



Inside Breastfeeding USA

September 2019

I. Greetings from the Board of Directors

From the Board

Rebecca Ruhlen, board president, writes this month:

September in the continental US means the end of summer, in the cultural sense if not, where I live in the South, according to the thermometer just yet. For many, September also means the start of the school year with all of its excitement and new responsibilities. For our board, it means it's time to wrap up another year and prepare to seat a new board on October 1.

Three of our board's nine seats roll open every year for election. Elections are currently underway with, to my memory at least, a record SIX candidates for those three seats -- among them two incumbents who are running for a second term. With this inspired enthusiasm from six capable women of diverse talents and backgrounds, I am feeling immensely heartened about the future of our organization.

One feature of a strong, growing, and flexible organization is that it successfully communicates its core values within its ranks as well as outwardly. It is in that spirit that we invite you to consider the following scenario:

A BC has a friend or a chapter mom who desperately wanted to nurse her baby but encountered insurmountable difficulties and ended up working her butt off to keep her baby exclusively fed with her own milk, pumping around the clock for a full year or beyond. The mother has great empathy for other parents who are struggling, believes strongly in the importance of breastfeeding, and wants to help others. She wants to become a Breastfeeding Counselor.

And we say no.

Why?? How could we be so cruelly dismissive of this mother's suffering and her sincere desire to help our cause?

This can be excruciatingly hard to explain to that mother. Our own community of BCs contains people who disagree with this policy. Why not change it?

First, it's not about policing the boundaries of the language people use. We're not hung up on whether the term "breastfeeding" encompasses using a pump to get milk from parent to child. A mother who exclusively pumped is free to call herself and be seen by others as a breastfeeding mother; we have no quarrel with that.

Second, it's not about who's a good parent or who most values breastfeeding. We're not judging whether an EPing momma had "good enough" reasons not to nurse at breast or "tried hard enough" to do so. A mother who has an easy time nursing her baby is not a better mother than someone who doesn't, nor vice-versa. Feeding our babies is not a contest of character.

It's about physical, embodied, lived experience. Nursing at breast is a qualitatively different life experience than expressing milk is. Nursing at breast is a qualitatively different life experience than feeding a baby with a bottle is, no matter what's in the bottle. Someone who has pumped and bottle-fed her milk to her baby for a year *doesn't have the experience* of nursing that child at breast for a year. They are different experiences, and that difference matters to us.

It matters because nursing at breast, not only providing breastmilk, matters.

Nursing at breast is a dynamic biological process. A baby at the breast is altering immune responses, releasing oxytocin, and learning how to navigate their first relationship. With nothing else between parent and child, the nursing infant puts in the order for milk and maintains milk

production to meet their needs. They have to signal their hunger, thirst, or need for comfort. There is even evidence to suggest that mouth-to-breast contact more efficiently [exposes the mother to pathogens](#) the baby has acquired, allowing her mature immune system to support the infant's developing one.

Nursing at breast is also an act of mystery, trust, and intimacy. The parent watches for subtle feeding cues: rooting, squirming, swallowing, relaxing, eyes drooping in peace. The baby may sense if mom is tense or distracted, as stress hormones interfere with her milk letdown. No one knows—or needs to know—exactly how much baby is getting each time, only that they are comforted and content. Meanwhile, mom feels a small mouth rhythmically milking her body, the contact of cheek to breast, the rush of oxytocin that helps her relax and connect with the infant in her arms. If parents bedshare, then at night they can respond to the small squeaks of a stirring infant, offer the breast, and drift back off to sleep with their little one.

All of this together is an experience unique to nursing baby at breast. Learning to read our children and our bodies is a radical act in a parenting culture that promotes and valorizes schedules, early independence, and external experts.

In critiquing our policy, BCs sometimes ask why we'll consider applications from parents who have used cry-it-out sleep training, have night-weaned early, or had extensive separation from a young infant, but not from parents who exclusively pumped. Why do we treat a full year of nursing at breast as a hard limit when interpreting our [personal experience requirements](#) but not these other criteria? It's a thoughtful and thought-provoking question.

We ground our response in our mission, which is to provide evidence-based breastfeeding information and support, and to promote breastfeeding as the biological and cultural norm.

The specific experience of nursing at breast for a year matters more to our mission than other breastfeeding- or parenting-related experiences do, because it is the basis of everything we mean by the concept of the biological norm of breastfeeding. And the other half of our mission—to promote breastfeeding as the cultural norm—is hamstrung at the starting gate if we don't center our work on the very basic act of parents physically bringing their infants to breast—feeding them from, and nurturing them with, their own bodies, directly.

In the mid-20th century, breastfeeding was almost a lost cultural practice in the US, for societal reasons involving hospital childbirth, modern medical and scientific-progress ideologies, and predatory formula-industry marketing. If we don't defend, protect, nurture, promote, and

normalize biologically normal breastfeeding in the 21st century, it again runs the risk of becoming a lost art, with pumps and breastmilk-feeding "systems" partially taking the place of the formula that nearly did the job in the 1940s and '50s.

Heavy or exclusive reliance on breast pumping has lots of good aspects in certain situations, and some of those situations are becoming more and more common ... but not for biologically normal reasons. The biological norm of breastfeeding has never been and can never be a process in which a machine replaces babies at mothers' breasts.

Does this policy requiring BCs to have nursing-at-breast experience mean that as an organization we don't care about EPing families or can't support them? Of course not. Our comprehensive course trains BC candidates thoroughly in both the normal course of breastfeeding as well as the more common challenges of the first year and beyond, including information about pumping and milk storage.

More importantly, the counseling skills module ensures that every BC can listen, build rapport, and share information sensitively and compassionately with the parents they help. We strive to meet families where they are and to help them meet their own breastfeeding goals in their own unique circumstances. Our nursing-at-breast requirement for BCs in no way suggests that there is only one correct way to breastfeed.

Why require it, then? Because we believe the lived, embodied experience of nursing a child at breast from the newborn stage to at least the onset of toddlerhood equips BCs better than any book learning can to truly support parents who are breastfeeding in a biologically normal way.

In a world that likes to give lip service but little actual support and space for breastfeeding, BCs show families who are in the trenches with a new baby that there are others who have actually walked the talk and found it worth doing and supporting. It makes our empathy for sore nipples, low-supply or oversupply struggles, teething, biting (oh, *biting!*), and nursing strikes that much more palpable. It makes our shared joy in the magic of that first peaceful, easy feeding, our shared tears for the bittersweetness of a toddler's gentle weaning, all the more sincere and believable. For many families, a BC's affirmation and accompaniment is the only real recognition they receive of the value of biologically-normal infant feeding.

We know that not everyone involved with Breastfeeding USA is comfortable with this policy. We hope that this explanation persuades you of its merits, but if nothing else, this should assure you that the board has heard the concerns of those who dissent and has once again given careful

consideration to ensuring that our requirements for BCs are grounded in our mission and core values.

Items of Interest & Upcoming Events

Breastfeeding USA Elections!

- **Voting is September 1-15.**
- Check your Breastfeeding USA email for your ballot.
- [Read about the candidates here.](#)

2nd board meeting of 2019: Sep 17, 2019 8:30 PM Eastern

- Meeting will be conducted [via Zoom](#) and is open to all Breastfeeding USA members.
- Meeting agenda will be shared prior to the meeting.
- Please click [here](#) to submit questions for the board by Friday, September 13.

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.

Editor's Note

We are looking for a volunteer to take over (or co-produce) Inside Breastfeeding USA. This is a great way to learn more about what all of our committees are doing throughout the month and can easily be done around your schedule. If you have interest in taking this on (or helping out), please email meredith.sinclair@breastfeedingusa.org.

II. From Committees

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

Community Engagement

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

Follow Us on Social Media

If your chapter has a presence on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter, we hope that you'll help broaden our reach by sharing posts made by our national organization accounts ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)). And we'll keep an eye out for your chapter's post and share those too!

Want to help our social media efforts? Let us know (communications@breastfeedingusa.org).

Share Your Story!

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 also always interested in hearing your stories about your work as a BC or Breastfeeding USA volunteer.

Finance

Chair: Amie Hood (Finance@BreastfeedingUSA.org)

The Finance Committee has been hard at work reviewing and recommending updates to our financial Policies and Procedures this month. Many thanks to Beth Laughlin, Patty Jacobs, Nicky Prince, Aimee Teslaw, and Ginger Gorrell for their time and attention to this project.

We have completed our rollover to Quickbooks Online, which should simplify jobs for some volunteers, one of the goals of the Strategic Plan.

As always, Quarterly reports are available upon request by emailing Finance@breastfeedingusa.org.

Funding & Development

Chair: Aimee Teslaw (funding@breastfeedingusa.org)

We are excited to share with you the **new membership initiative** we're kicking off with the slogan **"Now YOU Can Become a Member."** That's right, membership is no longer exclusive to those who want to volunteer for Breastfeeding USA--it is **open to the general public!**

It is our aim to build a **more supported and engaged breastfeeding community** among those who come to Breastfeeding USA for information and support—our local communities, our social media followers, and the families we directly serve. We believe that **our Breastfeeding Counselors provide a valuable service**, and allowing all individuals to join Breastfeeding USA helps to build community and **to recognize the efforts and impact of our BCs**. Joining Breastfeeding USA is also a way for an individual, family, or local business to make a meaningful financial contribution to the organization in recognition of the support we provide. As always, our members will receive the quarterly newsletter, #MilkMemos, which is always topical and full of up-to-date information.

To help build community on this scale, we need your help. We are asking you to share this opportunity with the families you serve, and we've made it easy for you to start the conversation. Below you'll find membership pitches you can copy and paste to your own communications in all different media.

Do you post on social media as a BC?

Follow Breastfeeding USA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) and amplify our membership campaigns by sharing to your groups and pages or reposting. We aim to post 3 times monthly (on the 1st, 10th, and 20th of each month) but you can share our posts or create your own with the [Join](#) link anytime. We'll provide you with easy links over on the BC Chat group on Facebook to get us all started.

Do you take phone calls from local moms? Do they ever want a way to say thank you or become more involved?

Invite them to become a member by directing them to breastfeedingusa.org/join.

Do you provide email support? Send meeting invitations? Send follow-up emails after a meeting?

Copy and paste one of the paragraphs below.

You, too, can support the work of Breastfeeding USA by becoming a member! As a member you'll receive a quarterly newsletter delivered to your inbox, with new informative articles and the latest news on breastfeeding-related topics important to you. Your financial support of our organization—just \$35 annually—will help us continue to provide evidence-based information and facilitate mother-to-mother support. Become a member at breastfeedingusa.org/join.

Do you enjoy the support you receive from Breastfeeding USA? You can now become a member! A \$35 annual membership fee supports the work of Breastfeeding USA in your community and across the country, plus you'll receive a quarterly newsletter delivered to your inbox. Join today! breastfeedingusa.org/join

You can become a member of Breastfeeding USA! The general public is invited to provide meaningful support to the organization by becoming a member for just \$35. In addition to the satisfaction you'll feel by belonging to an awesome organization that provides evidence-based breastfeeding information and mother-to-mother support, you'll receive a quarterly newsletter with support for your own breastfeeding journey. Become a member at breastfeedingusa.org/join. You may also consider donating to Breastfeeding USA. Our chapters are doing great things to normalize breastfeeding throughout the country, and your financial support will extend this mission. <https://breastfeedingusa.org/donate>

Thank you for doing the work you do to support the organization and to support breastfeeding families. We hope this campaign allows those families to feel like they belong to Breastfeeding USA and they help support the work you do, too. If you have any questions please feel free to send them our way.

Warmly,

Aimee Teslaw
Chair, Funding and Development
Director
funding@breastfeedingusa.org

Karyn DiNovo
Membership Manager
membership@breastfeedingusa.org

III. Volunteer News & Tips

CAAR Tracking

The new CAAR tracking form is up and running! [Please log your volunteer activities here.](#)

New BCs

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

Maria Florencia Cravello

Ellen Vig

Hilary Colson

Lauren Franzen

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

Volunteer Spotlight

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

****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](#).

Community Engagement:

The newly formed Community Engagement Committee is looking for folks with a passion or skill set for any of the following areas:

- Visioning outreach and publicity campaigns
- Designing outreach materials for chapter use
- Creating memes, infographics, and other visuals for social media and our website
- Curating external content that may be of interest to our social media followers
- 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

We are also looking for:

- Volunteers with Spanish language skills to work on translation of existing materials and/or creation of new Spanish content
- Volunteers with writing and/or editing experience to join the #milkmemos team to take it to a monthly publication.

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

NEW, SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITY. I am looking for a helper for this year's #GivingTuesday campaign. This has been a HUGE fundraiser for Breastfeeding USA in the last couple of years and we'd like to keep the momentum going. The job would start now then wrap up after #GivingTuesday 2020, which is December 1. You'd study past year's campaigns, look at the free materials from the folks at givingtuesday.org, and collaborate with the F&D chair to share your enthusiasm for Breastfeeding USA through this giving campaign. It's a great way to dip

your toes into fundraising waters and to help the org. Any questions? Email aimee.teslaw@breastfeedingusa.org.

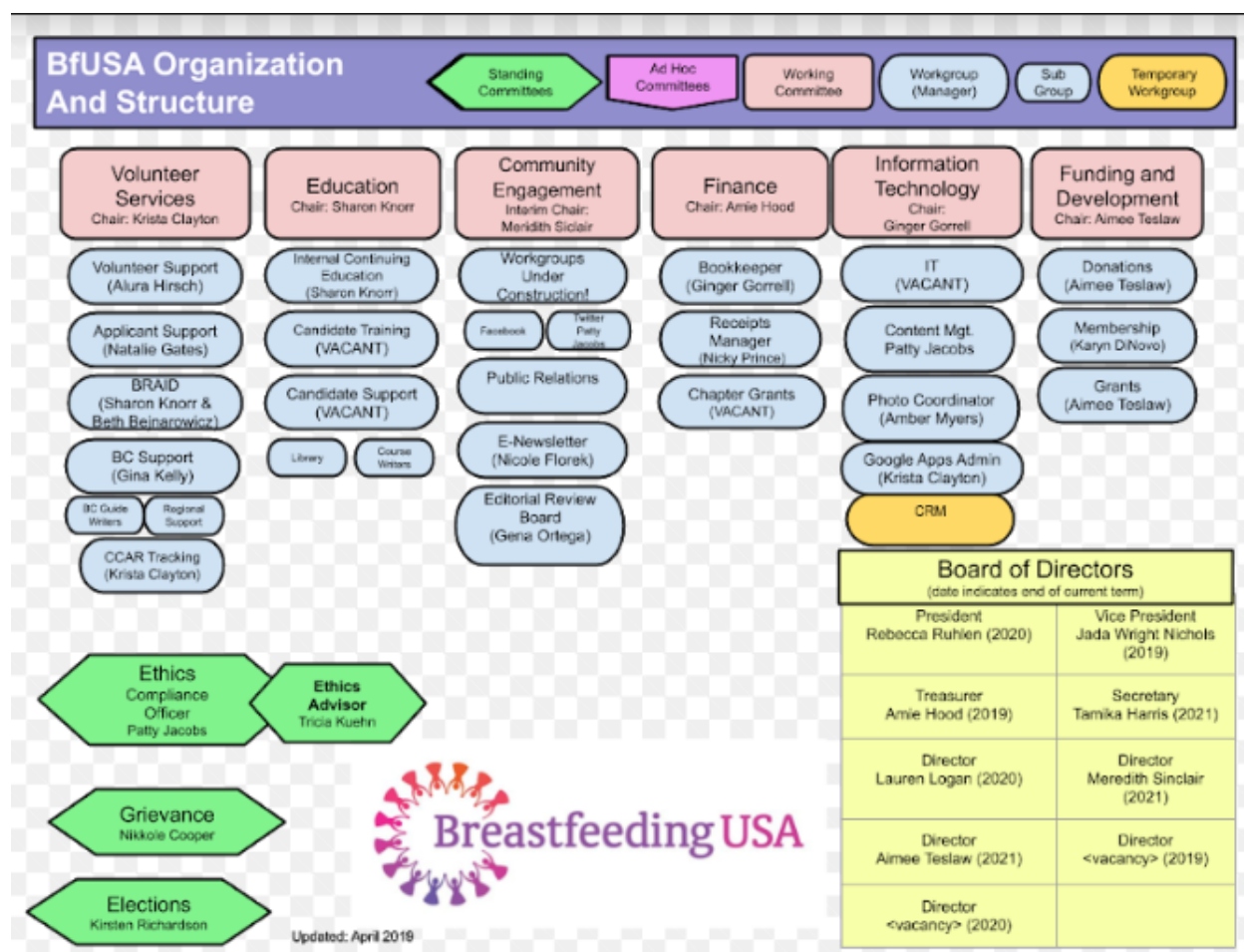
We are also looking for a **Grant Writer**. A key goal of Breastfeeding USA's strategic plan is to strengthen the organization's financial position over the next few years, and this includes the development and implementation of a grant writing strategy. If you have skills and experience in this arena,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