When to Consult?

Marie Beam, International LAD Council Coordinator

LAD orientation helps LAD representatives prepare to assess possible concerns and make decisions regarding typical application issues: Does the mother’s breastfeeding experience meet the prerequisite of having breastfed at least one child for a minimum of nine months at the start of the application? Is she a member of La Leche League, and has she attended at least a series of meetings? Do all Leaders in the Group support the application?

How should a LAD representative proceed when there are concerns that may not be so straightforward?

Abigail indicated on her Application form that she previously attended a nearby Group up until four months ago. Checking with the Leader of that Group elicits complaints about Abigail’s negative remarks to mothers who didn’t agree with her vegetarian, cloth-diapering, anti-vaccination choices.
Before deciding whether or not to accept this application, it’s prudent for the Coordinator of Leader Accreditation (CLA) to discuss concerns with her LAD support person and to gain another perspective. This “consultation” can be as simple as the exchange of a few emails, or a brief phone conversation. Together, they can talk over the concerns, and hopefully come to a consensus as to what further clarification will be needed from the mother and/or her supporting Leader, and how to go about eliciting more background without coming across as judgmental.

At times, sufficiently serious concerns will surface that lead to the application being refused. It is always preferable that such a decision be made after careful discussion. Consultation helps ensure that LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership are being applied uniformly, and that personal biases do not cloud the LAD representative’s judgment.

Beth was in an automobile accident when her baby was eleven months old, and was hospitalized for a month. By the time Beth was well enough to return home, her baby had weaned. For three months she pumped breast milk for her baby, but was never able to get the baby to return to the breast. Reluctantly, she abandoned breastfeeding. She remains passionate about breastfeeding and wants to apply for leadership.

How should the CLA evaluate Beth’s mothering experience in light of the prerequisite to have breastfed for about a year? Would her situation fall under the “Special Consideration” clause, since weaning was the result of the accident and subsequent hospitalization? What questions might the CLA want to ask in order to get a more complete picture of Beth’s mothering experience in the absence of breastfeeding?

Carmen returned to full-time employment when her baby was five months old. She eased back into work with a couple of part-time weeks to allow the baby to get used to staying home with Dad, and then settled into a regular routine where Dad would bring the baby to her at lunchtime. Dad found a new job when baby was seven months old, and there wasn’t the same flexibility with the daycare provider, so Carmen was separated from her baby for eight hours a day from that time onward. The Leaders in the Group are eager to have a co-Leader who can answer the many questions they get on pumping and storing breast milk, and the logistics of juggling baby and career.

Before deciding whether to accept Carmen’s application, the CLA will need to determine if Carmen’s experience meets the Mothering Experience Prerequisite. How did the baby handle the increase in separation starting at seven months? Did Carmen have flexibility to be able to spend more time with the baby if there was evidence of fussiness or unhappiness? As with the situations above, this is one where it helps to consult one’s LAD support person, determine what additional information might be needed in order to make an informed decision, and then discuss the nuances of the situation. It is not unusual in a situation such as this for the LAD support person to consult her support person as well, to draw on the more experienced LAD representative’s added experience and perspective.

Delia is a great help at Group meetings, arriving early to help with setup and always staying late to clean up. Her three young children, who attend meetings with her, are well-behaved. When the subject of children’s behavior comes up during meetings, Delia is forthcoming about her family’s religion-based “spare the rod and spoil the child” philosophy that includes the occasional smack on the bottom to make sure that her children obey her. The recommending Leader is enthusiastic about what an asset Delia is to the Group, but a co-Leader expresses reservations that Delia’s views do not reflect the Loving Guidance concept.

How can the CLA gain a balanced picture of Delia’s approach to discipline? What points might she want to encourage the two Leaders to discuss with Delia regarding how Leaders are expected to explain the Loving Guidance concept? Are there books in the Group’s library that the Leaders often refer to as their “tool box” when they talk about children’s inappropriate behavior? Once more information has been gathered, how do the CLA and the Leaders come to a consensus as to whether Delia will be able to credibly present and represent the concept of Loving Guidance?

The CLA’s LAD support person can provide an “instinct check” whenever a sensitive situation such as this is identified. She can also help draft correspondence in difficult situations. LAD representatives are always welcome to make the most of our LAD support system.
Consultation regarding difficult situations helps LAD maintain consistency in decision making throughout LLL. It also helps a LAD representative address concerns with confidence, knowing that others with greater experience affirm the way she is handling a difficult situation.

What is the difference between a “consultation” and a “referral”? A “consultation” is an informal discussion with one’s support person, a request for guidance, an opportunity to tap into the LAD support person’s broader experience with similar situations. After a consultation, the LAD representative uses the information provided to her to follow through, using her own judgment. A “referral” is a formal request that entails sharing of all past correspondence, discussion that will likely involve several highly experienced LAD representatives, and a consensus decision as to how the situation is to be handled.

If you’re ever in doubt about how to proceed with a difficult situation, contact your LAD support person!

Marie Beam lives in Kensington, Maryland, USA, just north of Washington, D.C. She and her husband, Eric, have three grown children and one grandson. Marie has been a Leader since 1992 and a member of the LAD since 1996. She is currently serving as one of two LAD Council Coordinators.

New Resources: Leader Applicant's Resource Kit, Combined Versions

LAD Council is pleased to share two new resources:

-- Leader Applicant's Resource Kit (LARK), Combined Version
-- Leader Applicant's Resource Kit (LARK), Leader's Guide, Combined Version

These new versions of LARK were created in response to requests to have all six chapters in one file for easier reference. We also added a Checklist of Topics to Discuss which Applicants can choose to use. The Table of Contents includes links to chapters and documents, making it easier for the user to move back and forth between different parts.

If you share LARK with Applicants and their supporting Leaders, you might encourage them to look first at the Application Work Summary on page 4. Many find that this simple, one-page graphic of the elements of leadership preparation helps to clarify the required work.

The pdf files are available on the LLL Alliance LAD Web pages http://www.llleus.org/LAD.html:

On Applicant page: LARK, Combined Version

You can download the Word files of these resources on the LAD representative page (http://www.llleus.org/LAD.html; username: LAD password: LADis#1). If the Applicant or the Leader wishes to receive the Word version, feel free to offer it. Whenever there may be concerns with transmission of accurate formatting, the pdf version would be recommended.

As with the original LARK, use of this document is not a requirement. The LAD offers it as an optional resource.
Giving Advice Versus Offering Suggestions

Giving advice often sends an unspoken message—a lack of confidence and trust. Advice usually begins with phrases such as:

- You should . . .
- You ought to . . .
- Why don’t you . . .
- You should have . . .
- Why didn’t you . . .
- You shouldn’t have . . .

When we give advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The mother follows the advice and is successful.</td>
<td>The mother may not give herself credit for making the decision to use the information in the advice and for implementing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mother follows the advice and fails.</td>
<td>The mother may blame the Leader, and the Leader and LLL lose credibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mother rejects the advice and is successful.</td>
<td>The mother doesn’t trust LLL information, and the Leader and LLL lose credibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mother rejects the advice and fails.</td>
<td>The mother resents the Leader or becomes dependent on her and doesn’t trust herself.</td>
</tr>
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Offering information and suggestions shows respect for the other person and encourages her to choose what suits her. It can begin with phrases such as:

- Here’s what other mothers have done in similar situations . . .
- How would you feel about . . .
- Many mothers have found . . .
- Some babies seem to need . . .
- You may find that . . .

When we offer information & suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The mother can make her own well-informed decision.</td>
<td>The mother gains confidence both in her judgment and in the Leader as a source of reliable information. Even if her decision does not lead to the desired outcome, she has learned from her own experience and may make a different choice in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear ACLA,

I was very excited when you explained that an Applicant would be moving to my town. Well, she attended our meeting for the first time today. You mentioned that she was close to accreditation, but personally I would not recommend her as a Leader. I believe that the first impression is very important when somebody works as a Leader. This Applicant was so talkative, and she never tried to be a “listener.” I am not comfortable about working with her as my co-Leader!

Leader

✦ Sample Responses ✦

Dear Leader,

Thanks so much for letting me know that Annie Applicant has attended her first meeting with the Group you lead. It’s good to hear that she has made that first important step of attending a meeting and beginning the process of assimilating into the Group. I have the impression that Annie really enjoyed simply being a mother in your Group, gaining from the way she felt welcomed and put at her ease. I’m sure she will have appreciated everyone’s support and friendship after the anxiety of moving house and leaving friends and family behind.

I do agree with you about the importance of the first impression that a Leader makes. It sounds as though Annie is in the best possible place to take the time she needs to adjust to the leadership role. Perhaps all that is needed is for you to meet with her personally. Maybe you could ask her to take on a task for the Group, such as being a hostess or giving out the notices at the end of the meeting. If you’re working with other Applicants, it would be great for Annie to meet them and perhaps have some role-play practice using the Preview.

Another option would be to hold an Evaluation Meeting. This is so often a way of encouraging Applicants—and every Group member—to take responsibility for the success of LLL meetings and to recognise the role they can play in helping to meet the needs of the mothers who come.

Please keep me posted and we can review how things are going once you and Annie have got to know each other a bit better.

ACLA, Great Britain
Dear Leader,

I can appreciate your anxieties about whether Annie Applicant is close to readiness for accreditation. I expect Annie might find it daunting herself, the prospect of becoming a Leader in a Group that is so new to her.

Annie might be glad of the chance to talk to you about how she plans to make the transition to Leader. Would it be possible to include Annie in planning your next meeting? This would give you an opportunity to work with her, to discuss together your objectives and ideas for the meeting, and to encourage her to support you during the meeting.

It’s possible that Annie herself would welcome the chance to practise Communication Skills at a CSD workshop. If there isn’t one planned near you at the moment, you could even arrange a workshop and invite Applicants and Leaders from your Group and from others near you.

I hope we can find ways to bring out the skills she has been developing during her application, so you can both gain confidence that she has the necessary skills for the Leader’s role. Let’s see how you feel things are going after the next Series Meeting. Is it okay with you?

ACLA, Europe

Dear CLA,

To be honest, I’m quite shocked that there wasn’t more questioning involved before coming to the decision to refuse Cathy Candidate’s application. She is an excellent candidate and is as present as she can possibly be in her situation. It’s true that her boys are in daycare for ten hours each day, and while I agree wholeheartedly that they need their mother and that the situation isn’t ideal, she just cannot financially afford to work part-time. I find it’s discriminatory to refuse her because of her financial situation. I know that many parents say they “have to” work, but can afford a big mortgage and vacations. However, this is not Cathy’s situation.

I know many Leaders who work—even full-time—and are accredited/have been accredited in the past. Other Leaders who know Cathy have expressed surprise at this decision because they know her to be a strong advocate of attachment parenting and breastfeeding.

Frankly, I’d like this decision revoked. I do understand the importance of our philosophy and of having harmonious discourse among Leaders, but I feel that the questions asked were not sufficient to determine Cathy’s mothering philosophy.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Lucy Leader

How would you respond? Send your suggested reply or an extract you would like to share with other LAD representatives to Alison Parkes, Contributing Editor, at: Rnparkes.family@ntlworld.com

Je suis allée à ma première réunion LLL en octobre 1990 lorsque Sophie avait 4 mois... Dès octobre 1992 alors que j’étais enceinte de Loïc j’animais ma première réunion et 2 ou 3 ans après, j’étais Co-Lad. Tout cela a été très rapide en fait. Et depuis toutes ces années je me plais beaucoup au Lad.

C’est comme un havre de ressourcement... Un espace où les relations humaines sont d’un autre ordre par rapport à la vie trépidante que je peux vivre par ailleurs, à mon travail par exemple.

Je me suis portée candidate au poste de Clad pour LLL France avec de l’hésitation, avec beaucoup de questions, puis avec bonheur de me mettre à disposition de cette association que j’aime. Je suis contente d’être active dans une nouvelle dimension à LLL France pour que LLL continue son service auprès des mères, contente aussi d’engager des relations avec Leche League au-delà de mon pays.

Lorsque je suis venue à l’EMS en 2012 je ne pensais pas du tout que je reviendrais à celui de 2014 avec cette nouvelle fonction. Je pense que le Lad est le fondement de LLL, il est le lieu de renouvellement des forces vives de l’association. C’est peut-être cela qui le rend attachant.

I am Agnès Chevalley. My husband, Philippe, and I have two children: Sophie (23) and Loïc (20). Thanks to LLL, I nursed them with pleasure. My children are now both students and are not at home so often. My son is a student near Paris and my daughter is in Nancy in eastern France. We live near Epinal in the Vosges. After my children were grown, I went back to work as an occupational therapist in a hospital.

I went to my first LLL meeting in October 1990 when Sophie was four months old. In October 1992, when I was pregnant with Loïc, I led my first meeting and two or three years later I joined the LAD. This all happened rather quickly, and in all the years since then I have been very happy in the LAD. It is a safe place where we can get back to basics, a place where human relationships are more important than in other walks of life, for example at work.
I applied for the position of CLA for LLL France with some hesitation, with many questions and with pleasure to be available for this organisation that I love. I am happy to take on this new dimension of work for LLL France, so that it continues to help mothers. I am also happy to have contacts with LLL outside my country.

When I attended the LLL European Management Symposium in 2012, I never imagined that I would be back in 2014 in this new capacity. I think that the LAD is fundamental to LLL. It is the place where the energy and strength of the organisation are revitalised. Perhaps that’s what makes it so endearing.

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Janna O’Connell, USA

I am a Regional Administrator of Leader Accreditation with Leader Accreditation Department West (LADW). I am CLA for Wisconsin, USA, and Interim CLA for Missouri and Montana. I also work as an ACLA-at-large for different Areas. In Wisconsin I am the Area Financial Coordinator (AFC) and Area Data Administrator (ADA). As you can maybe tell, I like LLL work, variety and keeping busy.

I have lived in Wisconsin all of my life. I have been married to my husband Neil for 20 years. Fun fact #1: Neil and I share the same birthday and year—I am four hours older. I am a stay-at-home mother of Novy, my daughter, who is eleven years old. Fun fact #2: Novy’s birthdate is the day after ours. Before my daughter was born, I had a career as a research microbiologist for 11 years. We also have many pets (dogs, cats, rats) and are foster parents to ill cats/kittens since 1997 for our local Humane Society. I also clean cat cages at the Humane Society every week and volunteer at fundraisers. The animal shelter and LLL are real passions for me. I enjoy strength training, cycling, running our dogs, reading and gardening, which is more like weeding.

I went to my first LLL meeting in 2002 when I was 6 months pregnant. The topic was “The Art of Breastfeeding and Avoiding Difficulties.” Stories from mothers about bleeding nipples, thrush, mastitis, biting babies, etc., were shared that night. The Leaders approached me after the meeting to make sure I was not traumatized and now terrified of breastfeeding. I told them I am the type that likes to hear the worst that can happen and see that people have survived, persevered and succeeded. It makes me feel like I can then survive anything, too.

I enjoyed attending my Germantown/Falls LLL Group and became a Leader in late 2003. I loved being a stay-at-home mother, but missed the mental stimulation of my busy career. LLL leadership filled that void, and I especially loved the science side of breastfeeding. I then joined LAD as a CLA for Wisconsin in 2007 and RALA in 2011. I find helping new A/CLAs with their LAD orientations very fulfilling.

I plan to enjoy my LAD and Wisconsin Area work for many years to come. There is always something new, and I really like the challenge. Plus, working with Applicants is like getting an “enthusiasm injection” for LLL work. It’s a great feeling every time I sign a Statement of Commitment for a newly accredited Leader.
Catch-Up Vacation

As you go about your work, is a huge “pending pile” staring at you, robbing you of the satisfaction you used to feel when doing LAD work? Here’s an idea you might try: a “catch-up vacation.” To do this, you will take a set time away from your usual LAD work. This might be a few days, or even a week. Many email servers will let you set an “away message.” This will automatically send a message to anyone who writes you, saying something like: “Thank you for your email. I will be away from my computer [dates]. I will respond to your message soon after that.” Even if you are unable to set such a message, taking a short time away from regular work will still allow you to respond to those incoming email messages within the LAD expectation of two weeks.

During your “catch-up vacation,” focus only on your overdue “pending pile.” Each day, choose one or two tasks/responses you have been putting off. Once you have completed those, close your LAD desk for the day. Do this without guilt, and spend the rest of your day on family activities, hobbies, a walk in the park, baking fresh bread . . . you get the idea! If you have a smaller “pile,” you may be able to clear it in a few days or a week. If you have a larger pile, you may need to return to your regular LAD work after the set time-off period and repeat your “vacation” again after reading and responding to or organizing pending responses to the mail which came during your time away.

Before you begin, tell your support person about your plans. While on your “vacation,” take a minute to look at the subject lines of the incoming mail you are putting off. If any are marked “urgent,” you will need to address them right away or refer them to your support person. Once you have cleared the backlog of pending things, you can take a deep breath and return to your regular schedule with satisfaction.
Congratulations on your appointment!

Hitomi Akao                 ACLA, Japan
Marie Alexandre           ACLA, France
Marie-Claire Bakker      LAD Secretary, FAiAsiaME
Carroll Beckham           CLA, North Carolina, USA
Kristen Carlson           ACLA, Massachusetts/Rhode Island/Vermont, USA
Kelly Cassidy              ACLA, Pennsylvania-East, USA
Cathy Hughes               ACLA, Minnesota/Dakotas, USA
Ellen Longman              CLA, Israel
Shaylea McKay              ACLA, Alabama/Mississippi/Louisiana, USA
Natalie McMaster          CLA, Atlantic Canada
Angela Orenczak           CLA, Georgia, USA
Chris Oretnburger         ACLA, Atlantic Canada
Joan Peloso                RALA, Southern Region, USA
Lori Shad                  ACLA, Sunshine State, Florida, USA
Kelly Stratford            ACLA, Area 1, New Zealand
Linda Wieser               ALA, Canada
Laura Williams             ACLA, Florida/Caribbean Islands, USA
My Dear Mother

Back: Lupe Forsang, RALA for LAD West, and her mother, Esther.

Front: Lupe’s daughters, Ava and Monica, and Monica’s daughter, Bella (2—now 8).

“This is my favorite photo because it shows the past, present and future generation of mothers in my family. My mother breastfed me, I’m a twin, and she supported me when I was breastfeeding my children. Monica breastfed Bella and the cycle of support continues. This photo reminds me of why I continue to be a Leader.”

Linda Dockrill, ALA, LLL New Zealand, and her mother, Margaret Dockrill.

“The photo was taken at the beach near Timaru, South Island, New Zealand, in July 2013. I asked my daughter to take this photo as I have very few photos of me and my mother together. It is already a treasure to me.”
Laurence Kher Descourtieux, ALA for Europe, in her mother’s arms.

“This picture was taken on the day I was born. My mother died many years ago and never knew any of my children. She was amazing, and I know how much I love being a mother comes from her. Special thanks to my dear mother!”

At the 2013 Alliance Leader Development Seminar in Pennsylvania, USA, there was a Fun Evening where Leaders could perform. Alison Parkes, LADders Contributing Editor for “How Would You Respond,” sang “Letter—My Dear Children.” This song is about an aging mother’s recollections of her mothering and about her love for her children. The original song is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omVq5eZOCUM

Mary Ann Kerwin, Founder, explained at her session at the 2008 LLL Japan Conference what Laurence Kher Descourtieux wrote in her photo letter. The session was entitled “Love That Lasts a Lifetime” and the relevant part is copied below.

Very little of what you and I do will matter 100 years from now. But our parenting will matter. Starting with breastfeeding, our attitudes are passed on to our children—and from them to future generations. Therefore right now we have opportunities in our lifetime to bequeath to the next generation loving, caring attitudes. They in turn will pass on these attitudes to future generations.

* Editor’s note: This bilingual session is available at: http://www.llljapan.com/education/podcast/MAKinLLLJapan2stconf.mp3  
The above part occurs at 0:01:45.

Thank you for helping mothers prepare for leadership and for accrediting them as LLL Leaders. Your dedicated work helps breastfeeding mothers offer loving, caring attitudes beyond their generations. We wish you a happy holiday season and look forward to working further with you in the coming year!

LAD Council

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