

## Frequently Asked Questions on the Center Officers Selection Process

Sai Ram!

Members of Selection Facilitation Committees (SFCs) from different Sai Centers in the Region have been contacting us with their questions on the Center Officers Selections Process. Additionally, they also shared with us questions they were asked frequently by the Center Members and Officers. These are very relevant questions. After responding to SFC members, Center Officers, and Center Members individually, Regional President felt it would be more helpful to share these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and answers with all the Centers. Questions are grouped and presented under categories, such as, Sai Center Membership, Forms and Guidelines, Nomination Process, and Self-withdrawal process.

You are encouraged to send in any additional questions that may come up while facilitating your Center Officers Selections to [admin@sathyasaicenters.org](mailto:admin@sathyasaicenters.org) . Thank you. Sai Ram.

### A. Sai Center Membership

#### A1. Who can participate in the Selection of Sai Center Officers?

Only Formal Members of Sai Center are eligible to nominate or to be nominated as Sai Center Officers.

#### A2. Who are Formal Center Members?

Any person who meets the basic requirements specified by Swami (also given in the Center Guidelines):  
*"The main objective of the Sathya Sai Organization is to help man recognize the Divinity that is inherent within him. It is established to translate the principles of Love and Non-violence into daily practice.*

*Membership Qualifications:*

- *be an eager aspirant for spiritual progress*
- *to have full faith in the name that the organization bears .*
- *to have won recognition as a good person.      Nothing else counts."* - Baba

All Centers are requested to use the Standard Center Membership Form available on our website: [www.sathyasaicenters.org](http://www.sathyasaicenters.org) to update the Center Membership List.

#### A3. Are there any Membership Charges / Fees / Dues involved?

No. There are No Membership Charges / Fees / Dues involved in Sai Centers. All Center programs are open / available / accessible for all people free of cost regardless of their formal membership in Sai Centers.

#### A4. What is the real difference between Formal Members and Informal Members or Visitors?

The real difference lies in the members' commitment for Swami's Mission and Message. This commitment can be exhibited by attending the Center programs regularly, by following the 9 Point Code of Conduct and other key teachings of Swami in their daily life, and by signing the Center Membership Form.

Two special privileges available exclusively to Formal Members are:

- Ability to actively participate in "members-only" Center meetings
- Ability to nominate or to be nominated as Center Officers

## B. Center Officers Selections: Forms and Guidelines

### **B1. Are there any guidelines available for facilitating the Selections process at Sai Centers?**

Brief guidance is available in Center Guidelines document [Guidelines for American Sathya Sai Baba Centers, published by the Sathya Sai Central Council of the USA].

Additional guidance is available for all Centers in Region 5 to facilitate the Selections process. The following documents can be downloaded from our Regional website: [www.sathysaicenters.org](http://www.sathysaicenters.org)

#### **Selection of Center Officers – Guidelines for Sai Centers**

- This document has the detailed guidance on Center Officers Selections process.
- This is sent directly to all the Center Presidents and SFC members via email.

#### **Center Officers Nomination Form [PDF, Word]**

- All formal Center Members should use this form to nominate formal Center Members as candidates for Center Officer Positions.
- This form can be used to nominate candidates for all Core Officer Positions (President, Vice President, Devotion Coordinator, Education Coordinator, and Service Coordinator) and Extended Officer Positions (Library Coordinator, Study Circle Coordinator, YA Rep female, and YA Rep male)
- The PDF version can be printed and used to write in names manually. PDF form is typically used for paper-based nominations.
- The Word version can be used for both paper-based and paper-less nominations.
- Paper-less Nomination forms can be sent via email to SFC members using a specially designated SFC email address for your center. Paper-based Nominations may be deposited into a specially designated Nominations Deposit box at the Center.
- Please don't change this form. If you have a situation that needs a different form design, please contact us at [admin@sathysaicenters.org](mailto:admin@sathysaicenters.org)

#### **Center Membership Form [PDF, Word]**

- Center President should use this form to keep a record of all formal center members.
- All Centers are encouraged to update their membership records at least once a year. Additionally, this form should be used to update the contact information for individual members as needed.
- Centers can use the Word version to maintain membership records by requesting members to send in their completed forms via email. When the members send in their completed forms from their registered email account (the one mentioned on the registration form), there is no need to collect the paper form with signature.

#### **Center Guidelines [PDF]**

- This is the official document, "Guidelines for American Sathya Sai Baba Centers" published by the Sathya Sai Central Council of the USA.
- All Center Members and Officers are required to review this document and commit to abide by these Guidelines.

#### **Duties of Center Officers [PDF, Word]**

- This special document from the Sathya Sai Baba Central Council of the USA elaborates duties of Center Officers giving more detailed guidance than that is given in the "Center Guidelines" document listed above.

## **C. Center Officers Selections: Nomination Process**

**C1. Should we use different forms for nominating Core Officers, Extended Officers, and YA Reps?**  
No. Please use the same standard form, “Sai Center Officers Nomination Form” for all.

**C2. How long can an Officer serve once selected?**

Officers Selections are held every two years. Once selected, an Officer can serve in a given position for one term (for 2 years).

**C3. Can an Officer be selected for a second term after completing one term?**

Yes. An Officer can be selected for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term through due selection process. An Officer can serve in the same position for a maximum of 2 terms (4 years).

**C4. Can an Officer continue in the same position for a 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive term?**

No. Even if all Center Members unanimously select, an Officer can not continue in the **same position** for a 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive term.

### **Special Situations:**

For small centers where there are not enough members who are willing to take the responsibility of Officer Roles, Regional President may waive certain requirements and allow the following after reviewing the current situation of the Center:

- One Officer may hold multiple Officer Positions.
- Current Team of Officers may continue a 3rd term after completing two consecutive terms.
- While doing so, they are encouraged to play a different Officer Role in the new term.
- Formation of SFC may not be required for small centers.

**C5. Will an Officer become ineligible for a given office after serving for 2 consecutive terms?**

Yes. He/she will be ineligible for that particular office. However, he/she is eligible for nomination for a different Officer Position for the 3<sup>rd</sup> term.

**C6. Can SFC Members be nominated for any Officer Position?**

No. SFC Members can not be nominated for any Center Officer Position.

**C7. Can SFC Members nominate any current Officer or other Member for any Officer Position?**

No. SFC Members can not nominate anyone for any Center Officer Position.

**C8. Can Center Presidents / other Officers collect completed Nomination Forms from Members?**

No. Members should return the completed Nomination Forms directly to SFC Members:

Paper-based forms should be deposited in a specially designated Nomination deposit box at the Center

Paper-less forms should be emailed to a specially designated SFC email address

**C9. Can SFC ask certain Center Members [who appear to be promising candidates for Officer Positions] if they are interested in any Officer Positions?**

No. Members of SFC or Center Officers do not have any authority to offer any Officer Position to anyone. All Candidates (including current term Officers) should go through the standard Selections process. Therefore, SFC members, current Officers, or Center Members should neither encourage nor discourage any specific individuals regarding Center Officer Positions.

However, SFC should strongly encourage all Center Members to participate actively in the Selections process and be ready to serve the Center if they are nominated and selected as Center Officers.

## D. Self-Withdrawal Process

### D1. Can SFC announce the names of the Nominees publicly or privately to Members or Officers?

No. Names of the Nominees should not be revealed by any SFC member to anyone outside of SFC. This 'outside' group includes, Spouses, Children, or other family members of SFC, Current Officers, Center Members (formal or informal), and especially other Nominees.

### D2. What are the reasons for not announcing the Nominees' Names publicly or privately?

In the Sai Organization, Officers are chosen using the "Selection" process as opposed to "Election" process. The primary purpose of the "Selection" process is to prevent usual problems associated with "Elections", such as taking sides, forming groups, campaigning, building up of competition, etc. that lead to divisive forces diminishing the unity of the Center. These problems are avoided by asking Center Members to 'nominate' any suitable candidate for a given position; and not asking them to 'vote' for pre-designated candidates.

By not revealing the names of the Nominees, we can avoid the following types of problems that occurred in the past at different Centers. A nominee's decision to self-withdraw was unduly influenced by the awareness of the names of other Nominees in the list for a given Officer position. Based on the awareness of other Nominees in the list for a given position:

- A given Nominee (typically a junior member) may withdraw though he /she may have strong interest, commitment, and ability to serve as an officer. Usually this is done as a respect for a senior member or a Center officer who is in the Nominees list.
- A given Nominee may be approached by other Nominees or Center Members to withdraw (against his/her wish) in support of another Nominee.
- A given Nominee (typically a senior member) may not withdraw from the list who otherwise would have withdrawn because of his / her personal situation.

### D3. When can SFC reveal the names of the Nominees?

At first, Nominees should be allowed to self-withdraw purely based on their own situation (personal interest, commitment, ability, other commitments at home, at work, at school, etc.) without external, undue influence.

After few rounds of self-withdrawal efforts, SFC may reveal the names to the Nominees and facilitate a direct meeting between the final 2 or 3 Nominees for a given Office, **only if they strongly feel** that it will result in the most **harmonious and loving way** of concluding the selection process **without causing any conflicts or other problems**.

### D4. How is the Selection process facilitated by SFC?

Even after conducting the Self-withdrawal process multiple times, if 2 or more candidates are still remaining in the list for a given Position, SFC should be prepared to finalize the selections by objective assessment of the remaining candidates who did not withdraw themselves from list. Some of the factors that may be considered by the SFC are:

- Number of Nomination Ballots received.
- Level of willingness and commitment.
- Level of understanding of the officer's role exhibited by the candidate.
- Personal and family commitments shared by the candidate.
- Size of the Center and the availability of eligible and committed candidates to take up the Center Officer roles.
- When all other factors are equal, prefer YAs to Adults.

- When all other factors are equal, prefer candidates who did not serve as an officer to those who have already served as an officer in the past.
  - Thoughts, views, and plans of the candidate should reflect acceptance and promotion of Sai Organizational guidelines, Universal Teachings of Swami, and Multi-cultural, Multi-faith, and Multi-language based universal, loving atmosphere in the Center.
  - Basic requirements of membership given by Swami (eager spiritual aspirant, faith in Swami, and a good name in the society).
  - Any available information from reliable sources about the candidate's past achievements and problems in the center from Center members' perspective.
  - Some key requirements listed in the Center Guidelines and Duties of Officers documents, such as affiliation with other religious organizations, professional activities that may conflict with his / role in the Center, etc.
- After considering all the above points, SFC may facilitate a direct meeting between the final 2 or 3 candidates for a given Office if they feel that it will result in the most harmonious and loving way of concluding the selection process.
  - Even after the best efforts by the SFC, if the final selection is not accomplished with **unanimity** [among the SFC members], then SFC should approach the Regional President to facilitate the final selection.

#### **D5. How does SFC handle if a person gets nominated for multiple Officer Positions?**

Immediately after receiving and consolidating Nominations, SFC should contact each Nominee individually (in person or by phone), convey the news of their Nomination (not revealing the number of nominations they got). If a person gets nominated for multiple positions, that should be conveyed to the Nominee and seek the preferred Officer Position among the ones he /she is nominated for. Once the Nominee selects his / her preferred Officer Position, he / she will be considered for that Officer Position only further in the Selections process; he/she will not be considered for other Officer Positions. However, SFC should retain all the nomination data; nothing should be discarded at this point.

#### **Ultimate Goal:**

The ultimate goal of the standard Selections Process and the associated forms and FAQ documents is to provide all SFCs with a common set of guidelines in facilitating a smooth Selections process at each Center in a loving atmosphere that retains and promotes Unity. These are not rigid rules; they are guidelines. SFC members should constantly pray to Swami, seek His blessings, and use their discrimination power given by Swami in interpreting and applying these guidelines to uphold Sai values and Unity at the Center. SFC should do what is best for the Center.

*You can perform any action only when all five fingers are together. You cannot act if they are drifted apart. We should be one. This is a piece of cloth. It has a number of threads. It is strong because the threads are inter-woven. If you separate the threads, you can cut it off with a finger. Therefore, unity is the true strength and source of happiness. You can achieve anything with unity.*

*The setting up of Sai centers is not an exercise in numbers. The emphasis should be on quality and not quantity. The international President and national President of our organization have mentioned how the centers (samasthalu) have grown. But has fellow feeling (samathvam) grown to the same extent? Fellow feeling should grow. On the contrary, divisiveness is growing. I want quality not quantity.*

*Promote harmony among members. You cannot avoid making such distinctions as President, Coordinator, Member and the like. But these distinctions are functional and have no place at the spiritual level. God is present equally in all from the president to the ordinary member. You should recognize this oneness. Positions, names and forms may vary. But the Supreme Truth is one. This spirit of oneness (samathvam) should be fostered. Then there will be no jealousy or discord. Where there is oneness, there will be no trouble. - Sathya Sai Baba [World Conference 11/18/95]*