

# HORIZONS

A Newsletter for La Leche League Leader Applicants  
Summer 2011

## Childbirth and Breastfeeding

La Leche League Leaders need to have a comprehensive understanding of how different childbirth experiences and methods of delivery affect the start of breastfeeding. The Background Reading/Learning requirement helps the Leader Applicant develop this knowledge, enabling her to help mothers who have had many different kinds of deliveries, and to understand and apply LLL philosophy when discussing childbirth.

The 13-page booklet, *Childbirth and Breastfeeding: Background Information for Leader Applicants and Supporting Leaders*, provides basic background information that can be used to meet the childbirth aspect of this reading requirement.

Even if you have already read one or more books on childbirth, you may find this a helpful, concise resource to explore.

You can find the booklet online at:  
<http://www.llli.org/docs/lad/ChildbirthandBreastfeeding.pdf>



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## Co-Leaders Working Together

At some time during their LLL careers, most Leaders work with other Leaders in their Group. Here are some suggestions for sharing leadership responsibilities:

### Planning and Leading Series Meetings

In many Groups, Leaders rotate the responsibility for leading Series Meetings, giving each Leader the chance to lead each of the four topics.

If a Leader can't attend a particular meeting or is extra busy for a few months, the schedule for who leads the Series Meetings can be adjusted. Some newly-accredited Leaders like to lead extra meetings to practice being the Leader in charge and to encourage mothers in the Group to look to them for answers rather than always to the more experienced Leaders.

Two or more Leaders can also co-lead a meeting or lead different parts of a meeting. This is most successful with advance planning.

### Helping Mothers One-on-One

Leaders do this individually, of course, but they can still support each other. If a Leader receives a particularly difficult call, she may want to consult with a co-Leader (keeping identifying details confidential) and then call the mother back. Or a Leader might put a message on her answering machine giving a co-Leader's phone number in case a mother wants to reach a Leader right away.

### Group Management

If there are Group workers, they can be supervised and supported by all the Leaders at planning meetings, or each by a particular

Leader. When Leaders are handling Group responsibilities, they often try to divide them among the Leaders fairly equally. If there are jobs that no one wants, or a job that more than one person wants to do, rotating responsibilities can help.

#### Keeping Up-to-Date

Each Leader receives LLL publications such as *Leaven* and the Area Leaders' Letter. Co-Leaders may also want to loan books to each other or forward appropriate electronic material.

Co-Leaders can encourage each other to attend conferences, workshops and chapter meetings by sharing transportation and lodging when needed and by helping the Group earn money earmarked for Leader education.

#### Helping Mothers Prepare for Leadership

One Leader is designated the "sponsoring Leader" for each Applicant, but it is usually more instructive for the Applicant if all Leaders in the Group take some role in her preparation. Groups with more than one Applicant sometimes find it useful to have Applicant meetings, which include several Applicants and Leaders.

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Ideally, co-Leaders will share both the decision-making and the responsibility for the Group. This requires good communication. Most Leaders use a combination of phone calls, email and in-person meetings to keep in touch and work together.

Sometimes, a Leader may find that it is difficult for her to fulfill one or more of the basic Leader responsibilities. In this case, she may ask her co-Leaders if they are willing to temporarily cover for her. For instance, a Leader may have a toddler whom she cannot leave at home but who needs her complete attention during meetings. She might volunteer to take on more Group management in exchange for not leading Series Meetings for a few months.

Often, the opposite happens: A Leader wants to take on more than the five basic Leader responsibilities. For instance, she may want to do an extra fund-raising project to buy books for the local library, or she may want to speak on breastfeeding at a nearby bookstore. Her co-Leaders might or might not want to collaborate with her on these projects.

Unfortunately, sometimes a Leader may feel dissatisfied with a co-Leader but not feel comfortable speaking up about the situation. For instance, she might feel burdened because she is doing more work than other Leaders, or the Series Meetings may be on a day that is difficult for her, or she may not agree with something another Leader said at a meeting. The only way to solve a problem like this is to say something about it. If this is difficult, a Leader can consult with her District Advisor (DA) or with a Communication Skills Instructor (CSI) for ideas on how to approach the subject with her co-Leaders.

With good communication and enthusiasm, co-Leaders almost always find joy in their work together.



### **Online Resources for Applicants**

The LLL of Texas website has most of the materials an Applicant needs, including:

- An overview of application work
- What to include in your personal history
- *Leader's Handbook* checklists
- *Childbirth and Breastfeeding*
- *Breastfeeding Resource Guide*
- Exercises for Applicants
- *A Preview of Mothers' Questions/ Problems and Group Dynamics/ Management*
- LLLI Bylaws
- Back issues of *Horizons* newsletter.

Point your browser to:

[www.texaslll.org/leader-applicant-resources](http://www.texaslll.org/leader-applicant-resources). No log in is required!