CENTERS FOR SPIRITUAL LIVING

Understanding the Member Community Agreement

A backgrounder for delegates and Member Communities ahead of the October 2026 vote

WHAT IS THE MEMBER COMMUNITY AGREEMENT?

The Member Community Agreement (MCA) is the governing agreement between Centers for Spiritual Living (CSL) and each of its Member Communities. It defines the relationship: what CSL commits to provide and uphold, and what each Member Community commits to in return. Every affiliated community signs it.

The MCA is not a new document. It is an update to the Member Community Affiliation Agreement that has governed this relationship since 2012. The version going to the field for a vote in October 2026 has been through Leadership Council review, a Legal Committee review, and revisions in response to member feedback. The process to create the current version has taken two years of dedicated work by the Affiliation Agreement Committee which included multiple zoom meetings with hundreds of members brainstorming and providing feedback, along with a feedback session on the recent Reno convention.

> **In short:**
> The MCA is the update to our 2012 Affiliation Agreement. It keeps the same core relationship and adds clearer standards, mutual accountability, and legal protections that the 2012 document did not have.

WHY ARE WE UPDATING IT?

The 2012 Affiliation Agreement was written for a different moment in CSL's history, in the middle of the merger between the International Centers for Spiritual Living and United Centers for Spiritual Living. Large parts of that document addressed transitional issues from the merger that are no longer relevant. Other parts have simply not kept pace with how communities operate today.

Three gaps stood out during the review:

- No clear definition of Good Standing. The 2012 agreement referenced the Bylaws but never spelled out what Good Standing actually required.
- A single-sentence termination clause. There was no notice period, no opportunity to correct a problem, and no graduated process before a community's status could be ended.
- No dispute resolution process, no data protection language, and none of the standard legal protections (such as a severability clause) that a professional agreement should include.

Leadership Council members and the CSL Legal Committee chair then reviewed the resulting draft for governance and legal soundness. The version presented here reflects that full process.

WHAT STAYS THE SAME

Before getting into what has changed, it is worth being clear about what has not. The MCA does not change CSL's Global Vision, Guiding Principles, or Shared Values. It does not change the theology or the teaching of the Science of Mind. It does not change the basic structure of the relationship: communities remain self-governing, CSL remains the Home Office providing training, credentialing, and support, and the same core rights and benefits of Member Community status continue.

What has changed is how clearly that relationship is defined and how fairly it is administered.

WHAT'S CHANGING: SIX MAJOR THEMES

The MCA contains 49 substantive changes from the 2012 agreement. Rather than list every one, this section groups them into six themes that matter most for a delegate's vote and for a community's understanding of what it is agreeing to.

Theme 1: A clear definition of Good Standing, and a fair process if a community falls out of it

Section Three now spells out exactly what Good Standing requires: financial compliance, reporting compliance, communication compliance, governance compliance, legal and ethical compliance, and operational integrity. None of that existed in 2012.

Section Four replaces the old single-sentence termination clause with a graduated process. If a community falls out of Good Standing, it first receives a written Notice of Deficiency with at least 60 days to correct the problem. If the problem is not corrected, the community may be placed on Probationary Status for up to 180 days, with a continued opportunity to return to Good Standing. Termination is a last resort, not a first response, except in cases involving serious harm or ethical violations, which allow for immediate suspension of privileges.

Theme 2: Conscious Giving: a shared, two-way commitment

The MCA reframes financial giving to the Home Office as Conscious Giving, a suggested percentage of a community's income, even if aspirational, offered as an expression of shared abundance rather than a flat fee. The Agreement now plainly explains what Conscious Giving supports: the magazine, licensing and education operations, the Ethics department, Global Support Services, Global Programs and global community development, and regional and social media marketing.

What is new, and matters for the vote, is that giving now flows both directions. The Home Office commits in Section 2.7 to returning 10 percent of community-supported contributions back to the wider movement through direct CSL support programs. The 2012 agreement had no equivalent commitment from the Home Office side.

Theme 3: Mutual obligations, not just community obligations

Several new provisions place obligations on CSL itself, not only on Member Communities. The Organization commits to regular financial reporting in complete transparency, to maintaining and expanding its ministries and programs, and to acting in good faith to help a community return to Good Standing before any termination process begins. The 2012 agreement was written almost entirely as a one-way list of what communities owed the Organization.

Theme 4: Modernized for how communities actually communicate and operate today

New provisions require communities to maintain current contact information, designate a primary contact for official communications, and follow safeguarding, risk management, and data protection standards. Trademark and branding provisions have been expanded to cover social media, livestreamed, and online content, not just print and broadcast media as in 2012.

Theme 5: Standard legal protections the 2012 agreement lacked

The MCA adds a mandatory mediation requirement before either party may pursue arbitration or litigation: good-faith mediation must begin within 45 days of a written dispute notice, with a 90-day window to resolve the matter before either side may escalate. It also adds an integration clause (the Agreement, the ODM, and the Policies and Procedures Manual together are the complete agreement) and a severability clause (if one provision is ever found invalid, the rest of the Agreement remains in force). Colorado remains the governing venue and law, as it was in 2012.

Theme 6: Removal of language that no longer applies

The MCA removes provisions tied to the 2011 to 2012 merger transition, including references to charters and moratoriums under the former ICSL and UCSL structures, and it removes the SOMARK brand-approval process, which is no longer in use. This is cleanup, not a reduction in any community's rights.

WHAT DELEGATES ARE VOTING ON

Delegates will be asked to ratify the Member Community Agreement in full at the field vote in October 2026. A yes vote adopts the MCA as the updated governing agreement between CSL and its Member Communities, replacing the 2012 Affiliation Agreement. Individual communities will then sign the MCA in place of the prior agreement.

Delegates are encouraged to bring this backgrounder, along with any questions, back to their communities before the vote. The full itemized list of all 49 changes is available as well as a one page summary for delegate use with the community.

USING THIS AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL

Community leaders are welcome to share this document directly with boards, councils, and congregations. It is written to stand on its own: it does not assume the reader has followed the review process, and it avoids legal language where a plain explanation will do.

A simple way to introduce it to your community is to lead with the two points that matter most: nothing about our shared Vision or teachings is changing, and what is changing makes the relationship clearer and fairer for everyone, in both directions.

No doubt, this new MCA is not perfect. However, we don’t want ‘perfect’ to be the enemy of the ‘good.’ And we are committed to reviewing the MCA every few years. Once a decade is too long.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Does this change our theology, Vision, or teachings?

A: No. The Global Vision, Guiding Principles, Shared Values, and the teaching of Science of Mind are unchanged. The MCA governs the organizational relationship, not the spiritual content of the movement.

Q: Is Conscious Giving required?

A: Conscious Giving at some level is a condition of Good Standing. As described in the Agreement, 10% is a suggested amount. More importantly, Member Communities are expected to support the Organization in an amount that reflects its current <u>highest commitment to shared abundance</u>.

Q: Does the new Good Standing and termination process make it easier for CSL to end a community's affiliation?

A: No, the opposite. The 2012 agreement allowed termination under a single sentence with no defined notice period. The MCA requires written notice, a minimum 60-day correction period, and up to 180 days of probation with continued opportunity to correct, before termination by the Organization can occur. The only exception is for serious harm or ethical violations.

Q: Does the Home Office give anything back, or is this all about community obligations?

A: The MCA adds a reciprocal commitment: the Home Office returns 10 percent of community-supported contributions back to the movement through CSL support programs, and it commits to full financial transparency and to maintaining and expanding its ministries and programs. Neither commitment existed in 2012.

Q: What happens if there is a dispute between a community and the Home Office?

A: The MCA now requires good-faith mediation with a mutually agreed neutral mediator before either side can pursue arbitration or litigation. This did not exist in 2012, where disputes had no defined resolution path outside the Bylaws and Colorado courts.

Q: What does a community need to do if the vote passes?

A: Each Member Community will be asked to sign the MCA, replacing its existing Affiliation Agreement. No other immediate action is required. Community leaders may want to review the Good Standing criteria in Section Three to confirm their reporting, and governance practices already align.

Q: What happens if the MCA is not approved?

A: This is a governance issue that the Leadership Council would need to address. The existing Affiliation Agreements would still be in effect, and the Leadership Council would need to research why it didn't pass and consider options at that point.