



## **La Leche League of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont (MA/RI/VT) Area Leader Agreement**

This agreement outlines how the Area will support Leaders, conduct Area business, and work with LLL Alliance and La Leche League International (LLLI). It includes Leader responsibilities and accountability procedures for both Leaders and Area Administrators.

La Leche League of MA/RI/VT connects to LLL Alliance, and through it to LLLI and the LLLI Leader Accreditation Department. LLL of MA/RI/VT receives departmental support from LLL Alliance.

LLL of MA/RI/VT recognizes that LLLI is the sole source for Leader accreditation and that this accreditation is worldwide.

### **Area Administrative Structure and Leader Support**

The LLL of MA/RI/VT Area provides support to Leaders through an Area Council, led by an Area Team consisting of the department heads and others as needed. The Area Team bears decision-making responsibility within the Area. The Team consults cooperatively with one another and other members of the Area Council as needed, communicates regularly via email, and meets virtually or in-person several times per year. The members of the Area Team may include:

- Area Coordinator of Leaders (ACL), *Area Head and Leader Department Head*
- Area Professional Liaison (APL), *Professional Liaison Department Head*
- Area Finance Coordinator (AFC), *Finance Department Head*
- Area Coordinator of Leader Accreditation (CLA), *Leader Accreditation Department Head*
- Area Publications Coordinator (APC), *Publications Department Head*
- Area Coordinator of Education (ACE), *Continuing Education Department Head*
- Area Communication Skills Instructor Coordinator (CSIC), *Communication Skills Department Head*
- Area Secretary/Area Database Administrator

In accordance with LLL Alliance guidelines, Area-wide searches are conducted for the positions of ACL and CLA, with opportunities for Leaders to recommend themselves or others. Other Team positions are filled via Area-wide search or appointment by the ACL in consultation with other Team members. In filling Team positions the Area Team receives the counsel and guidance of LLL Alliance staff. Other Area Council positions may be filled via Area-wide search or appointment by a department head in consultation with other Team members. Open positions are publicized widely and Leaders are encouraged to consider serving on the Area Council. The Area Council may meet periodically virtually or in-person. Ongoing support and training are provided within each department.

As a member of LLL Alliance, the Area is subject to the LLL Alliance Accountability Procedure for Area Administrators (<https://lllalliance.org/lll-alliance-accountability-procedure-for-administrators/>), which exists to ensure that administrators are accountable to Leaders. Any Leader questioning a Team member's performance can take advantage of this Procedure.

## **Area Services and Support to Leaders**

The members of the Area Council provide education, information, resources, training, and expertise to Leaders seeking support in their LLL work.

- The **Leader Department** provides a connection to the larger organization, information, enrichment, encouragement, and a first-line support person to help Leaders build confidence in their work and navigate organizational resources.
- The **Leader Accreditation Department** provides training and preparation for new Leaders and resources for current Leaders to help build strong co-Leader connections and to help provide support to Applicants as they prepare for leadership.
- The **Professional Liaison Department** is a resource for medical, legal, and technical issues that exceed a Leader's expertise and resources, is a conduit to the professional advisory boards, and provides the most up-to-date resources and information to local Leaders and Groups.
- The **Finance Department** works with Groups to ascertain funds are handled properly, and tax laws are met, in addition to providing information on ways to raise funds.
- The **Continuing Education Department** works to define and meet Leader education goals, and provides ongoing opportunities for education and building connections with others; and plans virtual and in-person education events.
- The **Communications Skills Department** provides workshops, information, and guidance on effective ways of communicating in a variety of situations so that Leaders feel comfortable and confident in the information they share and know that it is being received in the manner in which it was meant to be received.
- The **Publications Department** provides an avenue for dissemination of information to build a community, inform the Leaders, and maintain connections to one another; this includes direct support to Groups seeking assistance with public relations.
- Through the **Area Team and Area Council** the Area provides an Area website, Group information on the website, and technical support; an Area Secretary and Area Data Administrator to maintain the directory and database; a representative to the Alumnae Association; and more, as needed.

## **Mutual Accountability**

### **Area to Leader Communication**

Online communications and publications include the Area and LLL Alliance websites, and email communications from LLLI, LLL Alliance, and LLL of MA/RI/VT. All Area Leaders will be subscribed to the Area Leader email list. This is the Area Team's primary mode of communication to Leaders and Leaders should not unsubscribe from

this list. Leaders are also strongly encouraged to join the Area's Leader Facebook group.

### **Leader to Area Communication**

Every Leader is encouraged to make contact with their District Advisor, if applicable, or the ACL at least twice per year via telephone, email, postal mail, or in person. All Leaders are required to submit Semi-Annual Reports in January and July, whether or not there has been LLL activity during the period.

Every Group must file a Group Yearly Financial Report by April 30 (thirty days after the close of the fiscal year). Groups must comply with all local, state, and federal financial filing requirements. Groups that fail to report will be put on probation and won't be eligible to participate in Area funding programs. Group membership shares will be held by the Area until reporting is up-to-date. Because the Area reports to the IRS on behalf of the Group annually, failure to file for three years will result in closure of the Group.

### **Financial Services and Accountability**

In accordance with federal law, the Area makes its Form 990 available to any U.S. citizen who wishes to see it. The Area budget and year-end financial statements are posted to the Area Leader website. The Area Finance Coordinator will email a copy of the budget and year-end financial statements to any Leader who requests them. Members of the Finance Department are available to answer Leaders' questions about the budget, financial statements, and Form 990, and to assist with Group financial matters.

The Area Team adopts the budget in the spring. LLL of MA/RI/VT will make financial and programmatic information available to LLLI by reporting as required to LLL Alliance, or upon the request of LLLI.

### **Area Internal Financial Controls**

To ensure that Area funds are protected from misuse or misappropriation, the following internal financial controls will be followed:

- a) There must be two or more signers (including the AFC and the ACL) on the primary checking account and any other account.
- b) Bank statements must be mailed (or sent electronically) directly from the financial institution to the ACL.
- c) Any paper check over \$1,000 (except for required payments to LLL Alliance) must have two signatures. Any electronic debit over \$1,000 must have authorization from two Area Team members.
- d) Any check over \$250 paid to a Leader, or an immediate relative of a Leader, including but not limited to reimbursements, must have approval by both the AFC and ACL.

Any expense over \$1,000 other than payments made to LLL Alliance, LLLI, or conference expenses directly related to site fees, meal expenses, or speaker fees/expenses, must be approved by the Area Team.

## **Leader Responsibilities**

Each Leader associating with La Leche League of MA/RI/VT agrees to the following responsibilities:

- a) Signs the LLLI Statement of Commitment upon accreditation,\* agreeing to abide by LLLI policies for Leader volunteers, the current Policies and Standing Rules (<https://www.llli.org/leader-pages/policies-standing-rules/>). When paying annual dues to the Area, Leaders re-commit to abide by the LLLI Statement of Commitment and all current LLLI policies, including the Mission Statement and LLLI Inclusivity Statement, and all policies of LLL Alliance and LLL of MA/RI/VT.
- b) Pays Leader and Group dues on time, updating contact information as necessary.
- c) Communicates with Area administrators regularly (at least twice each year), and submits statistical activity and financial reporting in accordance with Area policies.
- d) Stays connected and meets the responsibilities of LLL leadership by annually leading/co-Leading at least one LLL meeting or participating in an Area Leader support meeting or other activity arranged by the Leader department.
- e) Acts as an accountable steward of La Leche League funds, property, and resources. These assets belong to La Leche League, not the Leaders, Groups, or members.
- f) Is supportive of and accountable to the other Leaders in the Area in matters relating to their work as Leaders. Demonstrates mutual accountability to all Area Leaders by fulfilling the obligations outlined in this agreement and in the LLLI Policies and Standing rules, and all current LLLI, LLL Alliance, and Area policies.
- g) Does not represent other non-profit volunteer parenting/breastfeeding associations with a similar mission in a counseling role, thereby avoiding conflict of interest and liability indemnification issues.
- h) Stays current with breastfeeding information relevant to their work as a Leader via LLL publications, LLL-approved resources, attending LLL education events, and earning LLL Continuing Education Units.
- i) Provides breastfeeding information and options, not specific advice, allowing each parent to make the best decision for their family.
- j) Takes care not to use their trusted position with parents to promote personal viewpoints (breastfeeding or otherwise) or to gain financially.
- k) Ensures that their activities as an LLL volunteer are consistent with LLL Philosophy, the LLLI Policies and Standing Rules, and all current LLLI, LLL Alliance, and LLL of MA/RI/VT policies.
- l) Keeps confidential the personal and medical information of those with whom they work, unless otherwise required by law.
- m) Protects the LLLI logo and name.

### **Leaders abiding by these policies may:**

- a) Form and lead LLLI peer-to-peer support groups.
- b) Work in cooperation with any organization that does not directly contradict LLLI philosophy.
- c) Use the LLLI logo and name in accordance with LLLI policies for accredited Leaders and Areas.

## **Area Procedures for Admitting and Removing Leaders**

### **Policy for Admitting Leaders**

LLL of MA/RI/VT is an Area that includes primarily Leaders who reside within the geographical boundaries of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont. In the spirit of openness and inclusion, the Area also will welcome Leaders who reside elsewhere, subject to the following guidelines.

All Leaders with a primary or secondary connection with LLL of MA/RI/VT must be in good standing and must accept the LLL of MA/RI/VT Area Leader Agreement.

#### **A. Leaders Automatically Admitted**

Leaders in good standing who meet the following criteria will be accepted into the Area automatically upon acceptance of the Area Leader agreement:

- Those who live within the geographical boundaries of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont
- Those who are Active Leaders affiliated with Groups in LLL of MA/RI/VT
- Those affiliated with LLL of MA/RI/VT who have moved outside of its geographical boundaries but who inform the Area Coordinator of Leaders (ACL) that they wish to remain affiliated with this Area. In such cases the ACL will discuss with the Leader the benefits and limitations of continued affiliation with LLL of MA/RI/VT.

#### **B. Other Leaders Requesting Primary Affiliation with LLL of MA/RI/VT**

If Leaders outside the geographic boundaries of the Area request connection with LLL of MA/RI/VT, those requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, the Area's primary focus will be on serving the needs and interests of Leaders inside the three-state area. Primary connections outside the geographic area are expected to be rare.

Leaders other than those listed in Section A above who wish to connect with LLL of MA/RI/VT must contact the Area Coordinator of Leaders (ACL) and provide the following information:

- Name, address, telephone number, email address
- Date of accreditation
- Current Area connection
- Reason for wanting to change Area connection
- Verification that they are in good standing with their current Area
- If they are not in good standing with their current Area or involved in a grievance procedure, details on the situation

The Area Team will review each application, conduct dialogue as needed with the Leader making the affiliation request and with the leadership of the current Area, discuss the benefits and limitations of non-geographic connection, and together with the Leader determine whether affiliation with LLL of MA/RI/VT is in their best interest.

## **C. Leaders Requesting Secondary Affiliation with LLL of MA/RI/VT**

Leaders whose primary affiliation is with another Area and who wish to have a secondary connection with LLL of MA/RI/VT must contact the ACL with details of their requests. Support of such Leaders will be considered and negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

### **Policy for Removing Leaders**

As a geographically based Area, LLL of MA/RI/VT believes it is in the best interest of Leaders, the Area, LLL, and the families served by the organization to retain Leaders. A Leader would be removed from the Area only as a last resort, when all other means of negotiation and conflict resolution had been exhausted. The following guidelines explain the procedures to be followed when a Leader fails to meet their responsibilities or deviates from LLL policy. Depending on the circumstances, the Area administration will follow either the Accountability Procedure or the Complaint Procedure.

#### **I. Accountability Procedure**

A Leader may be removed from LLL of MA/RI/VT if they do not fulfill their responsibilities as outlined in the Area Leader Agreement. In this case, the removal will occur only after the following steps have been taken:

- a) If a Leader is not fulfilling their responsibilities as outlined in the Area Leader Agreement, it will be handled at the most local level first. Co-Leaders will attempt to make contact by phone, email, letter, or in person and work out a solution satisfactory to all concerned. The District Advisor (DA), if applicable, or ACL will be available for consultation and support. The Communication Skills Department may also be called upon to help with co-Leader communication.
- b) If the situation cannot be resolved Leader-to-Leader on the local level, the DA or ACL will attempt to contact the Leader by telephone and email, and if no response or if the issue is not resolved, by postal mail. Correspondence records will be kept.
- c) In the instance of a Leader with No Group Affiliation (NGA), resolution will begin with the DA or ACL.
- d) If the situation cannot be resolved by the process outlined above, the ACL or the Area Finance Coordinator/Area Treasurer (if the issue is financial), will attempt to make contact with the Leader and work out a solution satisfactory to all concerned. Every effort will be made to come to a resolution, including mediation, if appropriate. Contact will be attempted by phone, email, and at least one postal letter with records kept of correspondence. If no response is forthcoming, a second letter will be sent by certified mail requesting a reply within 14 days.
- e) If the Leader does not reply to the certified letter, or a solution satisfactory to all concerned cannot be found, the Leader connection with LLL of MA/RI/VT will be terminated and LLL Alliance and LLLI will be notified.

## **II. Complaint Procedure**

To be followed when a complaint is lodged against a Leader.

The procedure for dealing with a complaint about a Leader follows the regular line of communication within the Leader Department through District Advisor (DA), if applicable, and Area Coordinator of Leaders (ACL).

There are instances that require immediate referral to the ACL. For example, all complaints lodged by individuals outside LLL must be referred immediately to the ACL. In addition, there may be times when the ACL would request that a DA disassociate themselves from a conflict situation, for example, if the DA were affiliated with the Group or lived in the District where the problem is centered and involvement may hinder the DA's positive relationships with Leaders in their District. If this occurs, the ACL assumes responsibility and continues working toward a resolution.

All official complaints must be communicated in writing (by email or letter). The Area cannot take action on anonymous or unwritten complaints. Although it is necessary for the complaint to be in writing, the source will remain confidential unless the source has explicitly agreed otherwise. All administrators will respect the confidentiality of all parties.

The DA or ACL will gather information and assess the situation. If the situation involves conflict among Leaders mediation may resolve the issue.

When communicating with the Leader, it is important to be as specific in the description of the failure as confidentiality allows, such as citing specific examples as well as describing the consequences the Leader's behavior has upon the parties involved.

The Leader will have the opportunity to give a description of the situation from their point of view. If the parties have difficulty coming to a resolution that is mutually satisfactory, it may be necessary to offer to bring in a third party, such as the Area Communication Skills Instructor (CSI) or another Area Council member, to mediate. Documentation of conversations, letters, and emails is to be kept.

If the issue is not resolved or if the Leader fails to respond to requests from the DA or ACL, the ACL notifies the Leader via certified mail, return receipt requested, that the Leader has been removed from the Area and explains the appeal process. The ACL notifies the Director of LLL Alliance that the Leader has been removed.

When the situation is resolved, the ACL will move the file to the archives and keep it for as long as necessary (and at least five years) to track it should the problem recur.

### **Appeal Process**

A Leader who has been removed from the Area has the right to appeal the decision to the LLL Alliance Director. All notifications of removal from the Area will include complete contact information for the LLL Alliance Director including their name, address, phone number, and email address.

**Agreements Review**

This agreement is posted on the LLL of MA/RI/VT website. It will be reviewed every two years, or more frequently as needed. A request for review/revision can be made by any Leader with a primary connection to LLL of MA/RI/VT. Comments on agreements can be submitted at any time via phone, email, postal mail, or in-person to an Area Team member, or at any meeting set up by a Leader for the purpose of discussing agreements.

All comments received by August 15 of each year will be submitted to the Agreements Work Group (which is comprised of members of the Area Team), which will draft revisions and circulate the revised agreement to Area Leaders for comments, with the goal of making final revisions and submitting to the LLL Alliance for general posting by October 15.

**Leader Understanding**

I have read this entire agreement and understand how La Leche League of MA/RI/VT agrees to support me as a Leader and work with LLL Alliance and LLLI. I understand that I am affirming that I have read and I accept the agreement annually when paying my annual Leader dues to LLL of MA/RI/VT.

If at any time I wish to retire and do not intend to pay the next year’s dues (billed in January) I agree to notify the ACL of my decision to retire before November 15 so that the retirement can be recognized by LLLI during the calendar year. I understand that if I do not retire by November 15, I agree to pay the dues when billed the following January.

If I choose to associate with a different Area I should notify the Area Coordinator of Leaders of MA/RI/VT in writing.

*I hereby agree to the above terms and state my intention to associate with LLL of MA/RI/VT:*

Leader signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_