



## Thoughts on Becoming an LLL Leader and IBCLC

Thank you for expressing an interest in becoming a La Leche League (LLL) Leader. You have also indicated you would like to become an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). As you consider your goals, please take the following information about LLL leadership into consideration.

Those interested in LLL leadership are eager to provide volunteer, peer breastfeeding support to pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. They value their own breastfeeding experiences and model LLL philosophy. As an international organization, LLL has standards for accreditation that are the same worldwide. All Leaders are expected to meet the prerequisites to applying for leadership and to value and role-model the organization's philosophy in their own lives.

The two roles, LLL Leader and IBCLC, are different but can complement each other. Leaders who are also IBCLCs recognize the responsibilities of each job and work to keep the roles separate. It is important that LLL Leaders avoid "mixing causes." For example, Leaders cannot recruit clients for their lactation consultant practices at La Leche League meetings or when mothers contact them as Leaders. This restriction can be especially challenging for Leaders who live in communities where they may be the only LLL Leader and the only IBCLC. LLL has a policy related to this. For more information contact the representative of the Leader Accreditation Department you are communicating with.

La Leche League Leader	International Board Certified Lactation Consultant
Is a mother and peer	Is a healthcare professional (may or may not have children)
Has personal breastfeeding experience (has breastfed for at least one year)	May or may not have personal breastfeeding experience
Is a volunteer	Is paid for professional services
Provides mother-to-mother support	Provides clinical lactation consultations
Focuses on the normal course of breast-feeding	Focuses on breastfeeding challenges
Values and role-models LLL philosophy and acts in accordance with LLLI Bylaws and Policies	Follows Code of Professional Conduct
Uses <i>The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding</i> as a primary resource	Uses resources designed for health care professionals
Has a support network within the organization	Works alone in a private practice or as part of a health care team

During the accreditation period, a Leader Applicant learns the skills she needs for her role as an LLL Leader through reading, reflection on her personal experiences, dialogue about LLL philosophy, observation at LLL Meetings and attendance at LLL workshops (if available), and discussion with other Leaders about Leader responsibilities. She explores LLL philosophy, researches common breastfeeding topics, learns effective communication skills, and practices addressing mother's questions and ways to handle challenging LLL Group situations. Some Applicants are accredited within six months to a year; others take longer.

Being a La Leche League Leader can be a route to meeting the contact hour requirement to sit the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBLCE) exam. In fact, La Leche League International (LLLI) played an important role in the development of the standards and qualifications of the profession, and right from the beginning Leader training and breastfeeding experience were acknowledged as accepted components of qualification. For the requirements to take the IBLCE exam, review the information on their website: [iblce.org](http://iblce.org)

Volunteering with La Leche League can help Leaders work toward their personal or professional goals. This can be a benefit of leadership; however, it is important to keep in mind that your primary reason for becoming an LLL Leader should be that you want to provide mother-to-mother support as a peer volunteer. LLL provides a different service to mothers and communities than midwives, doulas or IBCLCs. It is a distinct role and we want people preparing to be Leaders to recognize and value LLL's unique, mother-to-mother style of breastfeeding support.

Please think about the following questions and discuss them with a member of the Leader Accreditation Department.

- Why do you want to become an LLL Leader? Is it primarily as a path to becoming an IBCLC? Would you still pursue leadership if it didn't meet one of the IBLCE pathways?
- What is your understanding of the work involved in becoming an LLL Leader, and the ongoing volunteer commitment of Leaders?
- Do you plan to continue working as an LLL Leader once you earn your IBLCE certification?
- How do you see the two roles fitting together in your life? How do you plan to keep them distinct?