

Exploring the New Policy: "Code of Ethics: Leaders with Personal, Professional or Commercial Interests"

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<http://www.llli.org/llleaderweb/LV/LVJanFebMar07p22.html>

LLL Leaders shall respect their trusted positions with mothers. Leaders shall not seek to profit financially from mothers through their interactions with them as LLL Leaders. When representing La Leche League, LLL Leaders shall not promote their personal opinions or interests outside of the scope of LLLI philosophy.

Some LLL Leaders may be engaged in paid professions and businesses that offer products or services of value to mothers. LLL Leaders shall make all efforts to separate their roles as LLL Leaders from these paid professions.

An LLL Leader who is also a paid professional or businesswoman shall offer choices to mothers, in addition to her own products or services, when appropriate and possible.

At their October 2006 meeting, the LLLI Board of Directors adopted a Code of Ethics to address both professional and funding ethics for LLL Leaders. Ethics deal with values relating to human conduct: the rightness or wrongness of actions; and the goodness or badness of motives and ends. The policy quoted above replaces Appendix 21, "Guidelines for Leaders/Lactation Consultants." This new policy provides a basis for ethical conduct rather than a set of rules or guidelines. It expands the scope of the former Appendix 21. This policy concerns the Leader who operates a preschool, the Leader who is a health care professional, the Leader who sells baby slings, and many other situations—including the Leader who is also a lactation consultant. In fact, this policy concerns all Leaders, because we are all accountable to each other for the image and well-being of La Leche League! Here are some scenarios to show this policy in use:

Q. I am the only provider of my health care specialty in my community. Can I self-refer?

A. A Leader is responsible to the mother for the trusted position she holds with the mother. She is also responsible to all Leaders for the image she projects of La Leche League. A Leader's role is to offer information and options to a mother. This could mean a list of the closest providers of a health care specialty, or a Web site or toll-free number the mother can use to find a provider of the service she needs. Your name may be included along with others. The mother can then decide whether to select you as her provider or to select someone else given her unique circumstances and her criteria. You will have empowered the mother rather than having made a decision for her.

Q. I have a business that sells products for babies and new mothers. Can I display them at the meeting? Can I give my business cards out to mothers at the meeting?

A. The principles to use are the same as in the scenario above. Some Groups in the International Division have on their library or sales table a list or notebook or card file of resources that mothers can consult; a Leader's business card could be included with other resources.

Q. I teach breastfeeding classes in my community. How does this fit with the new policy?

A. If a hospital or well-baby clinic contracts with a La Leche League entity (Group, Area, etc.) to have any Leader teach, payment for service belongs to the LLL entity. The Leader who teaches would normally request reimbursement of her expenses. A contract may be with a particular Leader due to her recognized expertise in the field. She is acting as a private person with respected credentials on her resume (which include being an LLL Leader). In this case, payment for the contracted service rightfully belongs to the Leader.

Q. I have obtained a grant to allow me to help at a free clinic a few days a week. The grant will cover my supplies, such as LLL tear-off sheets, with a small stipend for my time. Is this okay?

A. The principle involved is identical to that given in the previous scenario. If a Leader applies for a grant independently and obtains it in part because there is "LLL Leader" in her resume, the grant money belongs to her to be used as stipulated in the grant. This is similar to obtaining a grant based on skills learned from office work, teaching, being a research technician, etc. However, if the grant proposal is intended to fund all or part of an LLL project, then the money received is for LLL, to be used as stipulated in the grant. The grant would, of course, include reimbursement of expenses and could include a stipend for those involved in the project.

Q. How does my Leader insurance apply to my work as a lactation consultant or other health care provider?

A. The liability insurance provided to Leaders by LLLI covers work done as a volunteer with La Leche League. Clear separation of LLL and non-LLL roles is important. Imagine you start a call or consultation in the role of LLL Leader and complete it, for example, in the role of a health care provider. Imagine a malpractice claim is filed. Both the LLL insurance provider and the business insurance provider could decline to represent you, believing it is the other company's responsibility.

Sometimes it is a challenge to determine an ethical course of action for a specific situation. Consultation with at least two Leaders who have relevant expertise and the ability to take an objective view will usually provide the guidance you need. This consultation may include Area and/or Division or Affiliate support staff who frequently have additional training and experience.