



## Thinking about La Leche League Leadership?

You can find additional information about becoming a Leader at: <https://www.lllc.ca/about/become-leader>

### What is our purpose as La Leche League Leaders?

The general purpose of the organization is to help the mother learn to breastfeed her baby, to encourage mothering through breastfeeding, and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding and related subjects. La Leche League (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 help to people with a variety of personal beliefs.

LLL Leaders know the importance of mother-to-mother and peer-to-peer support to help others discover the joy and satisfaction of breastfeeding. Leaders pass on what they have learned about this simple act of breastfeeding, so that mothers and parents can make decisions which are best for their families.

### 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 basic philosophy of La Leche League is expressed in *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* and summarized in the ten concepts on the next page. *The Womanly Art* has provided answers and inspiration for the rewarding and challenging job of parenting to several generations.

Reading this book will help you become familiar with the organization you might be interested in representing. If you wish to purchase your own copy of *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*, it is available through most booksellers.

Please also visit "*The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*" on the LLLI website:

<https://www.llli.org/resources/womanly-art-breastfeeding/>

## **La Leche League Philosophy**

- 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.
- Human milk is the natural food for babies, uniquely meeting their changing needs.
- For the healthy, full-term baby, human milk is the only food necessary until the baby shows readiness for complementary foods, 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 and parents one-to-one by telephone, text, email, social media or in person, and keeping accurate records of these helping situations.
- Planning and leading monthly Series Meetings.
- Supervising the management of the LLL Group.
- Keeping up-to-date on breastfeeding information.
- Helping others find out about leadership and prepare to become LLL Leaders.

Leader responsibilities are shared when there is more than one Leader in a Group. Many new 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 others 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 *LLLC By-laws and Policies* and/or other service to LLL. An active Leader 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 Experience**

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.

Special consideration will be given to someone whose personal breastfeeding experience is outside the realm of the normal/physiological course of breastfeeding.

**Organizational Experience**

A potential Applicant:

- pays applicable \$45 Leader Applicant fee
- 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 of Breastfeeding*, 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 LLLC By-laws and Policies,
- is willing to complete the application work, and
- has a recommendation from an LLL Leader.

**Personal Skills**

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.

**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 LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership. The Leader can also answer any questions you have about leadership, application work and current fees.

If there is no Group where you are, contact the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) at: [leaderaccreditation@lllc.ca](mailto:leaderaccreditation@lllc.ca). You will 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 others in the Group shows a real-life example of how breastfeeding can work. Your one-to-one support may inspire others to face any challenges that arise. Members often take on Group jobs, such as librarian, treasurer, or 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 options:

- Breastfeeding task force: If your town has one of these, it will bring together many lactation supporters from various venues and organizations.
- International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC): An IBCLC is a healthcare professional working in a private practice, hospital, physician's office or other clinical setting. IBCLCs are certified through the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE). For information, visit <http://www.iblce.org/>.

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

During your application you will be working with a representative of the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD), as well as your supporting Leader, who is usually the Leader who wrote a recommendation for you.

With the LAD representative, you will:

- Correspond about LLL philosophy and Leader responsibilities.
- Explore your understanding of LLL philosophy.

With your supporting Leader, you will:

- Discuss aspects of Leader work and practice responding to helping questions.
- Learn about LLL as an organization and about leading meetings and fulfilling other Leader responsibilities.

On your own, you will:

- Become familiar with breastfeeding topics and learn about resources available to parents and Leaders.
- Read required books and other publications.
- Attend LLL events, where available.

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

It can be different for each individual, depending on factors such as your organizational skills, the number and ages of your children, other commitments, and time available. Many applications are

completed within six months to a year. You are welcome to proceed at the pace that enables you to prepare yourself for leadership actively and effectively.

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

As a mother or parent 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. 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, the supporting Leader, and the LAD representative will ensure that you have met the Criteria for Leader Accreditation as an LLL Leader, set by the LLLI Board of Directors and described in LLLC Appendix M.

To be accredited, an Applicant:

- meets the LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership (as listed earlier).
- demonstrates understanding and practice of LLLI philosophy.
- completes all steps of the LLL Leader application work
- has read *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* and *Leader's Handbook* if available in an accessible language and format.
- has signed the *LLL Leader Statement of Commitment*.

When the LAD representative receives the signed *Statement of Commitment*, the Applicant is accredited as a Leader and is covered by LLLC liability insurance.

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

Contact a Leader in your local Group to have a pre-application dialogue. For information about how to find a Group, if you are not already attending one, see: <https://www.lllc.ca/get-help>

If there is no Group where you are, please contact the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) at: [leaderaccreditation@lllc.ca](mailto:leaderaccreditation@lllc.ca)

**Thank you for considering La Leche League  
as an organization where you would like to volunteer.**