

## LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership

### 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.

### LLLI Criteria for Leader Accreditation

To be accredited as an LLL Leader, a woman will meet the following criteria:

- She has met the LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership (as listed above).
- 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.
- She has demonstrated leadership skills and attitudes, outlined in Leadership Skills Criteria.
- She has completed the LLL Leader accreditation process.
- She has signed the LLL Leader Statement of Commitment.

*La Leche League is a worldwide, educational, nonsectarian, non-discriminatory service organization.*

### Breastfeeding Management Skills Criteria

Upon completion of her application, the newly accredited Leader will be able to demonstrate knowledge of **basic** breastfeeding management and problem solving techniques, **basic** lactation physiology of the mother and baby, and of the **normal course of breastfeeding** as described in the most recent edition of THE WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING, which will be owned by the newly accredited Leader, **if it is available in her language.**

The newly accredited Leader will have completed the LLLI "Breastfeeding Resource Guide," if available in her language, or its counterpart. If the LLLI "Breastfeeding Resource Guide" or its LAD-approved counterpart is not available in her language, she will have identified appropriate resources in her language, as available and as she is able, in the following categories of breastfeeding management. The categories include but are not limited to:

- LLL resources available to Leaders
- Mother-to-mother helping techniques
- Structure and function of the breast
- Management of breastfeeding
- Positioning techniques
- Infant anatomy, sucking mechanisms and breastfeeding behavior
- Infant reflexes
- Potential problems (e.g., nipple or breast problems, slow or low weight gain, thrush, allergies)
- Role of maternal and infant nutrition
- Solid foods
- Weaning
- Premature infants
- Jaundice
- Hand expression and pumping
- Working and breastfeeding

The "Breastfeeding Resource Guide," if available in an Applicant's language, or its LAD-approved counterpart will be completed by the Leader Applicant as part of her application in the way that the Applicant, Leader and LAD representative determine is best suited to her individual situation (e.g., completed alone by the Applicant using resources available to her, completed at an Applicant workshop, or completed in parts in collaboration with another Leader or LAD representative).

A newly accredited Leader will be able to demonstrate knowledge of how to use LLL information and resources, if available and as she is able. Ownership of the BREASTFEEDING ANSWER BOOK is strongly recommended, if available in her language. Other recommended (but not required) resources where available include, but are not limited to: LLL Professional Liaison Programs, LEADER'S HANDBOOK, LEAVEN (or another LLL Leader publication in her language), NEW BEGINNINGS (or another LLL member publication), the LLLI Web Site (including links from the LLLI Web Site), breastfeeding resources available to her on the Internet, and other resources in her language.

## **Leadership Skills Criteria**

Upon completion of her application, a Leader Applicant will have demonstrated awareness and understanding of the leadership skills necessary to assume the responsibilities of leadership. The Applicant, with the help of the contact Leader (where available), will have completed a checklist of topics to discuss in preparation for leadership, if one is available in her language.

Upon completion of her application, the Leader Applicant will have demonstrated that she:

- Understands the importance of acceptance and respect for individual choices regarding breastfeeding and parenting.
- Can communicate effectively in providing mother to mother help.
- Is familiar with LLL resources and can gather, organize and retrieve pertinent information.
- Understands and agrees to work within LLL guidelines for consulting, documenting and reporting.
- Understands and agrees to work within LLLI policies as presented in the LLLI Bylaws, Policy and Standing Rules Notebook, the LEADER'S HANDBOOK and other LLLI publications.

These skills and attitudes are covered in the LEADER'S HANDBOOK and are learned through reading, personal experience, attendance at Series meetings, LLL conferences and workshops, and discussion with sponsoring Leader(s) and LAD representative(s). These skills and attitudes are demonstrated in the Personal History, during Series meetings and during completion of the "Preview of Questions Mothers Ask."

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## LLLI Prerequisites for Leadership - Guidelines for Leaders

### Introduction

- 1) La Leche League International (LLLI) accredits Leaders to carry out its purpose and mission. Leaders are a diverse group of women representing a broad spectrum of cultures, bound together by a common philosophy and a mother-to-mother approach to providing breastfeeding help.
- 2) The credibility and authority of LLLI are due, in major part, to the fact that all LLL Leaders are experienced breastfeeding mothers. LLLI wants to attract prospective Leaders who have or are willing to develop the knowledge, experience, and skills needed to help mothers breastfeed and gain a better understanding of mothering through breastfeeding. Collectively LLL Leaders provide a variety of real life examples of mothering through breastfeeding and ways that challenges to breastfeeding can be overcome. The LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership are written in broad terms recognizing that mothers in a variety of circumstances can and do embrace LLLI philosophy and put it into practice.
- 3) These guidelines are designed to help a Leader and interested mother discuss the prerequisites and together evaluate whether or not the mother is ready to apply for leadership. A Leader's close contact with mothers and potential Applicants, along with her knowledge, observations, and use of LLL resources, place her in a unique position to help a mother decide whether or not to apply.
- 4) In preparation for discussing leadership with a mother, it is a Leader's responsibility to be familiar with the Leader's Pre-Application Packet which includes information about current LLLI policies related to leadership accreditation as well as with THE WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING and the LEADER'S HANDBOOK. A Leader can consult a LAD representative with any questions or concerns prior to or at any time during an application.
- 5) Before a woman can apply to become an LLL Leader, she needs the support of at least one active Leader (who could be a LAD representative). After consultation with co-Leaders, the Leader writes a recommendation affirming that the mother meets the LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership and that she will help the mother prepare for leadership. After a mother begins her application, she works with one or more Leaders and LAD representatives to fulfill the remaining LLLI Criteria for Leader Accreditation.

### Personal Breastfeeding and Mothering Experience Prerequisites

- 6) In order to meet the Personal Breastfeeding and Mothering Experience Prerequisites, a mother has experienced mothering through breastfeeding in a way that includes being available and responsive to her baby's needs. This experience, combined with what she learns from other mothers and from LLL resources, provides her with a strong base for helping mothers.
- 7) The Personal Breastfeeding and Mothering Experience Prerequisites are interrelated and to be considered as a whole, without overemphasizing individual phrases or sentences. A Leader can use LLLI philosophy statements, policy statements, and these guidelines to stimulate discussions with the interested mother as they examine together how the mother's experiences reflect her understanding of mothering through breastfeeding as presented in THE WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING.
- 8) Leaders discuss and clarify LLLI philosophy statements with potential Applicants using resources such as the LEADER'S HANDBOOK and questions similar to these:
  - 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?
  - How could your experiences and understanding of each concept help you fulfill the role of a Leader?
- 9) A mother may have experienced situations, usually short term, in which substitutes for breast milk and/or nursing at mother's breast were determined to be or were accepted as necessary. The Leader and mother, in their discussion of the Personal Breastfeeding Experience Prerequisite, consider the mother's understanding of her baby's needs and LLLI philosophy and how this understanding is revealed in her subsequent experience of mothering through breastfeeding.
- 10) The "special consideration" note applies only to the Personal Breastfeeding Experience Prerequisite. It has relevance in unusual situations that can challenge a mother's ability to breastfeed, such as a physical limitation of mother or baby. When a mother's breastfeeding experience differs from that described by the prerequisite and might warrant this special consideration, the Leader should consult with a LAD representative.
- 11) A mother who makes every effort to meet her baby's needs for nurturing and nourishment at her breast and who has demonstrated awareness of and responsiveness to her baby's need for her presence can fulfill the

Mothering Experience Prerequisite. A mother can sometimes combine commitments that take her away from her baby with an experience of mothering through breastfeeding that is consistent with LLLI philosophy.

12) When considering the Mothering Experience Prerequisite with a mother who has experienced separation from her baby, Leaders can use the following as the basis for dialogue and insight:

- How the mother demonstrates that she recognizes and understands the baby's intense need for her presence and how she responds to meet this need;
- Any impact of separation on mothering through breastfeeding;
- The arrangements the mother makes/has made to lessen separation between mother and baby, and/or to minimize disruption of breastfeeding;
- The mother's presentation and explanation of LLLI philosophy in light of her experience;
- How the mother thinks she would help other mothers experiencing situations similar to her own.

13) After discussions using the guidelines provided above, if a Leader recognizes that a mother is incorporating LLLI philosophy into her life, that mother very likely meets the Personal Breastfeeding and Mothering Experience Prerequisites. If a Leader is unsure about whether the mother's experiences thus far fit within the prerequisites, she can consult with a LAD representative.

### **Organizational Experience Prerequisite**

14) The Organizational Experience Prerequisite establishes that a mother knows enough about LLL and the role and time commitments of an LLL Leader to make an informed decision about leadership. It also provides the Leader with an opportunity to get to know the mother well enough to write a recommendation.

### **Personal Traits Prerequisite**

15) The Personal Traits Prerequisite helps a Leader identify mothers who have a foundation for developing effective leadership skills. Effective leadership relies on a woman's attitude and approach toward mothers who seek help as well as the way she presents herself and communicates with others. As a mother moves from seeking information and support for herself to offering these to other mothers, a Leader can note the mother's current attitudes and skills, as well as her willingness to learn and interest in learning. During the application, an Applicant will have the opportunity to build on the foundation of her personal traits and further develop the skills she would need to help mothers as an LLL Leader.

16) Leader Applicants need adequate language skills to be able to complete the application. This includes having or acquiring adequate knowledge about breastfeeding and the communication skills needed to be a Leader. If there are challenges to accessing LLL information due to low literacy, language barriers, or disabilities, Leaders, Applicants, and LAD representatives work together to facilitate access to or develop necessary resources.

### **Conclusion**

17) The Leader's observations and opinions are important as she talks with a mother about LLL leadership, both before and during an application. If the Leader is satisfied that a mother fulfills the Prerequisites, she can encourage the mother to apply for leadership. When the Leader writes her recommendation, she bases her comments on the prerequisites and these guidelines, her interactions with the mother and their discussions about LLL leadership, her recognition that the mother is incorporating LLLI philosophy into her life and her perception of the mother's willingness to learn.

18) If, at any point before or during the application, a Leader has doubts about whether a mother fulfills the prerequisites or can meet the criteria for leadership, it is the Leader's responsibility to consult with a LAD representative. If a Leader determines that a mother does not meet the prerequisites, it is her responsibility to inform the mother of the reasons for the decision and to inform her of the appeals process outlined in the application packet.

*(Feb 98; rev Oct 98; rev Aug 04; rev Nov 07)*

Cross-references:

[Breastfeeding Resource Guide](#)

[Leader Accreditation](#)

[Leader: Basic Responsibilities](#)

[Mission Statement](#)

[Appendix 1 - La Leche League International's Philosophy](#)

[Appendix 17 - LLLI Concept Policy Statements](#)

[LLLI Bylaws - LLLI Purpose](#)