



## Thinking About La Leche League Leadership?

Leaders represent La Leche League, so it is important to know what the organization believes and does. We hope the following frequently asked questions will aid your understanding.

### What is our purpose as LLL Leaders?

The general purpose of the organization is to help the mother learn to breastfeed her baby, to encourage good mothering through breastfeeding, and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding and related subjects. LLL is an international, educational, nonsectarian, nondiscriminatory service organization with a strict policy of not mixing causes. We have that policy in order to offer breastfeeding help to mothers with a variety of personal beliefs. Leaders know the importance of one mother helping another to recognize and understand the needs of her child and to find the best means of fulfilling those needs. Leaders provide information and support so that each mother can make the decisions which are best for her family.

### What does LLL believe?

Leaders believe that breastfeeding, with its many crucial physical and psychological advantages, is best for mother and baby and is the ideal way to initiate effective parent-child relationships. The ideals and principles of mothering which are the foundation of LLL beliefs are developed in *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*. This book has provided answers and inspiration for the rewarding and challenging job of parenting to several generations of mothers. Applicants for LLL leadership are required to own and be familiar with this book. If you have not yet read this book, doing so will familiarize you with the organization you might be interested in representing. *If you wish to order your own copy of The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding, visit the LLLI Online Store <http://store.llli.org/public>*

LLL philosophy is summarized in the following ten concepts:

*Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.*

*Mother and baby need to be together early and often to establish a satisfying relationship and an adequate milk supply.*

*In the early years, the baby has an intense need to be with his mother which is as basic as his need for food.*

*Breast milk is the superior infant food.*

*For the healthy, full-term baby, breast milk is the only food necessary until the baby shows signs of needing solids, about the middle of the first year after birth.*

*Ideally the breastfeeding relationship will continue until the baby outgrows the need.*

*Alert and active participation by the mother in childbirth is a help in getting breastfeeding off to a good start.*

*Breastfeeding is enhanced and the nursing couple sustained by the loving support, help, and companionship of the baby's father. A father's unique relationship with his baby is an important element in the child's development from early infancy.*

*Good nutrition means eating a well-balanced and varied diet of foods in as close to their natural state as possible.*

*From infancy on, children need loving guidance which reflects acceptance of their capabilities and sensitivity to their feelings.*

## What does a Leader do?

Most Leaders fulfill the basic responsibilities of leadership, which are:

- Helping mothers one-to-one by telephone, email, or in person.
- Planning and leading monthly Series Meetings.
- Supervising the management of the LLL Group.
- Keeping up-to-date on breastfeeding information.
- Helping mothers find out about leadership and prepare to become LLL Leaders.

Leader responsibilities are shared when there is more than one Leader in a Group. Most Leaders find it beneficial to concentrate on the basic responsibilities for a period of time before considering expanding or changing their service to LLL.

## I want to help mothers breastfeed but I cannot commit to all of the basic responsibilities. Is there still a role for me as a Leader?

The definition of an active Leader allows for many ways to commit to leadership:

"An active LLL Leader pursues the La Leche League mission through basic Leader responsibilities as defined in the *Policies and Standing Rules Notebook* and/or other service to LLL. An active Leader's fees are current, she keeps up to date with Leader education, and she communicates regularly with the organization."

## Are there prerequisites to applying for leadership?

Yes. They are as follows:

### Personal Breastfeeding Experience

Mother has breastfed her baby for at least nine months when she applies for leadership. Baby was nourished with mother's milk until there was a nutritional need for other foods (i.e., about the middle of the first year for the healthy, full term baby). If baby has weaned, the baby was nursed for about a year and the transition from breastfeeding respected the baby's needs.

*Note: Special consideration may be given to a woman whose personal breastfeeding experience is outside the realm of a normal course of breastfeeding.*

### Mothering Experience

Mother values nursing at her breast as the optimal way to nourish, nurture and comfort her baby. She recognizes, understands and responds to baby's need for her presence as well as for her milk. She manages any separation from baby with sensitivity and respect for the baby's needs.

### Organizational Experience

- Is a member of LLL.
- Supports LLLI purpose and philosophy.
- Has attended at least one series of meetings (where available) and has demonstrated a commitment to LLL.
- Owns and is familiar with the contents of the most recent edition of *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* (if available in her language) as a primary resource for LLL Leaders.
- Has a recommendation from an LLL Leader.

### Personal Traits

- Has sufficient command of language to complete the application and preparation for accreditation and to fulfill the responsibilities of LLL leadership.
- Has an accepting and respectful attitude toward others.
- Exhibits warmth and empathy towards others.
- Demonstrates or is willing to develop effective communication skills.

## **I'm not sure I meet those prerequisites. How can I find out?**

You can talk with the Leader of your local LLL Group to see how your own experiences and philosophy relate to the LLL Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership. She can also answer any questions you have about leadership, and talk with you about what work the leadership application involves and current fees. If there is no Group where you are, you can contact the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) at [LeaderAccreditation@lila.org](mailto:LeaderAccreditation@lila.org). You will then be referred to a LAD representative who can help you.

## **If leadership is not a good fit for me, are there other ways I can help breastfeeding mothers?**

Absolutely! Active members are the backbone of an LLL Group. Sharing your experiences with other mothers in the Group shows a real-life example of how breastfeeding can work. Your mother-to-mother support can inspire other mothers to face any challenges that arise. Members often take on Group jobs, such as Librarian, Treasurer, Greeter. The commitment of active members makes a crucial difference to the success of an LLL Group. You might also be interested in one of the following programs:

- Peer Counselor Program. These trained counselors help other mothers breastfeed; however, they are not required to have experienced all aspects of LLL philosophy. For information about the Peer Counselor Program, visit <http://lalecheleague.org/ed/PeerCounsel.html>
- Lactation consultant. This person sets up a private practice, or is employed by a hospital, a physician, or other health care provider. Many of these consultants are International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC). They are certified through the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE). For information about the IBCLC program, visit <http://www.lalecheleague.org/FAQ/LC.html> or <http://www.iblce.org/home>

## **What does an application for leadership involve?**

- Discussing (in writing, email, or otherwise) your personal experience of breastfeeding and mothering as it relates to LLL philosophy (through ongoing dialogue with a LAD representative).
- Learning how to support the normal course of breastfeeding and help mothers cope with common concerns.
- Learning how to access relevant resources to support mothers facing specific breastfeeding challenges.
- Completing required background reading.
- Acquiring leadership skills and attitudes (such as active listening and meeting facilitation).
- Learning about LLL as an organization at the local, national, international levels.
- Perhaps attending workshops and conferences where available.

## **How long does that take?**

It can be different for each individual, depending on many factors (such as her own organizational skills, the number and ages of her children, other commitments, and time available). Most applications are completed in a few months to a year, or a little more. Each individual proceeds at the pace that enables her to effectively prepare for leadership.

## **LLL leadership sounds great, but how can I fit it into my busy life?**

As a mother, you have already learned how to juggle many different responsibilities in your life. Leaders put the needs of their families first and also give priority to LLL work. Leaders find a way to balance their commitments to both as well as to other responsibilities they have. The application work is designed to correlate closely with the time needed to fulfill leadership responsibilities. In this way, the application can provide real experience in finding ways to weave LLL work into your life. Or, you might decide that you want to apply for leadership in the future, when the timing is better for you. Talking with a Leader can help you decide.

## **How would I show that I'm ready to be accredited as an LLL Leader?**

Together, you, your Leader, and the LAD representative will ensure that you have met the Criteria for Accreditation as an LLL Leader, set by the LLLI Board of Directors. These are:

- She has met the LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership (as listed earlier).
- She has nursed her baby for about a year.
- She has demonstrated understanding of LLLI philosophy.
- She has conveyed her knowledge of basic breastfeeding management, outlined in Breastfeeding Management Skills Criteria, Appendix 18 *Policies and Standing Rules Notebook*.
- She has demonstrated leadership skills and attitudes, outlined in Leadership Skills Criteria, Appendix 18 *Policies and Standing Rules Notebook*.
- She has completed the LLL Leader accreditation process.
- She has signed the LLL Leader Statement of Commitment (SoC).

When the LAD representative adds her signature to the SoC, the Applicant is accredited as a Leader and is covered by LLLI liability insurance.

## **I think leadership is right for me. What is my next step?**

Contact a Leader in your local Group to have pre-application dialogue. For information about how to find a Group if you are not already attending one, see:

<http://lalecheleague.org/WebIndex.html>

If there is no Group where you are, please contact [LeaderAccreditation@llli.org](mailto:LeaderAccreditation@llli.org)