

***Saint Padre Pio Fraternity
Secular Franciscan Order
Georgetown, Texas***

Governance Guidelines

April 2025

1. The Fraternity

- 1.1. The Fraternity, being a part of the organic union of the Regional Fraternity, will abide by all the regional governance guidelines which will supersede these local guidelines where relevant, being mindful that “the principle of subsidiarity must be respected” for both the Fraternity and the Region, as defined and described by Pope John Paul II in his May 1, 1991, encyclical letter *Centesimos Annus*.
- 1.2. These local guidelines may be amended from time to time by simple majority vote of the Council at a duly constituted meeting.
- 1.3. In the Diocese of Austin, it is a requirement for all professed Secular Franciscans to be in compliance with the Ethics and Integrity in Ministry guidelines. Its requirements are mandatory for all members of the Fraternity where activities covered by those policies are engaged in by Fraternity members.
 - 1.3.1. It is the responsibility of each member to be informed of these guidelines and to keep certification current.
 - 1.3.2. The Council may from time to time review the certification of any member involved in ministry to the youth or vulnerable adults as deemed necessary.
- 1.4. Fraternity Spiritual Assistant
 - 1.4.1. The Fraternity shall endeavor to collaborate actively with the Spiritual Assistant to promote the life of the Fraternity to the extent possible in order to assure that the Franciscan charism and formation and teachings of the Church are included and observed in fraternal life. In the absence of a local Spiritual Assistant, the Fraternity Council will collaborate actively with the Regional Spiritual Assistant.

2. Gatherings

- 2.1. The Fraternity will gather monthly.
 - 2.1.1. The monthly Fraternity gathering is vital to the life and vocation of each member and therefore, should rarely be cancelled or rescheduled.
 - 2.1.2. Each gathering will consist of prayer, fraternity, ongoing formation, initial formation and a business meeting preferably in that order.

- 2.1.3. The Fraternity, on the recommendation of the Council, may alter this format.
- 2.2. At regular monthly gatherings members may place only Catholic reading material (or other Catholic items) for distribution on a designated table for interested parties, unless other material is preapproved by at least two Council members.
 - 2.2.1. Individual distributions are discouraged except for designated formation materials.
- 2.3. Minutes of each regular Fraternity meeting should be distributed to all active members so that they may review and offer changes. The Fraternity Secretary shall be responsible for providing the minutes and making necessary corrections. The minutes are accepted at the business portion of the meeting.
- 2.4. Council meetings are opened to all the membership unless the council calls for a closed meeting.
- 2.5. The financial reports of the Fraternity which include the budget, income/expense report and bank statements should be available to the general membership upon request to the Treasurer.
- 2.6. The financial support of the Fraternity should be done anonymously and with no record of individual contributions being kept.
 - 2.6.1. All monies collected at each gathering will be counted separately by the Treasurer and a Council appointed member.
 - 2.6.2. Upon request members may obtain a receipt for their contribution to the Fraternity at the time the contribution is made.
 - 2.6.3. The Fraternity cannot accept contributions greater than \$100 dollars per month from persons who are in initial formation, applying for membership in the Fraternity, or discerning entrance into the OFS.
- 2.7. The fair share contribution to the Regional Fraternity should be done in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Regional Fraternity.
- 2.8. The Fraternity's treasury will, as much as possible, pay for all expenses (registration fees, traveling expenses, lodging and meals, etc.) for its members attending events (meetings, workshops, retreats, etc.) on a local, regional, or national level that are deemed necessary by the Council. The Council will determine the appropriateness of paying for such expenses and for whom (general membership, specific committee or individuals, council members only) depending on the nature and circumstances of the event and/or the fiscal ability of the treasury. Each event will be independently evaluated.

3. **Formation**

- 3.1. Inquirers and candidates in formation are required to focus on their discernment process and, as such, cannot hold a position of primary responsibility within the Fraternity, including serving as primary formator in an ongoing formation session. They may, however, assist a professed member in execution of those responsibilities.
 - 3.1.1. A position of primary responsibility is to be determined by the Council.
- 3.2. Sponsors will be assigned by the Council to all members in Initial Formation as they enter Inquiry through the end of Candidacy.
 - 3.2.1. The sponsors will be professed members except for the Minister, Formation Director, or Spiritual Assistant who will not be sponsors.
 - 3.2.2. The sponsors are to mentor the members in Initial Formation, assist them with their lesson preparations as needed and be available for make-up lessons.
 - 3.2.3. Fraternity meetings and formation lessons are vital to the life and vocation of each member of the fraternity, including each person in Initial Formation. Therefore, the reason for a make-up lesson with a sponsor is only to complete an occasional missed initial formation lesson.
 - 3.2.4. The sponsors will accompany the members in Initial Formation throughout their formation discernment process by joining them in prayer and by their testimony of the lived Franciscan charism.
 - 3.2.5. Following profession, the sponsors should continue to be available to the newly professed whom they were sponsoring for up to one year.
- 3.3. All candidates in inquiry and candidacy are required to meet annually with the Council during the initial formation process.
 - 3.3.1. These annual meetings will be coordinated by the Formation Director.
 - 3.3.2. Individuals in Inquiry and Candidacy who withdraw from the formation program for any reason must submit a written statement to that effect to the Council.
 - 3.3.3. The Council may request an intervention in an attempt to resolve any issue impeding the progress of someone in Orientation, Inquiry or Candidacy. If the individual fails to respond to such a request, the Council will, by written statement, withdraw that candidate from the program, in a manner consistent with Regional guidelines.

- 3.3.4. Any individual in Initial Formation experiencing an obstacle to being in communion with the teachings of the Catholic Church, sacramentally or otherwise, shall be asked to resolve these issues with the Fraternity Council prior to proceeding in Initial Formation. These obstacles are outlined in the Regional Guidelines, (Canon 139, 142, 144, 146, 147, 148). Any professed member experiencing an obstacle to being in communion with the teachings of the Catholic Church, sacramentally or otherwise, shall be asked to resolve these issues with the Fraternity Council, and may be asked to withdraw from the order. In accordance of the norms of article 56 and 58 of the General Constitution.
- 3.3.5. When an Inquirer requests admittance into Candidacy, the Minister will, prior to the Council's meeting with the potential future Candidate, solicit advice from Professed members of the Fraternity regarding that Inquirer's suitability to enter the Fraternity. When a Candidate has submitted a request for profession, the Minister will, prior to the Council's meeting with a potential Professed member, solicit advice from Professed members of the Fraternity regarding that Candidate's suitability for profession.
- 3.4. A formation team to assist the Formation Director will be formed at the discretion of the Council.
 - 3.4.1. Members in Initial Formation are encouraged to give feedback to the Formation Director and/or the Fraternity Council as to their experience in the lessons.
- 3.5. All professed members of the Fraternity should actively participate in the ongoing formation program under the direction of the Council, Formation Director, and the formation team. This is consistent with Article 23 of our Rule of Life which states, in part, "The entire community is engaged in this process of growth by its own manner of living."
- 3.6. Initial and Ongoing Formation must remain true to the Franciscan Charism.
- 3.7. The Fraternity will bear the expense of all the formation material.
- 3.8. If a professed member is having a one-on-one interview with a visitor, and an impediment is discovered, the Fraternity Minister or Spiritual Assistant shall be asked to be part of the interview.

4. Elections

- 4.1. No later than two (2) months prior to elections, two (2) professed members who are not Council members and who are approved by the Fraternity, will audit the Fraternity books and provide a written report of their audit to the Fraternity.
- 4.2. The outgoing Council will transfer bank signatures, checkbooks and all documents pertaining to the Council's activities to the new Council within one (1) month after elections.

5. Temporarily Vacated Council Offices

- 5.1. In the case in which the Minister temporarily cannot fulfill his/her duties, because of health issues or other impediments of a definite character, the Vice Minister will assume the office until the Minister is able to resume his/her duties as deemed appropriate by the Council and the Minister, in accordance with Art. 81.1 (GC). The situation will be reevaluated in six (6) months.
- 5.2. In the case in which the Vice Minister temporarily cannot fulfill his/her duties because of health issues or other impediments of a definite character, the Council will appoint one of the Councilors to assume the office until the Vice Minister is able to resume his/her duties as deemed appropriate by the Council and Vice Minister, in accordance with Art. 81.2 (GC). The situation will be reevaluated in six (6) months.
- 5.3. In the case in which one of the Councilors temporarily cannot fulfill his/her duties because of health issues or other impediments of a definite character, the Council will appoint a person from the professed members to assume the office until the Councilor is able to resume his/her duties as deemed appropriate by the Council and the Councilor. The situation will be reevaluated in six (6) months.

6. Ancillary Duties of Elected Officials

6.1. Minister

- 6.1.1. All inquiries related to the Secular Franciscan Order will be received and managed by the Minister.

6.2. Vice Minister

- 6.2.1. The Vice Minister will prepare, publish and distribute the monthly Fraternity *Good News* newsletter, including prayer requests.

6.3. Formation Minister

- 6.3.1. All formation materials introduced to the Fraternity will be evaluated and assessed by the Formation Minister for appropriateness, and in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church and the Franciscan charism.
- 6.3.2. All questions related to Fraternal formation will be addressed by this office.

6.4. Secretary

- 6.4.1. All postal mailings related to Fraternal and Council minutes, and other miscellaneous mailings will be mailed to those members without email.
- 6.4.2. All attendance records and duty lists for Gatherings, Retreats, Regional and other meetings, will be managed and kept updated by the secretary or an appointed assistant.

7. Non-Elected-Ancillary and Ad Hoc Positions

- 7.1. **Historical Archivist** – A professed member of the St. Padre Pio Fraternity will organize and preserve significant records and photographs pertaining to communications or events that the Council deems necessary to the spiritual historicity of the Fraternity.
- 7.2. **Photographer** – A member of the Fraternity will be responsible for taking photographs that documents events and activities that are important to the history of the Fraternity. This person will work together with the Historian as to how the records and photos will be preserved and presented.
- 7.3. **Secretary Assistant** – The Council may appoint a secretarial assistant from the general membership to work with the Secretary as needed.
- 7.4. **Fraternity JPIC Rep** – A professed member of the Fraternity will be responsible for coordinating activities related to the Franciscan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Mission developed by the National JPIC Commission of the Secular Franciscan Order, USA, spelled out in the Handbook for Animators of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.
 - 7.4.1. The Fraternity JPIC Rep is responsible for attending Regional meetings where JPIC reps throughout the Los Tres Compañeros Region are expected to attend.
 - 7.4.2. This Fraternity JPIC Rep is responsible for ensuring that the Fraternity has an active apostolate or apostolates for the benefit of its professed members; however, any fraternity member may choose to participate.
- 7.5. **Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Animator** – A professed member of the Fraternity will be responsible for fulfilling the responsibilities and duties in Article 11. Franciscan Youth of these Guidelines.
- 7.6. **Hospitality member** – A professed member of the Fraternity who is willing to handle the planning for events approved by the Council, and with the help of volunteers ensures that hospitality needs are met.
 - 7.6.1. This Hospitality member may also plan social get-togethers.
 - 7.6.2. The Hospitality member will obtain Get well, sympathy cards, or other appropriate cards as appropriate.
- 7.7. **Web/Database Administrator** – a tech-savvy professed member who is responsible for ensuring the update and maintenance of the Fraternity’s webpage and Facebook page, and any other Social Media tools which are appropriate to the Franciscan Charism.

8. Transfers

- 8.1. A person wishing to transfer to SPP Fraternity (the Transferee) for reasons other than (a) relocation by the person or (b) deactivation of the fraternity s/he currently belongs to, should first discuss the situation with the council of her/his current fraternity (the Fraternity of Origin), including the Spiritual Assistant.
- 8.2. The procedure for a transfer is as follows.
 - 8.2.1. The Transferee must complete relevant sections of Page 2 of the 4-page NAFRA Transfer Request Form, retain a copy of the form, and send the entire form to the Minister of the Fraternity of Origin.
 - 8.2.2. A professed Transferee must provide to the SSP Fraternity Council proof of profession and the name and contact information of the Minister of the Fraternity of Origin. A Transferee in initial formation must provide a copy of the initial formation syllabus of the Fraternity of Origin, the last lesson completed and date of its completion, and the name and contact information of the Formation Director of the Fraternity of Origin.
 - 8.2.2.1. A SPP Council Member and the Transferee will complete a Fraternity Interview Transfer Form. The completed form will be forwarded to the SPP Council.
 - 8.2.2.2. The Minister of the Fraternity of Origin will complete Page 3 of the NAFRA form, retain a copy, and send the entire form to the Minister of SPP Fraternity.
 - 8.2.2.3. The SPP Fraternity Minister must consult with the Minister of the Fraternity of Origin to obtain additional details about the Transferee not contained in the NAFRA form.
 - 8.2.2.4. Before the SPP Fraternity Council takes action on the Transferee's request to transfer, the Transferee must attend at least three entire SPP Fraternity meetings, and the SPP Fraternity Council must interview the Transferee. Then the Council will vote on the transfer and is free to accept, or not accept, a transfer request ensuring that the transferee is free of all obstacles, as listed in section 3.3.4. There is no set time within which the SPP Fraternity Council must decide on a transfer, except that a decision must be made within one year from the submission of the NAFRA form.
 - 8.2.2.5. Once the SPP Fraternity Council has voted on the transfer, the Minister will complete Page 4 of the NAFRA form, retain a copy, and send a copy to the Minister of the Fraternity of Origin and the Minister(s) of the Region(s) involved.

8.2.2.6. If SPP Fraternity accepts a transfer, the Transferee is notified, the transfer is recorded in the registers of SPP Fraternity and the Fraternity of Origin, notice is given to the Regional Council for recording in the National Database, and SPP Fraternity assumes responsibility for the Fair Share payment for the Transferee.

8.2.2.7. If SPP Fraternity does not accept a transfer, the Transferee may appeal to the SPP Fraternity Council or request a review by the Regional Executive Councils of SPP Fraternity and the Fraternity of Origin, if different from SPP Fraternity's, or, if necessary, to the National Executive Council.

8.3. If questions or difficulties arise during the transfer process, the Regional Executive Council(s), and if necessary, the National Executive Council, should be consulted.

9. Affiliations

9.1. The fraternity will consider requests by individuals to become affiliates, who do not belong to the O.F.S. but wish to participate in the Order's life and activities according to Franciscan principles and teachings. Affiliates have no right to vote and have no juridical bond or official status with the O.F.S. but are welcomed in the fraternity to love and be loved as gifts of the Lord and images of Christ.

9.2. A person interested in becoming an affiliate must make a written request to the fraternity minister which includes the reasons for becoming an affiliate. The requestor must attend at least six fraternity meetings and read a biography of St. Francis and other Franciscan texts, as determined by the council, before making the request. The council will consider the request and will meet with the requestor at least once before voting on the affiliation.

9.2.1. Affiliates will consider the Rule of the OFS as an inspirational document to assist in the growth of their Christian vocation and the Franciscan expression of their lives

9.3. A majority vote of the entire council, including the spiritual assistance, is necessary to approve an affiliation. If the affiliation is approved, the initial affiliation is for a period of two years and commences with a simple welcoming by the fraternity. A medal of St. Francis will be presented to the affiliate at the ceremony.

9.4. Each affiliate will be assigned a sponsor by the council. The sponsor will accompany the affiliate in their life in the fraternity, and act as the primary resource for the affiliate if questions or concerns arise. The sponsor will report at least semi-annually to the council on the affiliate's participation in the life and activities of the Order.

9.4.1. The affiliate will complete twenty-four monthly sessions focusing on primary Franciscan resources approved by the council. These sessions will be conducted during time allotted for initial formation at the regular fraternity gatherings with participation of the professed members of the fraternity. The sponsor will not necessarily be involved in every session

9.5. Every two years, the affiliate must express, in writing to the council, a desire to remain as an affiliate. If the affiliate fails to attend three or more fraternity meetings without valid reason as determined by the council, the affiliation will end. The council may end an affiliation at any time with a majority vote of the entire council, including the spiritual assistant.

9.6. An affiliation does not shorten or alter the norms of the O.F.S. formation process. If an affiliate wishes to become a professed member of the O.F.S., then the requirements of the formal O.F.S. formation process must be completed in their entirety.

10. Cell Groups

Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia (1991) states that "usually, [a cell] refers to a small, effective purpose, as for example, a cell in Catholic Action may meet for the common goal of prayer, work, or study."

10.1. The Fraternity should encourage the formation of cell groups that promote Franciscan Spirituality within the Fraternity, for example, a cell group to study the Admonitions of St. Francis, or a group working promoting an apostolate or JPIC activity.

10.2. The formation of cell groups should follow the guidelines set forth in *The Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order*.

11. Franciscan Youth

11.1. The goal of the Franciscan Youth and Young Adult ministry within St. Padre Pio Fraternity is to proclaim, in word and deed, the beauty of living our Christian vocation with a "Franciscan flavor" to the young people in our lives.

11.2. The Youth and Young Adult Animator for the Fraternity will participate in the "Francis Network" of young adults within the Diocese of Austin and will maintain contact with the Diocese of Austin Office of Youth Ministry.

11.3. We, as a Franciscan community, will make ourselves available to the youth, young adult and campus ministries within our geographic area. Each Fraternity member who participates in any of these ministries must comply with the Diocese of Austin Ethics and Integrity in Ministry (EIM) requirements and policies.

11.3.1. We will offer ourselves as resources to the youth minister, campus minister and/or young adult minister at our individual parishes.

11.3.2. The fraternity youth animator or another professed Secular Franciscan will be prepared to present a short program on St. Francis and/or living a Franciscan life in our modern society within the context of regular gatherings of the young people within our parishes.

11.3.3. The Fraternity will explore participation in the annual Diocesan Catholic Youth Conference (DCYC).

.....
Index of Updates

Guidelines First Adopted by Council March 12, 2012

Amendment No. 1, Article 2.6.3, January 16, 2013

Amendment No. 2, Article 2.8, January 16, 2013

Addition No. 1, Article 3.2, June, 2014

Amendment No. 3, Article 3.4, July 16, 2014

Amendment No. 4, Article 3.8, January 21, 2015

Addition No. 2, Article 5, January, 2018

Deletion No. 1, Article 1.4, March, 2020

Addition No. 3, Article 3.2.3, March, 2020

Addition No. 4, Article 3.2.4, March, 2020

Addition No. 5, Article 8, March, 2020

Addition No. 6, Article 9, March, 2020

Addition No. 7, Article 9.2.1, December 15, 2021

Amendment No. 5, Article 9.4, December 15, 2021

Addition No. 8, Article 9.4.1, December 15, 2021

Amendment No. 6, Article 1.3, February 2025

Amendment No. 7, Article 1.4.1, February 2025

Amendment No. 8, Article 3.1, February 2025

Amendment No. 9, Article 3.3.4, February 2025

Amendment No. 10, Articles 8.2.2.4, February 2025

Amendment No. 11, Articles 2.2 & 2.3, March 2025

Amendment No. 12, Articles 3.3, 3.3.2. & 3.3.3 March 2025

Amendment No. 13, Article 7.0, March 2025

Addition No. 9, Articles 7.4, 7.5, 7.6 & 7.7, April 2025

Amendment No. 14, Articles 10.1 April 2025

Addition No. 10. Text added to header in Article 10, April 2025

Addition 11, Restore Index (History) of Updates, April 2025

Approved April 9, 2025