

Revised April 2024. *This document replaces all previous GID-MC Guidelines*

## **Group in Development/Discernment - Mentoring Community Protocols**

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## **Introduction**

GID = Group in Development/Discernment

MC = Mentoring Community

PC = OCDS Provincial Council

PD = Provincial Delegate

*“Communities are founded by the Order.” OCDS Communities are not founded by individuals.*

First read the 2016 Statutes Section XII Establishment of an OCDS Community.

### **1. Group in Development/Discernment (GID) and its Mentoring Community (MC)**

Groups in Development/Discernment (GIDs) are founded by canonical OCDS Communities with the permission of the Provincial Delegate. The parent Community becomes the GID's Mentoring Community (MC) and its immediate authority. Once a GID begins to have regular monthly meetings, the members are released from attending their previous Community's meetings and dues. They attend the GID's meetings, take on group jobs, and pay dues to the GID. Their provincial assessment is paid through their Mentoring Community until they are made a Study Group.

The MC Council is also the Council of the GID, with the authority and responsibilities that it entails. The MC President shall forward all PC communications to the GID coordinator. GID members are members of their MC until the GID is elevated to that of a Study Group. The MC Council gives guidance on leadership, group policies, meeting content, and formation.

The GID leadership consults the MC Council regarding concerns affecting the GID. The MC's Provincial visitorator may also be consulted if needed.

Normally the MC President and Formation Director visit the GID several times in the first year and once or twice a year after that. They observe the meeting, talk with the GID leadership, and give guidance as needed.

### **2. GID Leadership**

The MC Council names a coordinator and a formator (leadership) for the GID. The Provincial Delegate may make recommendations. The coordinator is a member of the new GID. The formator may be a member of the MC until one of the GID members is ready to assume the role.

The MC Council has the authority to change the GID leadership any time it is warranted.

As the GID matures, the coordinator gradually assumes some of the responsibilities that normally fall to community presidents. These responsibilities may include such things as setting the agenda, chairing the community meeting, passing on information to the community, monitoring the schedule of the meeting day, and other meeting logistics. However, the GID coordinator should not be considered the president. See the OCDS Constitutions Article 51.

### **3. Provincial Council Visitations**

GIDs do not receive PC visitations unless requested by the MC or Provincial Delegate. The Provincial Delegate may visit the GID to see how things are going and give guidance where needed. When the MC has their PC visitation, the visitor asks about the GID. The visitor normally spends some time with the MC Council and the GID leadership and gives feedback as needed.

The visitor may add comments concerning the GID to the MC's visitation report. The Provincial Delegate may send additional comments. The MC President and/or Formation Director talk with the GID leadership about the Provincial Delegate's and visitor's comments, if any.

### **4. Monthly Meetings**

GID meetings may start out very simply. As the group matures, the meetings become more and more like regular OCDS community meetings:

- formation in Carmelite spirituality and the OCDS vocation
- mental prayer
- the Liturgy of the Hours
- social time
- business meeting

### **5. Formation**

The GID coordinator and formator work with the MC Formation Director to set up the formation according to the United States National OCDS Formation Program. The MC Council has ongoing oversight of the GID formation program together with GID leadership. Together they support members in their formation as Carmelite Seculars.

GIDs give special attention to formation in growing into a cohesive community with a strong OCDS identity.

Resources:

- the United States National OCDS Formation Program
- the OCDS Provincial Statutes
- the OCDS Constitutions Preface through Article 36 and Article 51
- the OCDS Ratio
- provincial website, Best Practices
- Flos Carmeli (The MC provides the Flos Carmeli to the GID.)

The MC Council should invite the GID members to join community retreats, days of reflection, and other events. With the approval of the MC, the GID may have their own events if they have the resources and especially if distance is a problem for their members.

### **6. Accepting New Members**

GIDs may admit new persons to aspirancy. Guidelines for accepting aspirants may be found on the provincial website. See Best Practices, Discernment.

## **7. Discernment for Admission to Formation I (clothing) and for the Promise**

*GIDs do not have the authority to approve candidates for formation and the Promise. The MC Council makes the discernment with the help of the GID leadership. The MC Council has the final decision.*

Primary resources:

- the Ratio Appendix II, Discernment of the Vocation to the Secular Order
- the OCDS Oklahoma Provincial Statutes
- the OCDS Constitutions, Formation in the School of Carmel

The discernment articles on the provincial website are necessary reading for the proper understanding of discernment. Councils are encouraged to ask for the Holy Spirit's grace and to use practical and sensible judgement.

The MC Council and the GID leadership discern candidates for admission to Formation I together.

As the MC Council and GID leadership discern together, areas to examine include:

- Why the candidate feels called to Carmel
- How the candidate demonstrates (or not) a vocation to Carmel
- Growth in interior prayer and virtue
- Whether the candidate has fulfilled the formation goals
- How the candidate lives the vocation with all its personal and communal responsibilities, any difficulties and how they might be addressed
- Other information the MC Council feels it needs to make a good discernment

It is good practice to get the formator's input on how the candidate does in the formation sessions: preparation, participation, comprehension, interaction, and general impressions.

Because some people interview well and others do better in writing, it is usual to combine the two approaches when discerning for the Promise.

Frank discussion among the Council is important. The MC Council makes the final decision by vote (yes, no, or extension).

## **8. Spiritual Assistant**

See Constitutions Articles 43-45.

GIDs are not required to have a Spiritual Assistant.

However, if the GID would *like* to have their own spiritual assistant, and have found a priest, deacon, or religious who is willing, it is the MC Council that asks the Provincial Delegate to make the appointment. It is usual practice to give the Spiritual Assistant a stipend in appreciation of his services to the group.

## **9. Isolates**

The OCDS Constitutions Article 56 and Statutes Section VIII state that isolate members in formation for the Promise must receive their formation from a canonically established OCDS Community.

## **10. Transfers**

See Statutes Sections XVII and XIX.

When receiving a transferring OCDS member, the GID leadership and the MC Council discern together whether to accept the transferring member. The MC Council has the authority to make the final decision but may take into account the GID leadership's recommendation.

## **11. Attendance Policy**

The GID is bound by the MC's attendance policy.

## **12. Leave of Absence**

The GID leadership will petition the MC Council for a community member's request for a leave of absence.

See Statutes Section VIII.8 on Community Life and the provincial website's policy regarding Leave of Absence.

## **13. Members Leaving the Order**

The MC Council, not the GID leadership, has the authority to release a community member from the Promise.

## **14. Paperwork and Records**

GIDs need to keep accurate records from the beginning. See the provincial website for policies and forms.

### **a) group history**

The group's history will be needed when the time comes to apply for a study group status. A running history of the group, regularly updated, is recommended.

The history should include:

- how the group was started
- date of the first meeting
- names of original members
- Mentoring Community information
- names of Carmelite friars involved with the group, when, and how
- visits from the Provincial Delegate or PC (names and dates)

The history may include (optionally) important events and items of interest.

### **b) record of leadership history**

Keep track of who has served and in what capacity and when.

### **c) record of membership history**

GIDs and their MCs both keep permanent records for everyone who has belonged to the GID, even if they discontinue or are discerned out.

#### **d) minutes**

Minutes are kept for both monthly community meetings and for leadership meetings. The recommended format can be found on the provincial website. See Best Practices – Community.

The GID coordinator sends the community meeting minutes and leadership meeting minutes to the MC Council every month. The minutes are important in discerning the GID's readiness for growing independence and elevation to Study Group.

#### **e) attendance records**

GIDs keep monthly attendance records that show who was present or absent and reasons for absences. Use full names for clarity.

#### **f) finances**

See the Provincial Statutes Section XIV on Finances.

The MC is responsible for overseeing the GID's funds. Eventually the GID will have its own checking account in the group's name. See the website's provincial policy on Community Bank Accounts.

The GID will present a monthly treasurer's report to the MC Council. The annual Financial Report shall be presented to the MC not to the Provincial Central Office Administrator. The report form is on the Provincial website.

Provincial assessments are paid through the MC, not directly to the province. Local dues are paid to the GID.

### **15. Ongoing Support and Growing Independence**

The ongoing level of support needed by the GID is discerned by the MC Council, with the approval of the PD, and with input from the PC if requested. As the GID and its leadership mature, the MC Council begins allowing more decisions to the GID's leadership. Signs that the GID is progressing and maturing include:

- They demonstrate good judgment and good understanding of how to form an OCDS community.
- They are cooperative with those in legitimate authority: GID leadership, MC Council, PC, PD, and the Order.
- They are attracting and keeping new vocations.
- They show determination to continue toward becoming an OCDS community.
- They are cohesive and compatible as a group.

### **16. Elevation to Study Group**

The MC Council and GID leadership discern together. However, the decision to request elevation to Study Group status ultimately falls to the MC Council. The MC Council sends the request to the PC, who then forwards it to the PD. See Statutes Section XII.

The request includes:

- When the GID started
- Number of definitively professed members
- Number of members in each formation level

- Current leadership
- Why the MC Council believes the GID is ready to be a Study Group
- 12 months of attendance records

List of “potential” leaders for formation and administration.

The PD will normally visit the GID to confirm the MC’s recommendation. The PD, in the Provincial’s name, makes the decision whether the GID is ready to become a Study Group.

The decision takes into consideration:

- The GID’s size and number of professed members
- Quality of leadership and formation,
- Understanding of the OCDS vocation
- Spiritual maturity
- Compatibility and overall cohesiveness
- The health of the group

Once Study Group status is given, the group comes under the supervision of the PC. The members become members of the Study Group and are no longer members of the MC. The group is no longer under the authority of the MC Council.

## **17. Disbanding the GID**

If over time the GID proves unlikely to develop into an OCDS Study Group, it is disbanded, and the membership is transferred to the MC.

The Provincial Delegate, in consultation with the MC Council, makes this discernment.

If at a later date circumstances change, the MC may apply again to establish a GID.

This online document is the only one to be considered official.