



## Frequently Asked Questions about La Leche League Agreements

### What is an LLL Agreement?

An LLL agreement is a statement that defines how Leaders connect with each other, or how LLL entities connect for mutual accountability. Agreements must be in keeping with the LLLI mission and policies. Examples of agreements include Leaders connecting with other Leaders, Leaders connecting with an Area, an Area connecting with an Area Network, Area Networks connecting to form a US entity, or a US entity connecting directly to LLLI.

### Do we have to have agreements even if we don't want to change how our Area works?

Yes, LLLI Policies and Standing Rules (PSR) Appendix 6 make this a requirement. The agreement can simply state how we work.

### Do all Leaders have to sign an agreement?

A paper signature is not necessarily required, but every Leader must connect to an Area through an agreement. Several groups of Leaders forming Areas have decided that they want each to sign their agreements on paper, and it certainly is one answer for how Leaders demonstrate their commitment to each other.



But it's not the only one. In most states and countries, agreements are agreements whether or not they are signed. Just as you agree to the conditions of software license by using the software, or you agree to changes in your credit card agreement by continuing to use the card, there are many ways to indicate agreement. Leaders are being encouraged to be careful not to enter into an agreement that they don't think they can keep or that they wouldn't be willing to sign if asked to sign! A reasonable set of agreements is not likely to get anyone in trouble. In fact, a nice clear set of reasonable agreements is likely to help everyone to stay out of trouble. That's a good goal for every Leader, Area, Area Network and even LLLI to aspire to!!

### Can I be in more than one Area?

All Leaders need a primary connection to one Area. Leaders are free to have secondary connections to other Areas – and as many as they feel necessary to do their La Leche League work.

### Can we still use the name La Leche League of.....?

If 80% of the Leaders who live in a geographically recognized name place, such as Arizona, Kansas, or Washington choose to connect to that Area, they can use the geographic place name of LLL of.....

### Will we still have a Team and an Area Council?

The Area makeup will be what the Leaders in that Area want it to be. If they are happy with the way

things are currently structured they need make no changes. If, on the other hand, they would like to try something else, they can do that instead.

### Do I have other options?

Yes. You may connect with any Area of your choice or start your own. Appendix 6 lists all that is needed to be an Area. Also, Areas are free to seek support in any manner they choose. They will not be automatically in a Division but can choose how they get support.

### Why are some Areas calling themselves an Area Network (AN) by breaking up into five small Areas?

Some Leaders want their Area to be relatively small so they know and interact with everyone on a more personal basis. One major benefit of breaking into smaller Areas is more local autonomy—Leaders in the Area have more say in what they do locally, if they want it. A related benefit some Leaders are hoping for is that more local autonomy will generate more local



enthusiasm and creativity! Another is that it may be simpler to break things down into smaller parts, as long as we don't lose the "economies of scale" of doing some things in the larger group (the AN). A benefit for LLL as a

whole is more diversity in how LLL USA is run. Rural Areas bring a different perspective than urban Areas—those differences are important to be heard. Some larger Areas are choosing to become Area Networks in order to better contribute to instituting a national entity.

### What needs to be in the agreement?

We have the same overall standards. We are ALL to adhere to LLLI Policy, including the Principles that state we will remain open and welcoming to all. How we do that will vary according to local custom. Some may feel the need to be explicit in their agreements; others may figure it's such a given for them that they don't need to write it down. That's between the Area Leaders, and the Area and Area Network they connect to -- and the other Area Networks THEY connect to.



The Principles require us to remain coherent; how we do that is what we get to figure out. The Policy lists the minimum requirements we need, how we do that is up to us instead of being decreed.

It has been suggested we might want to ask ourselves the following questions as we figure out how we want to connect with other Leaders and write our agreements:

- Who are you willing to receive feedback from?
- Who are you willing to offer feedback to?
- Do you have any special talents that certain Areas would value?
- Does the Area have any special points that you would value?
- How important are certain functions--- CE day, conferences, Leader Days, etc.
- Since all Areas are required to provide for PLD/LAD support how do you want to do that? Have a CLA and APL (or equivalent)

person as we've done in the past? Another possibility with the new LLLI Policies is for one Area to basically contract with another Area or Area Network to provide some services.

Put another way, support can now be unbundled from a one-package deal. For instance, an Area could be perfectly happy with the support it gets from the Area Network (maybe a Division in this example) but it just turns out to be more convenient to get, for example Communication Skills support, from a neighboring Area or Area Network.

### Does every Leader have to participate?

Every Leader is encouraged to participate at the level she is comfortable with. One question she may want to ask is, "What do I want my Area to do for me?" A Leader who participates discussing, writing and/or editing is assured her needs have been considered in any agreement she enters into. Another option is to find an Area that has already written an agreement she is comfortable with and ask to join that Area. This is about agreements *between* entities (Leaders, Areas, Area Networks).

To paraphrase some of the current LLLI policies:



1. Every Leader must sign the LLLI Statement of Commitment (SOC) upon becoming a Leader, and renew that commitment annually thereafter.
2. Every Area must have a written outline of:

- a. The system through which Leaders in the Area are accountable to each other for adhering to the SOC, LLLI policies and any other agreements that they make with each other within the Area.
  - b. The process through which Leaders are added and removed from the Area.
3. Every Area must maintain a connection for Leaders and Leader Applicants to the LLLI accreditation process and technical breastfeeding information (PL), maintain an adequate financial system, and have a way of making agreements as a whole. In general, Leaders are free to choose their own Area leadership.
  4. Sets of Leaders (at least 20) may choose to form their own Area, if they meet the requirements that everyone else has to, and don't interfere with other Leaders doing the same. Sets of Areas (at least 5) may choose to form their own Area network, with the same caveats. LLLI is the ultimate arbiter of whether any of these entities meet the necessary requirements.
  5. All Leaders, Areas and Area networks must connect in a way that ultimately connects to LLLI. Any Leader or entity that isn't connected may not do LLL work or represent themselves as being connected to LLL (I). LLLI has ultimate responsibility and authority for recognizing Leaders, Areas and Area networks.
  6. All LLL entities must follow local, state and federal laws.
  7. Affiliates currently have special and varied contracts with LLLI, which LLLI will honor, even if they conflict slightly with the above policies. The hope is that all Leaders will operate under the same obligations and privileges one day.

**Does that mean for the purposes of meeting the 20 Leader minimum an Area must have 20 Leaders who have their PRIMARY connection with said Area?**

No.

1. An Area must have a minimum of 20 Leaders that have entered into an agreement of mutual accountability. This is the real bottom line.
2. Making a primary connection *\*must\** include entering into that 20+ Leader agreement.
3. Making a secondary connection *\*may\** include entering into that 20+ Leader agreement. It's up to the Area to decide.



So, an Area can reach the 20+ threshold with a combination of primary and secondary connections, if that's what they choose. But the 20+ Leaders need to *\*know\** that that's how it works, i.e., Leaders need to know who they're mutually accountable to/among.

**Can there be an Area where everyone has secondary connections?**

Yes.

**If a Leader agreed to agreements for every Area formed, could she conceivably be connected to every Area in the country?**

While this is unlikely, it is technically allowable.

**Are there limits to the number of secondary connections?**

No.

**Could an Area not accept a Leader who has agreed to an Area's agreements?**

Yes. The connection between a Leader and an Area (other Leaders) has to be agreeable to all parties involved.

**Are the current Divisions (Eastern United States and United States Western) as listed in the LLLI organizational database already "recognized by LLLI" as Area Networks or do Area Network Leaders need to do more to ensure that that the PSR requirements are met?**

Yes, the current Area Networks are currently recognized.

To maintain that recognition, however, Area Networks need to meet the new policies set by the LLLI Board, including the written agreements noted in LLLI PSR Appendix 6C.

For new Area Networks to form, they must meet the standards fully.

**Why 20/5/5?**

To form an Area, 20 or more Leaders make an agreement. The LLLI Board has determined that 20 is the minimal number that can protect the Area against too much similar thinking. If there are at least 20 Leaders, they couldn't all be doing something awful and think it's just fine. Surely there'd be a voice of reason somewhere among them.



Five plus Areas to an Area Network is for the same reason. Once the ED approves the Area's agreements to make sure each of the Areas has a reasonable plan for being sure the

Leaders are accountable, the network is where each Area demonstrates to the other Areas in that network that the Leaders in the individual Areas are truly living by their agreements. Each Area demonstrates to the other Areas that they are accountable to their agreements. However, all the Areas in a network don't have to have identical agreements. Each Area's job is to demonstrate to the rest of the network that they are upholding their own agreement. "At least five" is because, again, the BOD feels confident that there will certainly be at least one Area willing to confront another Area whose Leaders aren't really upholding their agreements. The odd number also helps if votes are ever taken.

Five plus Area Networks are required to form a national entity. The networks will figure out a way to demonstrate to each other that all the Areas in each network are living by their agreements. And there have to be at least five because the BOD didn't want a bigger one always winning any disagreement just because of their size. (No big one bossing around the smaller one, no two ganging up on the third. With five there will always be lots of discussion so a best answer for the entire organization will be found---eventually!)

### **Will this change how my Group operates?**

No, not unless you want it to. Some Leaders are discussing the possibility of having a Group agreement.

### **What will stay the same and what will change?**

Leaders are the same as always.

- Groups are the same as always with room for innovation if desired.
- Areas are a collection of Leaders, with a minimum of 20 Leaders.
- Area Networks are a collection of Areas, with a minimum of five Areas. The

existing Divisions are considered Area Networks.

- LLI is the parent organization we all connect to either directly or indirectly.

How Leaders demonstrate their accountability and how they get support may stay the same -- or may change depending on what they want.



will continue to report information as needed. How we do that is now up to us – each Area can do it in whatever way they feel works best for them. Some Areas may agree to online reporting, others may decide to do it in person, others by phone, still others a mix or something else. The reporting (if it is agreed that serves a purpose) would happen.

Accountability mostly only comes into our awareness when we have a situation involving a so-called "rogue Leader," one who does something contrary to LLI policy, damaging to LLI's image in some way, or something that makes things difficult for other Leaders. Area administrators are aware of the accountability issue when they deal with Leaders who don't report, keep in touch with the Area in some way, or who don't pay dues--even though those Leaders may be doing great work helping mothers!

Holding those Leaders accountable in the past has been difficult because local Leaders/Area Administrators had very little actual authority to effect change. When they reported "up the chain" (DA, ACL, up to the Division and even the Executive Director level) there were procedures in

place to deal with the issue. However, if the Leader continued to be unaccountable in the situation, the Area had little recourse. Dis-accreditation was rare and only possible at the International level.

Certainly the part of Areas that we are probably all most familiar with is the support. How we do this has changed tremendously over the last few years. With the amount of information available on the Internet, many Leaders don't get support the way they did in the past. It's a fact of modern LLL life that support comes in a variety of forms. The new LLLI policy recognizes Leaders as responsible adults able to determine what works best for them.

That's where accountability comes in.

We all have the opportunity now to examine our own ways of working, and explain them to our sister Leaders enough to assure them that we are being accountable. We have a head start by going through the accreditation process—that's where we learn a lot about what's out there for us and how to access it (hopefully!) But resources change, and we need to continue to be conscious of what we are doing. We agree to keep in touch in a way that works for us AND for the rest of the Leaders in our Area. We keep each other informed. And we do it in a way that we have agreed to explicitly, so we all know if it's happening or not—and when it's not, we know we need to tweak the agreement so it works better.

That way we have something concrete to share with other Areas in our Area Network, and something the Area Network can share with

other Area Networks to demonstrate THEIR accountability.

We get support to help us fulfill LLLI Policy. Accountability is how others know we are fulfilling it. A clear chain of accountability (Areas and Area Networks) helps ensure the LLLI brand is meaningful. A smorgasbord of support ensures many ways to get what we need.

This may be one of the biggest changes: Areas are about ACCOUNTABILITY to LLLI Policy, NOT (necessarily) about support! The lines are easy to blur because we are used to the two going together.

Leaders will have the option to be accountable in ways that work for them -- making sure we each are making use of whatever we have and need to fulfill LLLI Policies. It is hoped we

will have fewer issues with "non-reporting" Leaders when Leaders can report in lots of creative ways that fit with their lives. They may even be more likely to stay Leaders longer if it fits naturally with the rest of their lives.

#### **14. Whom do I contact with questions?**

Feel free to contact any member of your Area Administrative Team, members of the USWD Staff or mentors with questions. LLLI Policies and Standing Rules (PSR) Appendix 6 and other reference materials on the topic of agreements can be found on the Leader Resource page of the USWD Web site: <http://www.llusa.org/USWD/RESOURCES/index.html>

