

# SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS and ONGOING FORMATION

What is the Spiritual Assistant's role in  
Ongoing Formation?

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## What it is

### 1. It is needed!

The SA is meant to participate in ongoing  
Formation, not just observe.

He or she can help in the planning and the  
execution of the plan for ongoing formation.

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## What it is

Article 2, Statutes of Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO

3. The purpose of spiritual assistance is to foster communion with the Church and with the Franciscan Family through witness and sharing of Franciscan spirituality, to cooperate in initial and on-going formation of secular Franciscans and to express the fraternal affection of the religious towards the SFO.

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## What it is

### 2. Franciscan in nature

The thrust of the ongoing formation experience ought to connect directly to the Franciscan vocation of the SFO. While it is about learning, it is specifically about learning more about Franciscanism.

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## What it is

### 3. A sharing about the implementation of the Franciscan ideals we are learning into the events of everyday life.

It is not a lecture series or a “how to” seminar, but rather it is discussion oriented, based on the experiences of the Franciscans present.

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## What it is

### 4. An opportunity for conversion

Ongoing formation is a time for reflective interchange. The members share about their work and ministry and spiritual lives. They learn from each other and the poor. As they do, they find ways to live more faithfully as Franciscans.

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## What it is

### 5. An opportunity for the SA to share insights in the middle of the discussion

The SA would participate in the discussion without leading it and certainly without dominating it. His/her insights could enlighten and challenge and shepherd the discussion in fruitful directions.

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## What it is

### 6. Interactive

Adult learners do well with a varied approach to education. Use various ways to explain a point, including stories, music, visual aids, panel discussions with real interchange, etc.

**ALWAYS** provide the adult learners ample opportunity to participate in the discussion, ask questions, tell of their own experiences, etc.

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## What it is

7. Ongoing Formation themes and methods are determined by the Formation Team and the Council.

The SA does participate on both the team and the Council, so his/her voice should be a part of choosing the direction, discerning what is needed and how best to respond to the current need in the fraternity.

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## What it is NOT

### 1. **It is NOT an option.**

The input of the Spiritual Assistant is invaluable and it is meant to be a way to make sure the fraternity is “on track.” Without the guidance or input of a good SA, trouble may ensue.

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## What it is NOT

### 2. **It is not a devotional thing.**

What the Spiritual Assistant models will have a huge influence on the fraternity. Marian devotions are wonderful. Devotions to saints like St. Therese, the Little Flower, or St. Padre Pio are commendable. However, they should not be the subject of continuing formation for any extended period of time.

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## What it is NOT

2. (continued)

Other kinds of texts might be wonderful and faith-building, but they are not really good for continuing formation.

It would be good if we could develop a solid and well-grounded understanding of the role of devotions in Franciscan life.

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## What it is NOT

**3. It is NOT imposing any one person's opinion on the whole group.**

Sometimes one person is so convinced of something that he or she feels she must share this with the whole group and that the whole group just **MUST** follow along. This is not continuing formation.

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## What it is NOT

- 4. It is NOT an opportunity for one group to convert everyone to their particular point of view or cause.**

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## What it is NOT

- 5. It is NOT an opportunity for the Spiritual Assistant to get his/her own agenda accepted.**

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## What it is NOT

### 6. **It is NOT a lecture only.**

Often it is a temptation to teach as we have learned. Research has shown that lecture only does not work with adult learners. Using this form reaches a very small percentage of adults.

As mentioned in the first part, creativity is needed, to use all kinds of methods. You might include small group discussion, film, pictures, power points (!!), etc. etc. Mix them up!

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## What it is NOT

### 7. **It is not chosen by the Spiritual Assistant alone.**

It might be a temptation to forego the discussion of what should be the topic or how it should be presented because the SA “knows so much better.” Avoid this temptation at all costs! It is better to include all and be a voice of guidance.

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## QUESTIONS

**1. How would you describe the success of the continuing education component at the regional fraternity meeting for which you are RM?**

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## QUESTIONS

**2. What would you add to the description of continuing education in a fraternity meeting, based on your experience in fraternity?**

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