

National Fraternity Secular Franciscan Order - USA SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE TRAINING PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR REGIONS

Regional Ministers and Regional Spiritual Assistants must remember that the responsibility for the training and appointment of “suitable and well prepared” spiritual assistants remains with the First Order/TOR Provincials and their delegates. Regions may initiate programs and certify spiritual assistants, but the appointment of the spiritual assistants, including Secular Spiritual Assistants, still ultimately rests with the Province. While highly recommended, it cannot be mandated that a spiritual assistant, at any level, complete the regional training program for appointment. Also note that completion of the program does not guarantee certification or appointment.

History:

The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) has been actively involved in the training of Spiritual Assistants since it first published ***Life-Giving Union: A Correspondence Course to Prepare Spiritual Assistants*** in 1998. ***Life-Giving Union*** was replaced in 2008 by ***Franciscan Family Connections***, which was revised in 2011. ***Franciscan Family Connection*** is the basic text for the Spiritual Assistant Training Program regardless of which class format is used.

The CNSA also publishes the ***Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the OFS***.

These Spiritual Assistance Training Program Guidelines are the result of the efforts of the Spiritual Assistance Development Task Force, in conjunction with the CNSA, through the Spiritual Assistants Training Program Survey taken of the regions of the National Fraternity in 2013, from participants at the Saint Francis University (Loretto, PA) Summer Seminar on Spiritual Assistance in 2014, and numerous CNSA spiritual assistant workshops throughout the country. They are the direct result of the our International’s Conference of General Spiritual and Pastoral Assistants’ (CAS) ***Formation Program For Spiritual Assistants Not Belonging To The First Order Or The TOR*** from which they are adapted.

Gentle Reminders:

Programs are always a “work in progress” – no two “classes” are identical, no two students are the same. Treat each class just as you would each new Initial Formation class. We all are unique individuals with our own learning styles, our own gifts, our own challenges, etc. Programs must be flexible to meet the needs of each student. Class size should be limited in order to be able to know each student.

Steps in Developing a Training Program for Spiritual Assistants in Your Region:

- Contact ALL the Provincial Ministers and Provincial Spiritual Assistants of each of the Provinces that have fraternities bonded to them in your Region for permission and guidance to start a training program.
- In collaboration with Provincial Spiritual Assistants (PSAs), Regional Spiritual Assistants (RSAs), the Regional Executive Council (REC), and interested OFS members decide which format might work best in YOUR Region. Design a syllabus.
- Get approval from the PSAs that this program will be an acceptable means of preparation for Spiritual Assistants.
- If not a simple correspondence course, identify qualified facilitators, possibly the PSA themselves, the RSA, recommended “mentors,” and establish location and time of meetings.
- Establish referral and screening procedures and vetting method e.g., letters of recommendation from pastor and fraternity council, interview by RSA.
- Educate fraternity members about Spiritual Assistance and promote the program in local fraternities.
- Invite participants.
- After screening, set-up initial meeting times and introduce scope and sequence of training program to candidates.
- Implement training program, including internship and mentoring segments.
- Certify those who have successfully completed the course and inform Provincial Leaderships of their suitability for appointment as Spiritual Assistants.
- Evaluate program.
- Develop program of Ongoing Formation / communication for new and serving Spiritual Assistants.

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SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS TRAINING PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR REGIONS

1. HISTORICAL ASPECTS

- Saint Francis, founder of three Orders.
- History of the Franciscan Family:
 - a) General introduction to the Franciscan Family.
 - b) First Order of the Friar Minors (OFM, OFM Conv, OFM Cap).
 - c) Second Order, the Order of Saint Clare.
 - d) Third Order of the “Brothers and sisters of Penance”:
 - Secular Franciscan Order and Franciscan Youth.
 - Third Order Regular, men and women.
 - e) Other Franciscan movements: Secular Institutes, etc.
- History of the Secular Franciscan Order, its basic development throughout the centuries; presence, relationships with the First Order and the TOR.

2. SPIRITUAL--LEGISLATIVE ASPECTS

- Detailed study of the *OFS Rule, General Constitutions* and National Statutes.
- Nature, identity, structure and organization of the OFS according to the new Rule and the General Constitutions, with emphasis on its secular nature and unity.
- Detailed study of the *Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the OFS and Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the OFS*.

3. DOCTRINAL ASPECTS

- Greater understanding of the role of the lay faithful, the co-responsibility and collaboration between clergy and laity, religious and seculars in the mission of the Church.
- Active presence of the OFS in the Church and in society.
- Study of the Catholic Social Teaching (CST) of the Church with specific regard to the responsibilities and duties of lay people.

4. FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS

- The role and tasks of the Major Superiors of the First Order and TOR for what concerns spiritual and pastoral assistance to the OFS.
 - Relationship between Major Superiors and Secular Spiritual Assistants.
 - Type of communication and mechanisms for connecting and evaluating.
- The role and tasks of the Secular Spiritual Assistants to the OFS.
- Consider other pastoral and work---related commitments of the Secular Spiritual Assistants.
- Internships and/or Mentoring period
- Appointment of Secular Spiritual Assistants

5. ONGOING FORMATION

For a continual update of the Secular Spiritual Assistants, we suggest the following:

- Annual formation/information courses on assistance, on the various difficulties, on the happenings in the OFS. It is important for the Secular Spiritual Assistant to meet with the First Order and TOR Assistants on a regular basis in order to enrich their Franciscan life and to strengthen their service as Assistants.
- Mutual knowledge and exchange of programs and initiatives between national, regional and local Spiritual Assistants.
- Reading of journals and other sources regarding the OFS, Youth and Young Adults and spiritual assistance at the national and international level.

6. ELECTIVES

- Conflict Resolution/Mediation Skills
- Group Decision Making – Reaching A Consensus
- Leadership Training
- Council Development

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Franciscan Family Connections (Bach, 2011) – The Primary Text

FUN Manual (Selected Sections)

Essential Documents of the Secular Franciscan Order (Mulqueen and Sanborn, 2015)

Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the OFS (Bach, 2012)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Documents of Vatican II or Vatican II in Plain English (Three Volumes) (Bill Huebsch, 1996)

St. Francis and the Third Order (Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR, 1982)

Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership (ed. by Mulqueen)

CIOFS Manual for Spiritual Assistance to the OFS (available on the CNSA page of the NAFRA website)

The Franciscan Story (Maurice Carmody, 2008)