



La Leche League  
South Africa

lllisa.org

## Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor Code of Professional Conduct

Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors who have undergone Breastfeeding Peer Counselling Training with La Leche League South Africa and who are paid up members of La Leche League agree to adhere to the principles and aim of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly's resolutions

(<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241541601>).

Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors agree to:

### **Provide services that protect, promote, and support breastfeeding**

1. Provide care to meet clients' individual needs that is culturally appropriate and informed by the best available evidence.
2. Supply sufficient and accurate information to enable clients to make informed decisions.
3. Convey accurate, complete, and objective information about commercial products.
4. Present information without personal bias.

### **Act with due diligence**

1. Operate within the limits of my Scope of Practice (see Job Description below).
2. Collaborate with other members of the healthcare team to provide unified and comprehensive care.
3. Be responsible and accountable for personal conduct and practice.
4. Obey all applicable laws, including those regulating the activities of lactation consultants.
5. Respect intellectual property rights.

### **Preserve the confidentiality of clients**

1. Refrain from revealing any information acquired in the course of the professional relationship, except to another member of a client's healthcare team or to other persons or entities for which the client has granted express permission.
2. Refrain from photographing, recording, or taping (audio or video) clients for any purpose unless the client has given advance written consent on their behalf and that of the child.

### **Report accurately and completely to other members of the healthcare team**

1. Receive a client's consent, before initiating a consultation, to share clinical information with other members of the client's healthcare team.
2. Inform an appropriate person or authority if it appears that the health or safety of a client or a colleague is at risk.

**Exercise independent judgement and avoid conflicts of interest**

1. Disclose any actual or apparent conflict of interest, including a financial interest in relevant goods or services, or in organisations which provide relevant goods or services.
2. Ensure that commercial considerations do not influence professional judgement.
3. Withdraw voluntarily from practice if a physical or mental disability could be detrimental to clients.

**Maintain personal integrity**

1. Behave honestly and fairly.
2. Withdraw voluntarily from practice if I have engaged in substance abuse that could affect my practice.
3. Treat all clients equitably without regard to ability/disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, sex, ethnicity, race, national origin, political persuasion, marital status, geographic location, religion, socioeconomic status, or age, within the legal framework of the respective geo-political region or setting.

**Comply with the Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors Disciplinary Procedures**

See relevant doc

**Job Description Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor****▪ Responsibilities**

- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors do not represent La Leche League (LLL) but are expected to support the Innocenti Declaration, uphold the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly (WHA) resolutions and be committed to the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. As such, Peer counsellors do not and will not accept funds or gifts from manufacturers or distributors of human milk substitutes, related equipment such as feeding bottles and teats or any branded product manufactured by companies who also produce any designated products e.g. manufacturers of infant formula, follow-up formula, complementary foods, liquid milks, powdered milks, modified powdered milks, or powdered drinks marketed or otherwise represented as suitable for infants or young children; feeding bottles, teats and feeding cups with spouts, straws or teats.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors could work at a health clinic, Midwife Obstetrics Unit (MOU), hospital setting or do home visits if needed.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors should work in a way that respects the dignity of the mother, the healthcare support system and those with whom they work.
- Peer Counsellors should practice evidence-based care.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors recognize the women's right to choose.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors use their interpersonal skills to support, promote and protect optimal breastfeeding practices, to help families to cope with breastfeeding difficulties and refer to a specialist when necessary, and ultimately, effectively increase breastfeeding rates in South Africa.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors work with lactation consultants by providing referrals when their support identifies situations that require clinical review, treatment or assessment.

- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors do not provide the assessment and/or clinical services of a lactation consultant or IBCLC, nor do they replace a medical professional.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors are responsible for organizing their own insurance cover for any potential liability arising from their work with breastfeeding families.

▪ **Scope of practice** refers to the range of services a Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor can provide. This includes:

- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors protect, promote and support breastfeeding and appropriate infant and young child feeding options for the community they serve.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors share information with women regarding infant feeding, so they can make an informed decision about how they wish to feed their infant.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors support normal breastfeeding for mothers and babies.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors support families to get breastfeeding off to a good start and establish exclusive breastfeeding by giving them accurate information, support and encouragement that is specific to their needs.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors encourage families to breastfeed by listening and helping them to explore their barriers and discover ways that allow breastfeeding to be part of their daily lives.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors refer mothers/families to other breastfeeding experts when needed.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors must know when they are unable to address a problem and when to refer.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors make appropriate referrals when a breastfeeding situation falls outside the realm of the normal course of lactation.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors do not provide medical advice, diagnose, or prescribe medication unless they hold another certification that qualifies them. They will as such not take medical notes during a support visit, not do a clinical assessment of the medical history of a dyad or a physical assessment of the mother or the baby, nor prescribe medications or prescribe the use of medical devices to treat a lactation condition.

▪ **Counselling, Group Talks & Support Groups**

- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors inform and support antenatal mothers/families with regard to breastfeeding.
- Information is shared on a one-to-one basis or in small group discussions.
- Antenatal Group talks can be based on the 10 steps to successful breastfeeding.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors assist mothers postnatally, with positioning, attachment, manual expressing of milk, adjusting the latch as a cause of painful/cracked nipples, etc.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors should refer their client to the appropriate care provider the moment breastfeeding is no longer straightforward or uncomplicated.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors assist in the labour ward with skin-to-skin and latching when needed.

- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors initiate postnatal support groups at the clinic/ MOU/ facility/ in the community.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors keep attendance registers at each support group meeting.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors liaise with nutrition advisors, dieticians as well as other counsellors in the same field of work.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors are part of the breastfeeding committee at the unit/ area they work and attend the facility/ area "infant feeding meetings".
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors do not perform any other duties that they are not trained for, such as nursing procedures, nursing duties or any kind of tests.

#### ▪ **Record Keeping**

- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors keep written records in pen of all and any:
  - Individual consultations;
  - Group education sessions (topic discussed, names of people who attended);
  - Community-based support group meetings held (topic discussed, names of people who attended).

#### ▪ **Continuing Education**

- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors attend workshops by La Leche League to update their knowledge.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors attend LLLSA Communications Skills Development course when available.

#### ▪ **Qualifications**

- A Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor is a person who ideally has personal breastfeeding experience.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors are committed to uplifting the community through working with families/mothers and babies.
- A Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor is able to offer empathetic support and understanding, in a caring, comforting, compassionate, non-judgemental, patient manner.
- A Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor is able to maintain client confidentiality.
- A Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor is reliable.
- A Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor recognises her personal limits and boundaries, and actively seeks to sustain a life of personal care.
- Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors have completed the Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor Training Course presented by LLLSA and signed the Commitment Agreement.
- To avoid public confusion between La Leche League Leaders and Peer Counsellors, LLLSA Council decided to call Peer Counsellors, **Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors** and *not* LLLSA Breastfeeding Peer Counsellors.
- A Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor is a paid-up member of LLLSA.