

Group in Development-Mentoring Community Protocols

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Introduction

GID = Group in Development/Discernment

MC = Mentoring Community

PC = 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). 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 entails. GID members are members of their MC until the GID is made a Study Group. The MC Council gives guidance on leadership, group policies, meeting content, and formation, as needed.

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.

The coordinator and formator make decisions together regarding the GID. They consult with the MC Council as needed.

The GID coordinator has some of the responsibilities that normally fall to Community Presidents. See the OCDS Constitutions Article 51.

3. Provincial Council visitations

GIDs do not receive PC visitations unless there is special reason to, or if requested by the GID, 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 simple. 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 program according to the Provincial Formation Guidelines. 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 Provincial Formation Guidelines
- the OCDS Provincial Statutes
- the OCDS Constitutions Preface through Article 36
- the OCDS Ratio
- provincial website best practices

The MC Council may invite the GID members to join community retreats, days of reflection, and other events. The GID may of course have their own 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

Primary resources:

- the Ratio appendix II
- the Statutes
- the Constitutions

The discernment articles on the provincial website are recommended reading. Councils are encouraged to ask the Holy Spirit's grace and to use their God-given common sense.

Early on, the MC Council and the GID leadership discern candidates for admission to Formation I together. The MC Council can hand this responsibility over to the GID leadership, once they have the skill and experience needed.

GIDs do not have the power to approve candidates for the Promise. The MC Council makes the discernment with the help of the GID leadership. The MC Council always makes the final decision.

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, and 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 class; preparation, participation, comprehension, interaction, 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

Constitutions 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

OCDS Constitutions paragraph 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

Statutes sections XVII and XIX.

When receiving a transferring OCDS, 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 defer to the GID leadership's recommendation.

11. Attendance policy

The GID uses the MC's attendance policy until they develop their own.

12. Leave of Absence

The GID leadership may grant a leave of absence after talking with the MC Council.

Abide by the Statutes section VIII on Community Life. See also the provincial website's provincial policy page.

13. Members leaving the Order

The MC Council has the authority to release from the Promise. The GID leadership does not have this power.

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 canonical 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)
- date of elevation to Study Group status

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

b) record of leadership history

Keep track of who has served 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 meetings and for leadership meetings. The recommended format can be found on the provincial website. See best practices – community.

The GID coordinator sends the 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 on finances for details.

The GID may begin with the MC taking care of its funds, but eventually will have its own checking account in the group's name.

The GID's financial reports go to the MC Council, not to the Provincial Council. The report form is on the Provincial website.

Provincial dues 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 leaving more decisions on the local level. For example, clothings and formation program details.

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

The MC Council retains the responsibility of discerning for the Promise. Canonical communities have the power to admit candidates to the Promise; GIDs and Study Groups do not.

16. Elevation to Study Group

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

The request includes:

- When the GID started
- Number of definitively professed
- Number of members in each formation level
- Current leadership
- Why the MC Council believes the GID is ready to be a Study Group

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 the overall cohesiveness and 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

If over time the GID proves unlikely to develop into an OCDS Study Group, it is disbanded and the members return to their original community.

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

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