



The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order – USA

Guidelines for the Regional Fraternity Visitation

As provided in Article 26 of the OFS Rule, regional fraternities should request fraternal and pastoral Visitations. While the schedule and form of a Visitation may vary among Regional Fraternities, it is important that both Pastoral and Fraternal Visitors accomplish the purpose assigned to their particular type of visit. Prayerful consideration and implementation of these guidelines will result in gaining the full value of a Visitation.

Preparation: Well before a visit, the Regional Minister, together with the Council, should thoughtfully and prayerfully conduct a regional self-evaluation. We enclose a Pre-Visitation Questionnaire for this purpose. The completion of this questionnaire is meant to be a collaborative effort accomplished by the Regional Executive Council and is not intended to be the work of one person. Ideally, the REC comes together to discuss the questions and reflect upon the answers to be submitted.

Extra copies of the Pre-Visitation Questionnaire can be sent to each Regional Executive Council member should they desire to complete and send it directly to the Visitors. In addition, a different Individual Self-Evaluation Form will be emailed to each REC member. This is an online form.

Please send the copy prepared by the Council to the Visitors at least **four weeks** prior to the Visitation. One copy should be retained in the records of the Regional Fraternity.

2. Visitation Schedule: It is important to allow adequate time for the Visitation. The Visitors need several hours to meet and dialogue with the Regional Executive Council and review files and records. The Visitors will attend the Regional Fraternity Gathering and address the Regional Fraternity as a whole. Time also needs to be allotted for the Visitors to meet with the assembled Local Fraternity Ministers and the Spiritual Assistants of the Region (without the REC present). A one-day Visitation is not enough time.

It is strongly suggested that the chapter schedule and agenda be reviewed with the visitors at least four weeks prior to the visit.

3. Evaluation: The Visitors will look at the following areas and methods:

Spirituality: Spiritual growth, prayer, and liturgy

Service to local fraternities: How needs are communicated and met

Communication: With Local and National Fraternities, as well as public relations

Formation: Description of formation programs both initial and ongoing including resources used

Vocation Promotion: Methods and frequency

Financial Stewardship: Proper recording and accounting for the Region's common funds.

4. The Report: After the Visitation, the Region will receive a written report from the Visitors.

What happens **before** and **after** the visits is in many ways as important as the visit itself. The Regional Council needs to review the Visitation report and do their best to carry out the recommendations given. The Visitors will welcome the opportunity to dialogue with you regarding the report, with its commendations and recommendations. Sharing of the commendations and implementation of the recommendations will be a great benefit to the Region and is a sign of true cooperation.

We highly recommend that the Region undertakes a review of the Visitation Report a year or so after the Visitation to evaluate your Region's progress.



Guideline: 2024-06
Creation Date: September 21, 2024
Revision Date:
Subject: Guidelines for Determining Stipends

The National Fraternity Council, with input from the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA), discussed the issue of stipends. The following points were agreed upon.

- (1) The cost of travel, room and board and other legitimate expenses should always be covered for those who are serving the Secular Franciscan Order in an official capacity.
- (2) Spiritual Assistants should receive reimbursement for the cost of travel, room and board and other legitimate expenses related to their ministry. Additionally, they should be offered a stipend over and above expenses (i.e., love offering) in an amount "appropriate to the journey made and the length of stay required" (NS 18.8 and 26.2). This stipend should always be offered for the regular meeting of the Fraternity, a meeting of the Fraternity Council, Pastoral Visitations, Elections or other events where their presence is requested.
- (3) Secular Franciscan Spiritual Assistants should be treated in the same manner as Friar Spiritual Assistants and other non-OFS Spiritual Assistants. Their expenses should be covered, and a stipend offered, as above.
- (4) Fraternities should offer a stipend to OFS Members who conduct a Fraternal Visitation or an Election, over and above covered expenses, (i.e., love offering) in an amount "appropriate to the journey made and the length of stay required" (NS 18.8 and 26.2).
- (5) OFS Regions are free to suggest to their local fraternities the amount of the stipend offered over and above expenses.
- (6) OFS members who serve the Order in capacities other than Spiritual Assistance, such as presenting at a retreat or workshop, etc., should be offered a stipend over and above expenses.

It is important to note - OFS members who receive stipends, over and above expenses, may opt to donate back to the Region, or to NAFRA, or to a charity. It is recognized that all OFS members who volunteer time to serve the Order in a variety of ways, do so in a spirit of generosity and fraternal service. This expression of our charism is a gift to the Order.