



Inside Breastfeeding USA

May 2019

I. Greetings from the Board of Directors

From Director Meredith Sinclair

Hello Breastfeeding USA Volunteers!

This month marks my 5th anniversary as a Breastfeeding USA Counselor. I still remember when I first heard about the organization back in 2012; someone I met at a conference told me all about this new organization that offered a different approach to supporting breastfeeding. Even though it would be a few years before I joined, I was sold right then on our mission to provide evidence-based breastfeeding information and support and to promote breastfeeding as the biological and cultural norm.

I've just gotten back from my first Board of Directors retreat and what an invigorating experience it was to strategize the next steps in fulfilling our mission—totally worth the 1900 mile round trip drive! Being in physical community with the folks I've gotten to know virtually over the last few months was fantastic and a reminder that our organization's greatest asset is our people (YOU!). In our increasingly digital world, it is easy to forget the power of physical presence.

I brought my youngest and current nursling along with me to the retreat; she's newly two and in that phase where when mama is around, she has a pretty big need to be near. The fact that she was welcomed literally at the table speaks to a central value of our organization. The needs of our volunteers (and their families) are a priority; our full lives are valued and honored.

We'll have more reporting from the retreat including how we will be moving forward on various strategic plan goals. For now, I'll share what emerged for me as a recurring theme from the weekend: how to differentiate between and strengthen both our inward facing and outward facing activities.

Our inward facing work is what we do in service of sustaining ourselves. This includes the logistical tasks of everything from budgeting to the website to our fabulous in-house education. But it also includes the way we build and sustain our volunteer community—leveraging our talents and supporting and recognizing those who serve.

Our outward facing work includes both how we interact with breastfeeding families, but also how we engage the larger conversation around breastfeeding—what do we mean when we claim to “promote breastfeeding as the biological and cultural norm”? In some ways, this means acknowledging our work is political—political in the sense of not neutral. Calling something political can sound a bit risky. But working to promote breastfeeding as the biological and cultural norm is about disrupting the status quo—and disrupting the status quo is political. It also means our work cannot be successful unless we look inside ourselves—as individuals and as an organization—to trouble our own biases and assumptions. In doing so we emerge stronger and better equipped to do our work.



What the strategic plan process revealed is that Breastfeeding USA is at a point in its growth where it is ready to think more deeply about each side of itself—the inward facing and the outward facing. Yes, they are interconnected and always will be. Examining these places of intersection and divergence will give us lots to think and talk about.

I look forward to working in community with you all and having the conversations that both challenge and sustain us.

In Solidarity,
Meredith Sinclair
Director (2018-2021)

New Chair!

We are pleased to share that Ginger Gorrell, recently named as Interim IT/Website chair, has agreed to take on role more permanently. Ginger is an experienced IT volunteer and served as

liaison to IT while she was on the Board of Directors. We are deeply grateful that Ginger is willing to continue sharing her skills, time, and energy in important leadership roles with Breastfeeding USA.

Items of Interest & Upcoming Events

- The United States Breastfeeding Committee hosts a series of Racial Equity Webinars. On May 28, Jada Wright Nichols, vice president of our board and interim chair of our Advocacy committee was the presenter for the most recent one, titled “Advocating for Families Who Have Been Failed by the Health Care and Legal Systems.” . You can catch the recording [here on YouTube](#).

If you know of upcoming regional or local events that might be of interest to our BCs, please submit to communications@breastfeedingusa.org for inclusion in the next newsletter.

II. From Committees

The following committees have updates to share with volunteers this month.

Communications

Interim Chair: Meredith Sinclair (communications@breastfeedingusa.org)

Breastfeeding USA is back on Instagram!! Come give us a follow, tag us, and share our posts: <https://www.instagram.com/breastfeedingusa/>

Thank you to Callie Counterman for getting us back up and running on Instagram. Want to help our social media efforts? Let us know (communications@breastfeedingusa.org)!

If you would like to submit a breastfeeding story to be featured on our website, in #milkmemos, and/or on Breastfeeding USA's social media platforms, please contact Meredith Sinclair (meredith.sinclair@breastfeedingusa.org). **We are especially seeking stories about breastfeeding beyond infancy for the next issue of #milkmemos.**

Elections

The 2019 elections season is starting soon; please look for important announcements coming your way!

Update from Patty Jacobs:

The Breastfeeding USA Board of Directors has voted to remove the requirement that BCs be up-to-date on Community Contact Activity Reports (CCARs) in order to be eligible to vote in the 2019 elections. The updated eligibility requirements will be announced by the elections team at a later date.

We hope this will open up the opportunity for more BCs and volunteers to be active in elections this year, while aligning more of our policies to the 2018 Strategic Plan.

Although CCAR reporting will no longer be required for voting eligibility, **please continue to fill out these forms as this data is useful to the organization and is helpful in applying for grants.** Log into breastfeedingusa.org and click "For Volunteers" to find the CCAR forms under your account.

If you have any questions about the elections process or are interesting in joining the elections team, please contact Kirsten at elections@breastfeedingusa.org.

Finance

Chair: Amie Hood (Finance@BreastfeedingUSA.org)

It's been a busy month! The finance committee has agreed to meet via conference call monthly, discussing our role in ongoing implementation of the organization strategic plan. The committee is composed of our bookkeeping and Funding & Development volunteers as well as other interested volunteers. If you have an interest or nonprofit financial expertise, please contact Amie Hood about volunteering on the Finance Committee.

The most recent tax return has been posted to our website. It can be found at <https://breastfeedingusa.org/content/governance-and-operations> If you have any questions about the return, please email Finance@breastfeedingUSA.org

The upcoming 2019-2020 budget work is underway. Amie will be contacting committee chairs and managers to integrate their needs with Breastfeeding USA's overall financial considerations. The goal is for the budget to be board-approved to implement on July 1.

Now that interest rates have risen, the committee recommended to the board that Certificate of Deposit/deposits, be opened to bring in interest income. The committee agreed that using a bank with positive social values was important to us. Amie researched banks and brought a recommendation to the board, who voted to place \$35,000 in a one year CD.

If you are a volunteer and have expenses for your committee work, please get them into your chair ASAP, so they can be included in the current fiscal year bookkeeping, which ends on June 30th.

BCs, remember, Chapter Grants are still available! Reimbursement forms are on the website at: <https://breastfeedingusa.org/content/expense-reimbursement-forms>

We value ongoing transparency of our organization finances. Please don't hesitate to email finance@breastfeedingusa.org if you'd like to see the most recent financial reports.

Funding & Development

Chair: Aimee Teslaw (funding@breastfeedingusa.org)

Membership Fee Increase

This is just a reminder that, in accordance with the three-year [2018 Strategic Plan](#), **starting July 1, 2019, the annual membership fee for Breastfeeding USA will be \$35.** Along with this, we will be promoting membership to the general public as a way of fostering a larger, more engaged Breastfeeding USA community.

Between now and June 30, 2019, you are welcome to take advantage of the current \$25 membership fee by renewing your membership early for next year. Simply follow these directions: On our website, breastfeedingusa.org, click **Log In** in the upper right hand corner of the page to sign on to your Breastfeeding USA account. Select **Renew**, fill in your information, and click the Join button at the bottom of the page.

In keeping with our core values of serving families and engaging volunteers from all walks of life, we will continue to offer a membership payment plan for the new \$35 membership fee.

If you have questions about Breastfeeding USA's 2018 Strategic Plan or the fee increase, you may direct them to funding@breastfeedingusa.org.

If you have any questions about your membership, accessing your account, using chapter funds to pay membership fees, or the membership payment plan, or if you'd like to cancel your Breastfeeding USA membership, please email membership@breastfeedingusa.org.

III. Volunteer News & Tips

New BCs

We'd like to welcome the following new BCs who completed the course in May:

Clare Price from Alabama
Rachel Price from Georgia
Ashley Neeson from Nebraska
Nicole Marcom from Texas

We are so glad you are here and look forward to working with you!!

Volunteer Spotlight

This month we'd like to highlight the contributions **Gina Kelly** makes to Breastfeeding USA! Gina has volunteered at the national level for several years and is currently the BC Support workgroup manager

Here's what Rebecca Ruhlen had to say about Gina:

"Gina stepped up with enthusiasm to fill the vital role of BC Support workgroup manager last summer. She's a pleasure to work with, and we are very lucky to have her volunteering at the national level."

Here's what Gina shared about herself:



"I live in Roseland, NJ with my husband, six-year-old daughter, Reagan, and three-year-old son, Grayson. I've been a Breastfeeding Counselor since 2015, and joined BC Support as a Regional Rep in 2017. In 2018, I became BC Support Manager. In addition to my BFUSA work, I volunteer on my borough's environmental commission and as a campaign writer. Being a part of Breastfeeding USA has been a wonderful journey so far. It is truly an incredible feeling when you help a baby latch properly and see the relief on a mama's face. I'm so grateful to be a part of this organization!"

Thank you for your dedication to Breastfeeding USA Gina!

If you would like to nominate a Breastfeeding USA volunteer for the volunteer spotlight, please let Meredith Sinclair (meredith.sinclair@breastfeedingusa.org) know!

Chapter Highlights: Growing In-Person Meetings

We plan to start collecting your great tips on running and growing your chapter to include in the “For Volunteers” section of the website as we continue to revise and curate the information there. We also plan to continue the section of #milkmemos begun last issue that highlights the work of a local chapter.

Have a topic you’d like to see us cover or want to write up something great your chapter is doing? Please email communications@breastfeedingusa.org.

Here’s Part III of Beth Lichy’s thoughts on the important role in-person meetings play in supporting breastfeeding. Thanks to Beth for starting this series! You can catch Part I & II of Beth’s advice in the April Inside Breastfeeding USA (and soon on the website).

If You Build It, They Will Come.....

It is hard to get a busy parent out of the house and into a meeting, but the efforts are well worth it! There is no magic solution to building a group, and no one way will work for each group. Here are some suggestions to try.

One point to consider when planning a meeting is to ask yourself who you are trying to reach out to. Pregnant moms, new moms, partners, mothers of toddlers, all of the above? Do you want a narrow or broad focus? If you are having difficulty attracting moms to come out, a pre-planned audience can be helpful. Reaching mothers while they are pregnant by offering a class at an OB/GYN’s office or pregnancy center can work. The moms will have a contact once they give birth, and it can lead to the start of a moms’ group.

Is La Leche League or a hospital support group active in your area? Try to get a sense of what is out there, and see if you can fill another niche. If they provide daytime meetings, think of an evening or weekend. Are there meetings for mothers of toddlers in your area? The local hospital where we meet has a group for all mothers, and various topics are presented. They have guest speakers most weeks and I was asked to speak about starting solids, which was a great segue into publicizing our meetings for breastfeeding mothers. It’s best to work with pre-existing groups in a collaborative rather than competitive manner. Developing personal relationships with others in the lactation community through a breastfeeding coalition or WIC office can help.

There are many ways to publicize a meeting. We call ours a “moms’ meet-up” (instead of support group) to emphasize that you do not need to have a problem to attend. You can share your information on community listservs, in pediatrician and OB offices, libraries and community centers, etc. We have both a local FB page and a private FB group for local families.

Is your meeting place easy to get to? Is there public transportation and/or convenient parking? Is it well-lighted? Can you arrange carpools, or find a location moms are already visiting? The café model of meeting in a local coffee shop can work well for mothers of newborns, but not as well for those with toddlers. Is there a community center where little ones can run around? Is there a local park or playground when the weather permits? A picnic or a potluck can be lots of fun. Make sure there is a bathroom nearby, and no danger spots for runaways!

How would you like to design your meeting? Will it be participatory or BC-led? I prefer meetings where the mothers take the lead and the BC acts as a facilitator when the discussion gets off track or incorrect information is shared. Showing mothers that you respect them and value the decisions that they make can be empowering for the mothers who attend. Making it clear from the start that the meeting is a safe and non-judgmental space for sharing sets the tone for the meeting. Moms should feel comfortable enough to share their concerns and questions in a supportive environment. Remember to ask open-ended questions and let the participants take the lead in problem-solving. Don’t let any one person dominate the conversation but allow time for each mom to tell her story.

Plan ahead for time considerations. Be sensitive to those who arrive on time, knowing how hard it is for a new mom to get out of the house. Pull in late-comers quickly, but don’t keep the whole group waiting if attendance starts out small. Plan for some unstructured time for moms to chat amongst themselves or individually with a BC. We have free time after the structured part of the meeting, but others do that beforehand.

We usually start with introductions and a simple ice-breaker, so there is some time for late-comers to arrive. We ask people to share some information about themselves, but not let it lead into an extended discussion. If pregnant moms attend, we might ask the other moms to share a tip for the birth. We might ask about local fun activities in our area, or the most useful or least useful gift they received. We try to get a handle on what questions the moms have so we make sure to cover pressing concerns during the meeting time.

This is a good time for us to pass around a sign-in sheet. It can also be helpful to make an opening statement, such as “You may hear many things at the meeting, some of which will be helpful to you and others which will not be. Feel free to take what works for you and leave the rest behind. Only accredited Breastfeeding Counselors can speak for the organization, but we value everyone’s input.”

Some groups offer snacks and refreshments at the meeting. That is wonderful and something my own group aspires to do one day. A door prize, free information or giveaways can be great if they are Code-compliant and do not go against any restrictions of your meeting place. I once received a donation of gently used nursing clothes that a community member donated, and we

were able to offer clothing to the attendees. Sometimes a mom will bring in something she no longer needs, such as a nursing pillow, to give away. We hope to have a baby clothing exchange at a future meeting.

Guest speakers can attract additional mothers, but we find most moms want to focus on breastfeeding. We once had a representative of Babywearing International come to our meeting and demonstrate various carriers, which was a hit. If you do have a guest speaker, make sure there are no conflicts-of-interest, and leave time for breastfeeding questions.

Do you want to invite partners to your group? There are pros and cons, depending on your community. Some new mothers feel uncomfortable breastfeeding in front of others, others do not. Topics discussed would likely be different, so one solution is to have some meetings for mothers and some which include partners.

How do you evaluate your meeting? Was the atmosphere friendly and warm, or chaotic? Were there many side conversations during the meeting? Did participants hang around to talk to each other? Do you send out emails or do follow up calls afterwards? We try to continue a sense of community via FB in between our monthly meetings. We typically invite mothers to join our local FB group and share articles which complement topics discussed at the meeting. When mothers talk about the meetings and encourage others to come, it helps us build our village of support.

****Volunteers Needed****

We hope you will consider the following organization needs for a match with your time and talents. If you have interest in tasks not listed here, please contact Krista Clayton of Volunteer Services (VolunteerSupport@BreastfeedingUSA.org) or complete [this interest form](#).

Communications:

The Breastfeeding USA Communications Committee is looking for additional members for our **social media workgroup**. Currently, we maintain a presence on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#); we plan to reboot our Instagram presence in the coming months.

Tasks in this workgroup include:

- Curating external content that may be of interest to our social media followers. This involves identifying items to share, participating in the vetting process, and creating a header “hook” to go with that content.

- Monitoring our social media accounts for comments and shares; assisting with responses to messages via social media.
- Connecting with like-minded organizations and breastfeeding advocacy efforts via social media.
- Developing campaigns with original Breastfeeding USA content.
- Engaging readers with questions.

We are in particular need of one or more BCs who are **Instagram** “savvy” who would be willing to take the lead on building our presence on that platform.

We’d also welcome volunteers with **meme-creation** skills - experience working with graphics, images, etc - to help us create eye-catching images for social media and other marketing.

Newsletter Writers/Editors: The strategic plan calls for the development of an inward facing newsletter (like this one!) and the expansion of the public facing #milkmemos to a monthly publication. To work towards these goals, we need volunteers interested in curating content, writing content, and editing/assembling content.

If you have questions or are interested in any of the above tasks, please contact communications@breastfeedingusa.org.

The Breastfeeding USA Editorial Review Board (ERB) is seeking new workgroup members. This workgroup is responsible for editing and vetting Breastfeeding USA original content for the website and social media.

We particularly need volunteers who have strong editing skills or who are IBCLCs and able to vet content.

If you have questions or would like to join this workgroup, please contact Gena Ortega (gena.ortega@breastfeedingusa.org).

Funding and Development

Do you enjoy communicating with and motivating others? Join the Funding and Development team! We are looking for a **Funding and Development assistant**, and while fundraising experience is a bonus, much of this work can be learned on the go with the right attitude and some excellent communications skills. The assistant will spearhead funding campaigns like #GivingTuesday and the end-of-year campaign from start to finish, creating emails, social media posts, and working with fun incentives, all with the aim of sharing our enthusiasm for

Breastfeeding USA and encouraging our stakeholders to donate to the organization. This is a great position for anyone looking to have a future leadership role in the organization.

We are also looking for a **Grant Writer**. A key goal of Breastfeeding USA's strategic plan is to strengthen the organization's financial position over the next few years, and this includes the development and implementation of a grant writing strategy. If you have skills and experience in this arena, come join us in Funding and Development.

Direct your questions about these positions to Aimee Teslaw (aimee.teslaw@breastfeedingusa.org).

Finance

Finance is seeking volunteers experienced in **bookkeeping, accounting, and/or non-profit finance**, or who would be interested in learning the ropes. Contact Amie Hood (Finance@BreastfeedingUSA.org) to learn more.

Organization Contacts

Committee	Email	Current Chair*	Board Liaison**
Advocacy	advocacy@	Jada Wright-Nichols (VP)	Meredith Sinclair
Bylaws	(no direct email)	Ginger Gorrell	Amie Hood (T)
Communications	communications@	Meredith Sinclair	Meredith Sinclair
Education	education@	Sharon Knorr	Rebecca Ruhlen (P)
Elections	elections@	Kirsten Richardson	Tamika Harris (S)
Ethics	ethics@	Tricia Kuehn	Ginger Gorrell
Finance	finance@	Amie Hood (T)	Amie Hood (T)
Funding & Development	funding@	Aimee Teslaw	Aimee Teslaw
Grievances	grievance@	Nikkole Cooper	Tamika Harris (S)
Inclusivity	(no direct email)	Norma Ritter	Jada Wright-Nichols (VP)

Information Technology	website@	Ginger Gorrell	Lauren Logan
Volunteer Services	volunteersupport@	Krista Clayton	Tamika Harris (S)

*Board policy is to have most committees chaired by volunteers not currently serving on the board. When another suitable volunteer cannot be found, however, a board member may serve as interim chair. Our bylaws require that the Treasurer serve as the chair of the finance committee.

**Board liaisons are informal positions designated by the board and intended to facilitate communications between committees and the board.

Contact the Board of Directors via email: bod@breastfeedingusa.org.

Breastfeeding USA Board of Directors:

Rebecca Ruhlen, President

Jada Wright Nichols, Vice-President

Tamika Harris, Secretary

Amie Hood, Treasurer

Aimee Teslaw

Meredith Sinclair

Lauren Logan