

*LLLI Policies and Standing Rules:*

## **Applying for Leadership**

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## Applying for Leadership

### Part I: Application and Accreditation Information

*La Leche League International (LLLI) is committed to serving everyone inclusive of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental ability, socio-economic status, political views, gender identity, sexual orientation, family structure, or other protected status. LLLI seeks the equitable accreditation of a diverse body of Leaders.* (LLLI Policies and Standing Rules: Inclusivity Policy)

Notes about our use of language:

- LLLI welcomes Applicants who meet the prerequisites for leadership, regardless of how they self-identify.
- LLLI defines the act of feeding the baby directly at the breast as breastfeeding.
- While the majority of people who nurse their babies identify as mothers, LLLI understands that not everyone identifies this way. In keeping with our purpose and mission, we use “mothering” to describe nurturing behavior, and “mother-to-mother” to describe the one-to-one or group support we offer.
- We have both removed and retained some language that might be interpreted as discriminatory, per legal advice. While we continue to use the words “breastfeeding” and “mothering” due to the many cultural, legal and translation issues that we face, we recognize that some may prefer other words. We hope those who prefer other words or terms will think of this Policy and Standing Rule in terms of their preferred language as they read.

#### Introduction

LLLI, through the work of the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD), accredits Leaders to carry out the purpose and mission of the organization. Leaders represent many cultures, yet share a common philosophy and one-to-one or group approach to providing breastfeeding help.

The credibility and authority of LLL are due, in large part, to the fact that personal experience in breastfeeding for a year or beyond is a requirement for leadership. Collectively, LLL Leaders provide a variety of real-life examples of mothering through breastfeeding and ways that challenges to breastfeeding can be overcome.

When an application for leadership is accepted by the LAD, a triad will be formed by three people: the Applicant, the supporting Leader, and the LAD representative.

Throughout the application period, the LAD representative will communicate with both the Applicant and the supporting Leader.

#### Section A: LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership

The LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership (prerequisites) are written in broad terms, recognizing that individuals in a variety of circumstances can and do embrace LLL philosophy and put it into practice. Every effort shall be made to provide reading materials in an accessible form for the Applicant. An Applicant who otherwise meets the prerequisites but is unable to attend a series of meetings or does not have a local supporting Leader may still be considered for leadership, and LAD may appoint another Leader or LAD representative to act as the supporting Leader.

To begin an application, the following Personal Experience Prerequisites, Organizational Experience Prerequisites, and Personal Skills Prerequisites must be met (see also Concept Explanations):

### **Personal Experience Prerequisites**

The experiences of breastfeeding and mothering are two parts of a whole that is described by LLLI as “mothering through breastfeeding,” as defined below. This personal experience of the breastfeeding and mothering relationship, combined with what the person has learned from others and from LLL resources, provides a strong basis from which to help others. A potential Applicant:

- has breastfed a child for 12 months or more,
- did not introduce complementary foods or supplements until the baby demonstrated a nutritional need for other foods, around the middle of the first year for the healthy full-term baby, and
- has chosen breastfeeding as the optimal way to nourish, nurture and comfort the baby.

The above points refer to a description of a normal/physiological course of breastfeeding and the relationship formed by mothering through breastfeeding as described in *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* (*The Womanly Art*), published by LLLI. These measurable behaviors offer an objective way to identify responsive breastfeeding and mothering.

Special consideration will be given to someone whose personal breastfeeding experience is outside the realm of the normal/physiological course of breastfeeding as described above. Leaders may refer to Guidelines for Leaders (Part II, Section A, Personal Experience Prerequisites, Item 5) for some examples.

### **Organizational Experience Prerequisites**

A potential Applicant:

- is a member of LLL or contributes as appropriate for the entity in which the application is being submitted,
- supports LLL purpose, mission, and philosophy,
- has attended at least one series of meetings in person or via the Internet,
- demonstrates a clear understanding that leadership is volunteer work,
- has knowledge of the information contained in the most recent edition of *The Womanly Art*, if available in an accessible language and format,
- is willing to create time to fulfill the basic responsibilities of leadership and/or provide other service to LLL, as described under “Definition of an Active Leader” in the LLLI *Policies and Standing Rules* (PSR; see Cross-References),
- is willing to complete the application work, and
- has a recommendation from an LLL Leader.

### **Personal Skills Prerequisites**

A potential Applicant:

- has communication skills in the potential Applicant’s preferred language necessary to begin the application and preparation for accreditation,
- demonstrates an accepting and respectful attitude toward others,
- provides information and support without judgment, and
- is willing to develop further communication skills as needed to fulfill the responsibilities of leadership.

## Section B: LLLI Criteria for Leader Accreditation

The accreditation period is a time of learning and development as the Applicant discusses breastfeeding management, leadership, and LLL philosophy with the supporting Leader(s) and the LAD representative. Every effort shall be made to provide resources in an accessible language or form for the Applicant. To be accredited as an LLL Leader, an Applicant shall:

- meet the LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership,
- demonstrate understanding and practice of LLL philosophy,
- complete all steps of the LLL Leader application work as described below in Breastfeeding Management Skills and Leadership Skills criteria, and
- sign the *LLLI Leader Statement of Commitment*.

The following information describes the application work to be completed prior to accreditation.

### Breastfeeding Management Skills

1. Demonstrate accurate, current knowledge of and/or the ability to find information in up-to-date, credible resources, including the *Breastfeeding Resource Guide* (BRG), the most recent edition of *The Womanly Art*, or LAD-approved counterparts in an accessible language, be able to convey that information accurately, and commit to maintaining up-to-date knowledge pertaining to:

- basic breastfeeding management and problem-solving techniques,
- basic lactation physiology,
- how active participation in childbirth can facilitate the initiation and establishment of breastfeeding, and
- the normal course of breastfeeding.

2. Be aware of situations outside of the normal course of lactation so that additional support and/or medical advice can be sought by the parents if needed.

3. Demonstrate knowledge of how to use LLL information and resources as available and accessible. In addition to *The Womanly Art*, the BRG, and the *Leader's Handbook*, these may include:

- LLL Professional Liaison Department,
- *Leader Today* (or another LLL Leader publication),
- *Breastfeeding Today* (or another LLL member publication),
- LLLI website or other LLL websites,
- credible breastfeeding resources available on the Internet, and
- other evidence-based resources.

## Leadership Skills

1. Complete the *Checklist of Topics to Discuss in Preparation for LLL Leadership (Checklist)*.
2. Read and promote the contents of *The Womanly Art*, if available in an accessible language and format.
3. Read the *Leader's Handbook*, if available in an accessible language and format.
4. Demonstrate the following:
  - awareness and understanding of the leadership skills necessary to assume the responsibilities of leadership,
  - understanding of the importance of acceptance and respect for individual choices regarding breastfeeding and parenting,
  - ability to communicate accurately and effectively when helping others,
  - commitment to continued development of effective communication skills that support others in developing their own expertise and confidence,
  - familiarity with LLL resources, particularly *The Womanly Art* and the *Leader's Handbook*, and ability to gather, organize, and retrieve pertinent information from them,
  - understanding and agreement to work within LLL guidelines for consulting, documenting, and reporting,
  - understanding and agreement to work within LLLI policies as presented in the PSR, and as discussed in the *Leader's Handbook* and other LLLI or LLL publications, and
  - willingness to work with and support people from diverse backgrounds in achieving their breastfeeding and/or leadership goals.
5. Be committed to continuing development of leadership skills and attitudes as covered in the *Leader's Handbook* and as learned through:
  - reading,
  - personal experience,
  - attendance at Series Meetings or other LLL meetings as available,
  - LLL conferences and workshops, and
  - discussion with supporting Leader(s) and LAD representative(s).

These skills and attitudes are demonstrated in the application work such as the personal history, during LLL meetings, and during completion of the *Preview of Helping Questions and Group Management (Preview)*.

## Part II: Guidelines for Leaders

### Introduction

In preparation for discussing leadership with others, it is a Leader's responsibility to be familiar with the most recent editions of *The Womanly Art* and *Leader's Handbook*, if available in an accessible language. Every effort shall be made to provide reading materials in an accessible form for the Applicant. The *Leader's Pre-Application Packet*, which includes information about current LLLI policies related to leadership accreditation, is also helpful and is available from the LAD. A Leader can consult a LAD representative with any questions or concerns prior to or at any time during an application. A Leader may begin encouraging interest in leadership at any time by:

- sharing and discussing the most recent edition of *The Womanly Art*,
- sharing and discussing other reading, such as *Breastfeeding Today*, *Sweet Sleep*, and other texts available in an accessible language,
- encouraging taking on a Group job,
- discussing LLL philosophy, and
- discussing LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership.

During LLL meetings or other encounters, the Leader shall also observe the potential Applicant's interactions with the baby to consider how LLL philosophy is reflected and how the person listens to others and begins to share ideas based on personal experiences. A Leader's knowledge, observations, and use of LLL resources provide a unique perspective for helping someone decide whether to apply.

The support of at least one active Leader is necessary to initiate and continue an application for leadership. In addition to the above list of activities, the supporting Leader's role includes:

- consulting with any co-Leaders,
- writing a recommendation affirming that the potential Applicant meets the prerequisites and that the Leader will help the potential Applicant prepare for leadership, and
- working with the Applicant, any other Leaders involved, and LAD representatives to support the Applicant in fulfilling the remaining LLLI Criteria for Leader Accreditation through the application.

In the case of someone who is isolated, unable to attend a Group, or has no local supporting Leader, a LAD representative may arrange for a Leader from a different entity to support the Applicant, or a LAD representative may serve as the supporting Leader. Reasons for isolation may include but are not limited to:

- distance,
- transportation,
- incompatible meeting day or time,
- cultural, language, or social differences, or
- physical accessibility issues.

## Section A: LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership

### Personal Experience Prerequisites

1. The Personal Experience Prerequisites described in Part 1, Section A of this document are interrelated and are to be considered as a whole, without overemphasizing individual phrases or sentences. LLLI recognizes that maintaining a breastfeeding relationship with one's baby for at least 12 months or beyond reflects the value of the nursing relationship. In addition to using the items in Part 1 as a basis for discussion, a Leader can use LLL Philosophy, Concept Explanations, and these guidelines to explore how personal experiences reflect an understanding of mothering through breastfeeding as presented in *The Womanly Art*.

2. A Leader observes the interactions between the potential Applicant and the baby and sees how the behaviors and relationship reflect an understanding of LLL philosophy. Additional insights may be gained by discussing the following topics with a potential Applicant:

- understanding of breastfeeding as a relationship,
- ways of recognizing and responding to the baby's needs through answers to such questions as:
  - How do you know when your baby needs you?
  - What are some ways you have found to meet your baby's needs?
  - If there are times when you are away from your baby, how do you reconnect with your baby when you get back together?
  - What strategies have you implemented to make the most of your time with your baby?
  - What strategies have you used to maintain the breastfeeding relationship for one year or beyond?

3. A Leader discusses and clarifies LLL philosophy statements with someone interested in leadership using resources such as the *Leader's Handbook* and questions such as:

- What is your understanding of each concept statement? Are any concepts unclear to you? Do you have reservations about any of the concepts?
- How do you see your experiences reflecting the concepts? What are some examples of each?
- How could your experiences and understanding of each concept help you fulfill the role of a Leader?

4. After discussions using the guidelines provided above, if a Leader recognizes that LLL philosophy is being incorporated into someone's life, the Personal Experience Prerequisites are very likely being met. If a Leader is unsure whether the experiences thus far meet the prerequisites, the Leader can consult with a LAD representative.

5. Special Consideration: Special consideration will be given to someone whose personal breastfeeding experience is outside the realm of the normal/physiological course of breastfeeding as described above due to medical, physiological, or anatomical issues. When the personal breastfeeding experience differs from what is described by the prerequisite in Part 1, Section A and might warrant special consideration, the Leader should consult with a LAD representative. The most common examples include:

- babies with cleft palate and/or lip(s),
- premature babies,
- nursing after breast surgery, and
- adoptive nursing.

### **Organizational Experience Prerequisites**

1. To make an informed decision about applying to become a Leader, a potential Applicant needs to know enough about LLL to:

- support LLL purpose, mission, and philosophy,
- have a good understanding of the responsibilities, role, and time commitments of an LLL Leader, and
- recognize that leadership is an unpaid, volunteer position.

2. Discussing these elements of leadership will also provide the Leader with additional opportunities to get to know someone well enough to write a recommendation.

### **Personal Skills Prerequisites**

1. Observing how someone interested in leadership interacts with others in consideration of the Personal Skills Prerequisites helps a Leader identify whether the person has a foundation for developing effective leadership skills. Effective leadership relies on a supportive attitude and approach toward others who seek help and an ability to communicate with others effectively in their preferred language. As someone moves from seeking personal information and support to offering these to others, a Leader can note current attitudes, skills, and willingness to learn. During the application, an Applicant will have the opportunity to build on the foundation of personal skills and further develop the skills needed to help others as an LLL Leader.

2. Effective leadership requires two primary elements:

- adequate knowledge about breastfeeding, as described in the Criteria for Leader Accreditation, and
- the communication skills needed to be a Leader. (See Part I, Section A, Personal Skills Prerequisites, and Section B, Leadership Skills. See also Part II, Section B, Items 4, 5, and 6 below.)

3. Language should not be a barrier to leadership. The LAD and the Leader will work together to ensure that an application can be accomplished in whatever means of communication is most comfortable for an Applicant and in whatever language the Applicant prefers.

4. If there are challenges to accessing LLL information, Leaders, Applicants, and LAD representatives shall work together to facilitate access to or develop necessary resources.

5. Leaders and LAD representatives shall work together to reduce barriers to leadership whenever possible, in accordance with the LLLI Inclusivity Policy.



## Section B: LLLI Criteria for Leader Accreditation

1. To be accredited as an LLL Leader, an Applicant shall complete the LLLI Criteria for Leader Accreditation as described in Part I, Section B in a manner that the Applicant, supporting Leader, and LAD representative determine is best suited to the individual situation. For example, the BRG may be completed alone by the Applicant using available resources, completed at an Applicant workshop, or completed in parts in collaboration with a Leader or LAD representative. Every effort shall be made to provide such resources in an accessible language or form for the Applicant.

2. A supporting Leader may find it helpful to use role-playing or to discuss a variety of help scenarios while an Applicant is covering the topics in the BRG and the *Preview*. These forms of preparation will assist the Applicant in acquiring a solid grounding in breastfeeding management skills. All together, the work the Applicant does with the supporting Leader and the LAD representative will ensure that the Applicant is able to meet the criteria for accreditation.

3. The LAD representative will provide an overview of the accreditation work and will, with the supporting Leader, facilitate the Applicant's preparation in:

- completing all steps of the LLL Leader application work,
- understanding and being committed to serving all who request support as guided by LLLI Inclusivity Policy,
- being supportive of equitable accreditation, and
- signing the *LLL Leader Statement of Commitment*.

4. Leadership skills and attitudes are covered in the *Leader's Handbook* and are learned through reading, personal experience, attendance at Series Meetings or other LLL meetings as available in the Applicant's Area, LLL conferences and workshops, observation of Leaders, and discussion with supporting Leader(s) and LAD representative(s).

5. These skills and attitudes are demonstrated in the personal history, during LLL meetings, and during completion of the *Preview*.

6. The supporting Leader and other Leaders are the role models for the skills and attitudes appropriate to leadership. The Applicant is encouraged by the supporting Leader and the LAD representative to practice communication skills that will facilitate Group discussions and empower others in their breastfeeding journeys.

## **Part III: Appeals**

The purpose of an appeals procedure within La Leche League International (LLLI) is to allow someone interested in leadership or a Leader Applicant a means of contesting a decision to either:

- not allow an application for leadership to proceed, or
- discontinue an application for leadership with LLLI that is in progress.

They shall be informed of their right to appeal.

### **Section A.**

If a Leader has doubts about whether someone interested in leadership fulfills the prerequisites, it is the Leader's responsibility to consult with a Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) representative.

If the Leader and LAD representative determine that one or more of the prerequisites are not met, the Leader shares the reasons for the decision and information about the appeal procedure outlined in the LLLI Leader Accreditation Appeals Procedures, which is included in the *Leader's Pre-Application Packet*.

### **Section B.**

If, at any point during the application, a Leader has doubts about whether an Applicant continues to meet the criteria for leadership, and a discussion with the Applicant has not resolved those concerns, it is the Leader's responsibility to consult with a LAD representative.

The LLLI Director of the Leader Accreditation Department is the only person who is authorized to stop an application in progress. Therefore, LAD representatives need to consult with their LAD administrators. If the Director of the Leader Accreditation Department determines that the application should be stopped, the LAD provides the Applicant with the reasons for the decision and information about the appeal procedure. The appeal procedure is outlined in the LLLI Leader Accreditation Appeals Procedures, which is included in the *Leader's Pre-Application Packet*.

### Cross-references:

Please refer to the most current versions of the following documents as available on the LLLI website or from a LAD representative.

- **Leader Obligations and Privileges Policy**
- **La Leche League Mission**
- **Inclusivity Policy**
- **La Leche League Philosophy**
- **Purpose and Principles Reference Set**
- **Concept Explanations**
- **LLLI Leader Accreditation Appeals Procedures**

All of the above are available at: <https://www.llli.org/leader-pages/policies-standing-rules/>  
(LLL username and password required)

- **LLLI Bylaws, Article II. Purpose:**

Available at: <https://www.llli.org/leader-pages/bylaws/>

- **La Leche League Mission**
- **Inclusivity Policy**
- **La Leche League Philosophy**

Available for the public at: <https://www.llli.org/about/philosophy/>

- ***Breastfeeding Resource Guide***

Available from a LAD representative.

- ***Checklist of Topics to Discuss in Preparation for LLL Leadership***

Available at :

<https://www.llli.org/leader-pages/leader-applicants/leader-applicants-resources/checklist-topics-discuss-preparation-lll-leadership/> (LLL username and password required)

- **FAQs about application and accreditation: *Thinking About LLL Leadership?***

Available at: <https://www.llli.org/get-involved/faq/>

- ***Leader's Pre-Application Packet***

Available through LAD; please contact the appropriate LAD representative.

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