



Selection of Sai Center Officers

A Guide to Sai Centers

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a common set of guidelines to Selection Facilitation Committee (SFC) members for conducting / facilitating the Center Officers Selections more effectively.

Overview of Center Officers Selection Process

Sathya Sai Baba Centers are administered and operated locally by the Center Officers (or Center Office Bearers) adhering to the Guidelines set forth by the National Sathya Sai Council and Regional Officers. Center Officers are formal Center Members chosen by the formal Center Members using a “Selection” process as opposed to “Election” process, which is commonly used by groups and associations.

"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."

"The only qualifications needed for center members are: to be an eager aspirant for spiritual progress, to have full faith in the name that the organization bears, and to have won recognition as a good person. Nothing else counts."
- Sathya Sai Baba

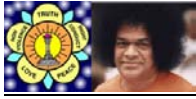
- ❖ The goal of the "Selection" process in Sai Centers is to 'select' the Center Officers from among the members who have the required ability to lead and necessary commitment to follow Center Guidelines with full faith in Swami's Mission and Message to administer and operate the Sai Center.
- ❖ Unlike regular "Elections", the "Selection" process is not a "popularity contest". The emphasis is not on the number of votes gained or who gets majority. There are no campaigns associated with Selections. There are no pre-determined candidates on the ballot form for Members to vote. As such, there is no Voting Ballot Form. Each Center Member uses a standard Nomination Ballot Form to write-in names of suitable candidates for each officer position [subject to certain eligibility criteria¹].
- ❖ All the candidates who are thus nominated – even by just one member – are considered “eligible Nominees” for further consideration in the Selection process. The next step is to facilitate “self-withdrawal” process² where eligible Nominees will be given opportunities to withdraw themselves from the “eligible Nominees list” one by one until one candidate remains as the final Nominee. That Nominee will be finalized and declared as selected for a given Officer Position.
- ❖ Officers are selected for a term of two years and may serve two consecutive terms, if so selected. Officers may not serve in that same position for a third consecutive term. More details on handling special situations in small centers are given later in the document.
- ❖ The emphasis here is to facilitate selection of officers who meet the requirements specified by Swami - in a loving atmosphere.

"Choose men and women who have unshaken faith in this present Avatar, with this Name and this Form. Offices should not be regarded as positions of authority or as 'prizes' for devotion. They should be accepted with humility and exercised with love."

- Sathya Sai Baba

Notes:

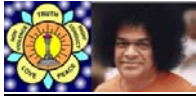
1. Only formal Center Members are eligible to be nominated as Center Officers.
2. “Self-withdrawal” process is described in more detail in the following pages.



- ❖ All Sai Centers will have the following five CORE Officer Positions regardless of the size of the Center.
 - **President**
 - **Vice President**
 - **Devotion Coordinator**
 - **Education Coordinator**
 - **Service Coordinator**
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ If there are no children in the Center for participating in SSE classes, the Center need not have a separate Education Coordinator; instead, one of the other Officers can play this role. However, having a dedicated Education Coordinator will be of great help in establishing the SSE program.
- ❖ Depending on the need and size of the Sai Centers, they can have the following EXTENDED Officer Positions. It is recommended to have these positions for all Centers unless they are small centers.
 - **Study Circle Coordinator**
 - **Library Coordinator**
- ❖ If a Center has Young Adult members, it should also have the following positions as applicable.
 - **Young Adult Representative – Female**
[only if there are female young adults in the center]
 - **Young Adult Representative – Male**
[only if there are male young adults in the center]

Note: Though Center Officers' Selections and YA Reps' Selections may occur during the same period, they will be facilitated by different groups.

- ❖ Centers Officers' Selections will be facilitated by the SFC (for large and medium size centers) or the outgoing President (for small centers).
- ❖ YA Reps' Selections will be facilitated by the Regional YA Reps and Advisors.



Summary Description of the Selection Process

The Selection Process is divided into the following phases and activities.

1. Preparation Phase

- 1.1. Announcement of Center Officers Selections
- 1.2. Formation of Selection Facilitation Committee (SFC)
- 1.3. Review of Center Officers Selections Process **with SFC Members**
- 1.4. Updating Center Membership Records

2. Nomination Phase

- 2.1. Review of Center Guidelines and Center Officers Selections Process **with Center Members**
- 2.2. Distribution of write-in Nomination Ballot Forms to Center Members
- 2.3. Collection of Nomination Forms
- 2.4. Consolidating Nominations for each Officer Position

3. Selection Phase

- 3.1. Confirmation of Nominees
- 3.2. Facilitation of Self-Withdrawal process
- 3.3. Finalizing Selections and Handling Special Situations

4. Transition Phase

- 4.1. Facilitation of Transition
- 4.2. Conducting the first Center Meeting with the New Team of Officers



Detailed Description of the Selection Process

1. Preparation Phase

1.1. Announcement of Center Officers Selections

Responsibility: Center President.

Guidance: Email Communications from the Regional President.

1.2. Formation of Selection Facilitation Committee (SFC)

Responsibility: Center President.

Guidance: Keep the following points in mind while performing this activity.

- Current President in consultation with current officers and center members will request for or nominate volunteers to serve as the SFC members.
- Selection of SFC is not an elaborate process like selection of Center Officers.
- Limit the SFC size to 2-7 members based on the size of the Center.
- **Criteria for selecting SFC members:**
 - o Past term Officers or current term Officers who are not interested in re-selection in the upcoming selections for the new term.
 - o Center Members who satisfy all the following criteria:
 - Have been formal Members of Sai Center / Sai Organization for at least 2 years.
 - Have no intention to be selected for the new term.
 - Are fully familiar with USA Sai Center Guidelines.
 - Have firm faith in Swami and His teachings.
- SFC once formed, will select a **Spokesperson** to facilitate all activities of SFC and to represent SFC in communicating with Regional President.
- SFC members should work together very closely as a team exemplifying Swami's teachings and acting as a role model for the new team.

1.3. Review of Center Officers Selection Process with SFC Members

Responsibility: Center President

Guidance: Regional Teleconferences and Selection of Sai Center Officers [this document].

1.4. Updating Center Membership Records

Responsibility: Center President

Guidance: Use Standard Center Membership Form [download from our Regional website, www.sathyasaicenters.org]



2. Nomination Phase

2.1. Review of Center Guidelines and Center Officers Selections Process with Center Members

Responsibility: SFC

Guidance: Center Guidelines and Selection of Sai Center Officers documents [download from our Regional website, www.sathyasaicenters.org]

2.2. Distribution of write-in Nomination Ballot Forms to Center Members

Responsibility: SFC

Guidance: Keep the following points in mind while performing this activity.

- Use Updated Center Membership records and **Standard Nomination Form** [download from our Regional website, www.sathyasaicenters.org]
- Blank Forms can be sent to members via Email.

2.3. Collection of Nomination Forms

Responsibility: SFC

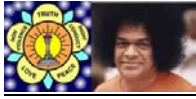
Guidance: Keep the following points in mind while performing this activity.

- Establish a Mechanism to collect and store the completed forms securely.
- Candidates being nominated need not be physically present in the Center during the Nomination period.
- Completed Forms **should be** folded and dropped in a secure box by Center Members during their visits to Center Meetings. This procedure will help maintain anonymous Nominations. [This box should be kept safe and secure by the SFC spokesperson].
- This can be completed over a period of several Center Meetings in the month of January.
- Members who can't attend even a single Center Meeting during January may send their completed Nomination forms in a sealed envelope to SFC Spokesperson's home address. SFC Spokesperson should open the envelope at the Center just before dropping the folded form from the envelope into the secure box.
- SFC Members **are not eligible** to nominate candidates for Center Officer Roles.
- Current team of Officers **is eligible** to nominate candidates for Center Officer Roles.
- SFC Members, Center Officers, or Center Members should not engage in any sort of campaigns, promotions, etc. either supporting or opposing any members / potential nominees.
- Both Adult members and Young Adult members are equally qualified to be nominated for all Officer Positions, except for YA Representative positions.
- Only YA members can nominate candidates for YA Representative positions.
- **Optionally, centers may choose to adopt a completely paperless method** for conducting the Nominations process as outlined below:
 - o SFC sends Electronic Nomination Forms (in Word) to members via email
 - o Members will send back the completed Nomination Forms as email attachments to a **specially designated SFC email address**. List of SFC email addresses for different centers will be published by January 1st.
 - o SFC members will keep the Nomination data strictly confidential. The Nomination data will not be revealed to any person outside of SFC.

2.4. Consolidating Nominations for each Officer Position

Responsibility: SFC

Guidance: Use the standard Nomination Consolidation Form [download from our Regional website] for counting and consolidating names of candidates for each Officer Position.



3. Selection Phase

3.1. Confirmation of Nominees

Responsibility: SFC

Guidance: Keep the following points in mind while performing this activity.

- SFC should inform all Nominees individually by phone or in person about their nomination.
- This work can be shared by SFC members.
- If a candidate is nominated for multiple Officer Positions, this should be conveyed to the Nominee at this time.
- SFC should ask the Nominees to think about the responsibilities of the Officer Roles they were nominated for and choose one Officer position and discard others for further consideration in the Selection process.
- SFC may drop the Nominees from further consideration in the Selection Process if:
 - o The Nominee is not willing to be considered for any Officer Position.
 - o The Nominee is not accessible for SFC either by phone or in person.
- SFC should not try to influence the Nominee's decision making process.

3.2. Facilitation of Self-Withdrawal process

Responsibility: SFC

Guidance: Keep the following points in mind while performing this activity.

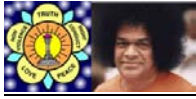
- Review Center Guidelines, Duties of Officers document, and **Selection of Sai Center Officers** document [download from our Regional website] with the Nominees.
- Facilitate Self-withdrawal of Nominees by encouraging Self-assessment of their Ability and Commitment to Officer roles in the light of their personal and family commitments.
- During these meetings, SFC should gather pertinent information from the Nominees that will allow SFC to objectively assess the Nominees' readiness to take up the Center Officer responsibilities.
- SFC should keep the names of all Nominees confidential; Nominees should not know the names of other Nominees so that their self-withdrawal decisions will not be influenced by their awareness of the other Nominees in the list.
- SFC should interact with the Nominees professionally and impartially – without any bias.
- SFC should be ready to answer any questions the candidates may have about the duties and responsibilities of different Officer roles.
- If the Self-withdrawal process results in one Candidate remaining in the list for a given Position, then that candidate may be finalized for that position.

3.3. Finalizing Selections and Handling Special Situations

Responsibility: SFC

Guidance: Keep the following points in mind while performing this activity.

- 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:
 - o Number of Nomination Ballots received.
 - o Level of willingness and commitment.
 - o 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**, then SFC should approach the Regional President to facilitate the final selection.
- After completing final selections, SFC reviews them with the Regional President before announcing at the Center.

4. Transition

4.1. Facilitation of Transition

Responsibility: SFC

Guidance: Keep the following points in mind while performing this activity.

- SFC Spokesperson schedules and facilitates this meeting.
- Each of the Current team of Officers will present the following to the New team.
 - Ongoing and planned key projects and commitments made by the center.
 - Special tips and advice for smooth operation.
 - Any lessons learned and best practices from their experience
 - Their commitment to support the new team
- SFC sends full contact information for all Officers of the new team to Regional Communications Coordinator [admin@sathysaicenters.org] for updating the directory and mailing lists.
- SFC announces the Start Date for the new team at the Center.

4.2. Conducting the first Center Meeting with the New Team of Officers

Responsibility: New Center President

Guidance: Keep the following points in mind while performing this activity.

- Acknowledgement of the Services of Outgoing officers with gratitude.
- Acknowledgement of the Services of SFC members with gratitude.
- All Officers and Members together seek Swami's Blessings for smooth and harmonious operation of the Center.



Selection Process

“There must be an atmosphere of love and tolerance, not of envy, excitement or aggrandizement when names are considered. When once a person is selected in an atmosphere of peace and love, co-operation and tolerance should prevail and every one must follow his directions and respect his guidance. It is only then that the Divine Grace will be conferred on you.” - Baba

Suggested Prayer for Officers

“Swami, save me from any act of commission or omission which will affect adversely the three qualifications You have laid down. Bless me with the skill, intelligence and enthusiasm necessary for the task I am dedicating myself to carry out for my own uplift. Guide me along the correct path; shower on me Your Grace so that I may earn a fair name in this attempt; guard me from temptation and wrong steps.” - Baba

Advice to Officers

“Do not seek to exercise authority over others; seek rather chances to be useful to them. Officers in this Organization are leaders who bear the brunt themselves, guides who walk along a path they wish others to take. They shall not command or punish; they can only persuade or advice.” - Baba

Sai Ram. Please send your feedback (questions, comments, or improvement suggestions) to admin@sathyasaicenters.org Thank you.