Academic) for Education Requirement

To be eligible to sit for the IBLCE exam, all US-based candidates must complete 90 hours of lactation-focused education. (Note: The number may be different in other countries. If you are not sitting for the US-based exam, you should confirm this number.)



There are two basic approaches to acquiring your 90 hours of lactation-focused education.

1. The hodge-podge approach: In this approach, you pick and choose whatever courses or lectures you wish. You continue to do so until you have accumulated 90 hours of what you assume to be lactation-focused information. (You must have a paper trail to show that you have earned all 90 of these credits, AND you must hope that all of these are acceptable to IBLCE. This information is current when written; ALWAYS check the IBLCE's web site for updates to be sure.
2. The second approach is the comprehensive approach. Here, the course director picks out the topics to best match the IBLCE Detailed Content Outline and the IBLCE Competencies. [\(Link\)](#)

Timeline

You must accumulate all of your 90 lactation-focused hours within 5 years of when you submit your application to sit for the exam.

Documenting

You absolutely must have a certificate of completion or a transcript or something that documents that you have actually earned these 90 lactation-focused educational hours.

Outlining Your Next Steps for Lactation-Focused Hours

Weigh the risks and the benefits of the hodge-podge approach versus the comprehensive approach.

Remember that it is a COMPREHENSIVE, INTERNATIONAL EXAM.

Do some introspection before you sign up for a course. Make sure that you know how you learn best, and pick a course that will help you to do that.

Check your “life circumstances”

| | Hodge-Podge Approach | Comprehensive Approach |
|------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| (Criteria) | | |
| | | |

Choosing a Course that Works Best for You

| | Course A | Course B |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| (Like the slides...) | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Course you have picked

Contact person or persons there:

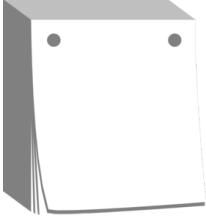
Phone number

Web site

Other:

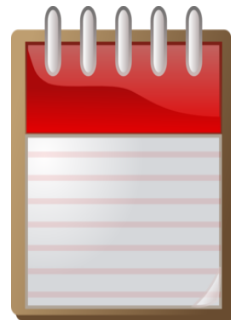
6. Sign Up for the Exam!

My plan for signing up for the next exam (in English)



The date of the next exam in the United States in English is

The deadline for submitting my application for the IBLCE exam is:



Notes

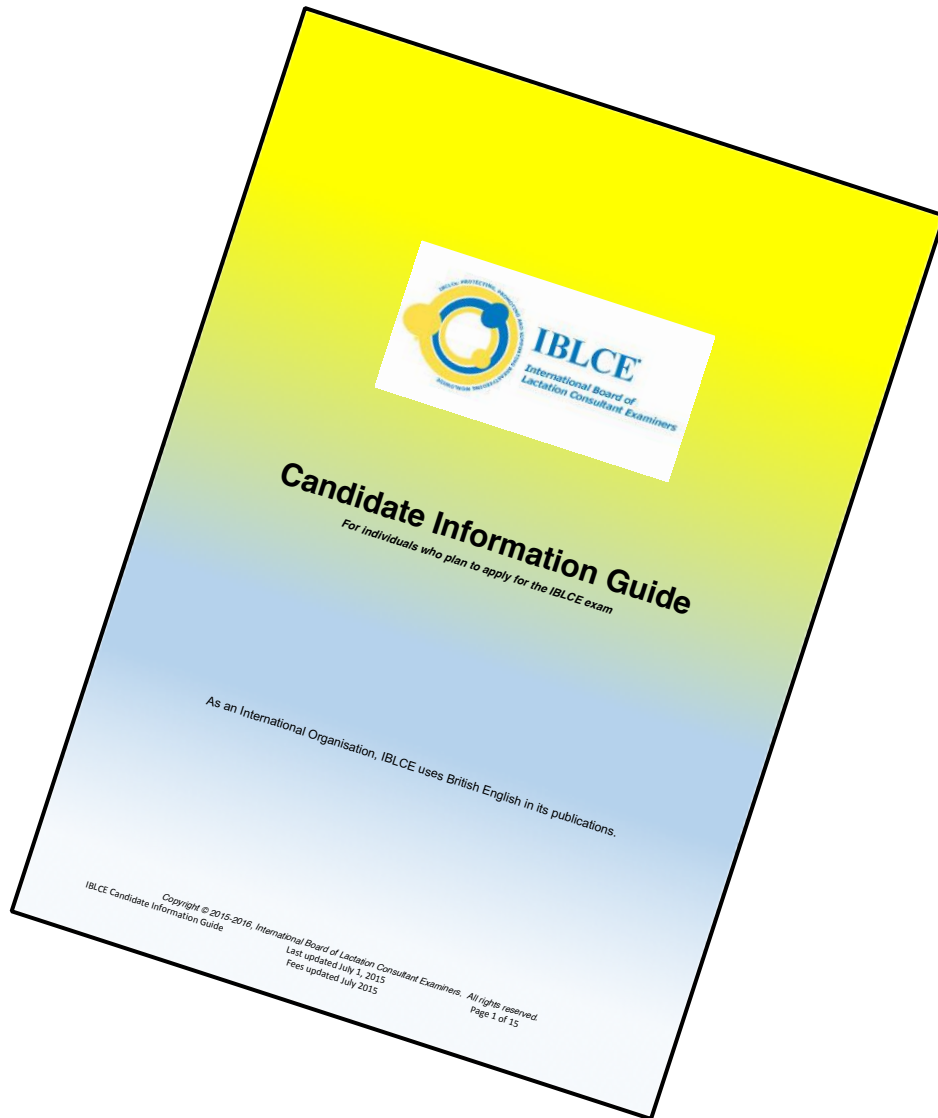
Here are the requirements I need to have completed before I apply for the IBLCE exam.

| At LEAST, and check this year they may require something more! | Pathway 1 | Pathway 3 |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| 90 hours of lactation-focused educational hours. Have certificate(s) handy. (Scanned copy, even better!) | | |
| Letter from supervisor stating that the clinical hours I claim are a “reasonable estimate” of what I have done. | | |
| Completion of hours, signed off by my mentor | | |
| Funds to cover the exam fee. | | |
| Other? | | |
| Other? | | |
| Other? | | |

| | Healthcare Professional | Non-Healthcare Professional |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Copy of my license as a healthcare professional | | |
| Copy of documentation showing that I have all 14 of the healthcare sciences completed | | |

For the exam: Be sure you have at least two forms of ID that MATCH. Check the PearsonVue site to make sure you provide whatever they are asking for.

WARNING: We make our best attempt to keep up with the current IBLCE requirements. However, this check-list is for your CONVENIENCE and we accept NO RESPONSIBILITY for its accuracy. Always check your current Candidate Information Guide and the IBLCE website!



[illegible]

[illegible]