



## Residential Agreement and Policies

### Tara Mandala Buddhist Retreat Center

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees.*

This agreement covers policies and conduct related to being a resident at Tara Mandala, a Buddhist Retreat Center in Pagosa Springs, Colorado.

All residents, aside from short term visitors and retreatants (program attendees) must adhere to these policies and sign them as part of their residence at Tara Mandala. The policies and procedures include the following areas:

1. Structure and Key Staff
2. Code of Conduct and Ethics (under separate cover)
3. Practice Requirements and Other Dharma Topics
4. Housing Policy and Procedures
5. Long Term Personal Retreats

There is a separate document for Employment Policies and Practices, and for Community and Communal Life at Tara Mandala, which also provides important information.

### **1. Structure and Key Staff**

Tara Mandala, Inc. was incorporated as a Colorado Nonprofit Corporation in 1994. Tara Mandala is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) religious organization and church. Tara Mandala is led by Spiritual Director Lama Tsultrim Allione and managed by its Board of Trustees who provide overall governance and set policy, work on the strategic and master plans, and implement and follow its bylaws. In order to preserve Tara Mandala's core principle of the strengthening of the feminine voice, the organization commits to always having a majority of women as trustees on the Tara Mandala Board who identify with the feminine and the need for it in the world.

Tara Mandala day-to-day operations are overseen and managed by Executive Director, Joanne Brion, Operations Director, Clifton Carmody and Assistant Spiritual Director, Lopön Chandra Easton. The Executive Council provides support and oversight on key policy and operational issues. Attachment A summarizes the organization of Tara Mandala and staff assignments, by department, and oversight and management roles.

**Tara Mandala®**

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All Tara Mandala staff (onsite and offsite), board members, teachers, and any other person working with or for Tara Mandala are subject to the Code of Conduct and Ethics policy which can be found [here](#).

### **3. Practice Requirements and Other Dharma Topics**

*Adopted June 2019*

When Lama Tsultrim and David Petit founded Tara Mandala over 25 years ago, they envisioned a place for deep retreat and a dedicated practice community. For many years, Lama Tsultrim and David held the community practice up at Prayer Flag Ridge (PFR) at 7am during the warm season for Prajna Paramita (PJP) meditation. This is a quintessential aspect of living at Tara Mandala, one that has touched many deeply. For this reason, Lama Tsultrim would like us to hold consistent daily morning and evening practice. Morning practice is held Prayer Flag Ridge weather permitting, and evening practice is held in the Temple at 5 pm, and includes protector's practice.

Please know that Lama Tsultrim and Lopön Chandra deeply value your presence and practice and we deeply care for your well-being here at Tara Mandala. The intention for the commitment to group practice at Tara Mandala is to help us benefit from this rare jewel of Sangha (community) who is committed to the inner journey, as well as, to being of service in the world.

#### **The Six Paramitas**

Paramita means "perfection." We practice the Six Paramitas in order to cultivate compassion and mindfulness while living and working in community. The Six Paramitas are: Generosity, Ethical Conduct, Patience, Diligence, Concentration, and Wisdom.

#### **Service to the Dharma**

We have the opportunity to become fully dedicated to practice and being of service to the Dharma, seeing all work, regardless of its form or appearance, as opportunities to practice. Service is an opportunity to take Dharma "off the cushion" and into the world.

Personal challenges become an opportunity to turn to wisdom, skillful means, and compassion as methods for transforming our experience.

### **A. Retreat Season**

During Retreat Season,, we ask that residents attend community practice five days per week as a way to foster in-depth practice and community related to Lama Tsultrim's practices and lineage. This creates a deep point of connection and comradery between the community when practicing together before the work day begins or at the end of the day.

We understand that you may have come here from different traditions with your own practices. We are not asking that you give those up. Rather we are asking that if you live on the land as a Tara Mandala Resident, that you support and attend our community practices on a regular basis to help hold the container of deep practice within the lineage offered by Lama Tsultrim.

Of course, in a perfect practice community you would be able and want to come to all practices all the time! But because we all have different needs (practice, work, and personal) and because we live in a less than perfect yet amazingly wonderful community, we have developed these guidelines in the spirit of walking the middle path between the two extremes of "too tight" and "too loose."

- All residents are required to go to at least 5 practices per week, either 7am morning practice or 5pm evening practice. We feel this builds community and supports us living in a spiritual community, and it upholds the container.
- If you would like guidance in organizing your practice schedule, please reach out to the Tulku Osel or your Kalyanamitra<sup>1</sup> to help map out your week.
  - For 7am Prajnaparamita practice: If you do not know PJP yet, you may do Shamatha or Mindfulness meditation on the ridge until you learn PJP.
- Sign in at practice:

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○ Please sign in at practice (sign in sheets will be provided at both 7am

and 5pm practice locations) this is required as a part of living in a religious retreat center, but is not a condition of your employment.

- If you live on the land and do not consistently attend practice (five practices per week), you'll need to check in with Lopön Chandra and Clifton to discuss why you are missing and how to help overcome obstacles.
- If you are sick or unable to attend due to extenuating circumstances, please send an email to the Operations Director.
- Accommodations may be made on a case by case basis in order to take into account health or accessibility limitations.
- If you continue to miss daily practice, we will need to discuss whether or not Tara Mandala is a good place for you to live since this is a key part of living in our practice community. This policy does not affect your employment status at Tara Mandala but may affect your living arrangement.
- Practice Leaders (Umdze, Chöpön, Drummer):
  - If you are a Chöpön (ritual arts), Umdze (chant leader) or drummer for 5 pm practice, Sang, or Naga Pujas this counts for your practice requirement for the days you serve.
- Weather: For 7am practice: When the weather is good, we will practice PJP on Prayer Flag Ridge. When weather does not permit we will practice PJP in the Temple.
- We encourage you to do your own practice at home on days you do not go to community practice or within a different time frame that works with your schedule.

## **B. Off-Season**

**Group Practice:** Practicing together is an important aspect of being part of this spiritual community. During the off-season, the practices that residents are expected to participate in will be made clear. This generally includes a weekly Tsog (feast offering) on Wednesdays at 5 pm and a daily practice between 5 and 6 pm on most weekdays. Other weekly practices may be offered and are optional. As noted above,

residents are asked to attend 5 practices a week, and these may include morning practices such as Sangs or Naga Pujas, etc.

**Community Events:** In the off-season, there are regular and spontaneous community events for which attendance is highly encouraged. Our regularly scheduled events include our annual Losar celebration and Equinox/Solstice events. Other spontaneous events include early morning Sangs, extended practice sessions and other events scheduled by Lama Tsultrim. Other community events are optional (such as parties, dinners, practices organized by members of the community, etc.). If in doubt whether your participation is expected at a specific event, please ask.

## **Other Practice Related Topics**

### *Temple Protocols or Etiquette*

- **Prostrations:** It is a traditional sign of respect to stand when the Lama enters the room and to prostrate three times once the Lama takes her/his seat. However, if you do not feel comfortable prostrating it is not required. If you have physical limitations you can do a half bow with hands in prayer mudra.
- **Feet:** Never point the soles of your feet at statues, the shrine, teacher or others. Traditionally, this is considered bad manners. If leg extension is necessary the feet should be covered.
- **Text Treatment:** Texts are considered sacred. Thus, we handled them with respect, taking care not to place them directly on the floor, sit on them or step over them.
- **Puja Tables:** We do not step over puja tables since they contain texts and other sacred ritual items.
- **Respect Private Signs:** There are private work and living spaces throughout the Temple. Please be aware of any posted signs.
- **Personal Study and Practice:** If a space is not being used for a retreat, you are generally able to practice in that space. When in doubt, check with the Temple Manager. The Library and Lama Lounge on the second floor is normally available for personal use.
- **Speech in Temple:** When in Nirmanakaya or Dharmakaya, refrain from unnecessary chit chat or gossip or trying to resolve any sort of conflict. Remain in a contemplative state if possible and be mindful of your words, and actions.
  - Refrain from speaking loudly in the Temple or having detailed work

- conversations in the two shrine rooms.
- Be aware of other people practicing, both in the room and in the entire Temple.

### *Dana or Generosity and Offerings*

"Dana" is a Pali word that means generosity. Since the time of the Buddha, there has been an interdependency between the teachers of the Dharma and its students. Here at Tara Mandala, the Living Dharma Program participants as a group receive Dana from program retreatants in recognition of their hard work and service to the Dharma. The Dana is divided up and distributed by the Staff Coordinator and Finance Department. When teachers, including Lama Tsultrim give an empowerment, it is appropriate to offer some sort of dana. If you do not have any money, you may offer a flower or other item. These offerings create "tendrils" or connection between you and the teacher and is a sign of respect and gratitude.

Dana from staff and residents is not required for teachings but is welcomed and again creates tendrils.

Khatas (traditional white or colored Tibetan scarves) are also offered with dana, and you may purchase one in the Dakini Store or borrow one from the temple supply. Please return it to the box when finished. When approaching the teacher, offer the dana and then the scarf and the teacher will return it to you over your head.

## **4. Housing Policy and Procedures**

*Adopted 2016; Revised May 2018*

Tara Mandala provides housing for its Residents as a benefit of employment, or for long-term residents (monastics), which ranges from camping sites, shared or private rooms in Prajna, to shared or private yurts and small cabins. All Residents are guaranteed a site for camping, at a minimum, and may be considered for other housing options as they become available.

Tara Mandala Housing (cabins, yurts, Prajna Hall, etc.) is reserved for employees, long term residents, and program participants only. You acknowledge and agree that your right to use Tara Mandala as a dwelling during your employment creates a licensor-licensee relationship between you and Tara Mandala. You further agree and acknowledge that your use of Tara Mandala housing does not create any landlord-tenant relationship between you and Tara Mandala. As a condition of your employment, you must comply with Tara Mandala's Housing Policy, Code of Conduct and Ethics, and the Residential Agreement.

The Executive Committee and Board reserve the right to hold certain housing options to attract senior level staff on an as needed basis. In general however, when housing becomes available, a notice will be sent to Residents and they may apply using the process described below.

### **Housing Application Process:**

- Unless otherwise specified or previously agreed to, an announcement will be made to the community (via email and at the community meeting) when a new housing option becomes available;
- Applicants may submit an application via email or in-person to the Executive Director;
- The application will be reviewed by the then-current leadership team; in case one of the above reviewers is an interested party, such party will rescue him or herself from the review.

### **Housing Application:**

Tara Mandala maintains the right to evaluate housing based first and foremost upon business needs. The following are factors for consideration: **(in no particular order of importance):**

- **Seniority:** amount of time spent living on the land and/or working for Tara Mandala;
- **Commitment:** amount of time applicant has committed to living on the land and/or working for Tara Mandala;
- **Job Duties:** duties the applicant performs and how these may affect applicant's need for such housing;
- **Job Performance:** the consistency with which Resident meets or exceeds job and community expectations;
- **Other:** other factors such as personal needs, including, but not limited to: whether the applicant has a partner, roommate, family; location of housing and applicant's ability to live in such housing

### **Changes to Current Housing**

In rare circumstances Tara Mandala may require Residents to move from their current housing situation to another option. If changes are required due to the needs of Tara

Mandala and its community, Residents will be given notice of any change. In the case where changes to current housing are necessary due to such needs, the process will be: the Executive Director first will contact the Resident whose housing is being affected. Then the Executive Director will hold a community meeting to announce the request for change, the reason for the request and collect Resident feedback. The Executive Director will then contact the HR Committee of the Tara Mandala Board of Trustees, requesting such change in writing and include the reasons for such request along with written feedback from the Resident meeting. Residents, including the Resident whose housing is affected, may also submit individual responses to the HR Committee.

The HR Committee will consider, vote and may approve or deny such request. In the case that a request for change is approved, the Executive Director will notify the Resident of such change and work with the Resident to find another housing option. Generally it will be the intention to allow the Resident whose housing is affected thirty (30) days to move to another housing option.

## **5. Long Term Personal Retreats**

Each year, residents normally do a 2-week Losar Personal Retreat on the land. This retreat occurs two weeks before the Tibetan New Year or Losar. Each resident meets with Lama Tsultrim to determine their individual practice schedule for the retreat. Residents may request additional time off to do extended retreat before or after this 2-week retreat. Approval of this request must come from your supervisor or manager, and have Lama Tsultrim's blessing.

Request for use of one of Tara Mandala's retreat cabins, requires payment by the resident for use of the cabin. Costanzo's cabin may be used by residents at a discounted rate. Residents are required to pay for their food during personal retreats, beyond the 2-week Losar retreat and participate in normal protocols for retreatant care.

Extended long personal retreats by residents need to be made several months in advance so Tara Mandala can ensure your duties and responsibilities are covered during your retreat.

### **Tara Mandala Solitary Retreat Policy**

Tara Mandala would like to support people living in the community reach their personal goals in practice. At times Lama Tsultrim may ask community members to go into solitary retreat, extend their Losar retreat, or community members may request to



enter into solitary retreat.

This policy outlines how these decisions are made.

**Solitary Retreat Application Process:**

- Applicants may submit an application via email or in-person to the Executive Director;
- The application will be reviewed by the Executive Director, Director of Operations, and the Spiritual or Assistant Spiritual Director.

**Solitary Retreat Application:**

Tara Mandala maintains the right to evaluate solitary retreat applications based first and foremost upon business need. The following are factors for consideration: (in no particular order):

- **Seniority:** amount of time spent living on the land at Tara Mandala;
- **Commitment:** amount of time applicant has committed to living on the land at Tara Mandala
- **Spiritual Goals and Role:** duties the applicant performs and how these may affect applicant's need for such solitary retreat experience
- **Practice Performance:** the consistency with which Resident meets or exceeds practice and community expectations
- **Work Performance:** showing consistent high-quality work and meeting your work deadlines

**6. Acknowledgement and Signature**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read this Residential Agreement, and agree to the policies stated above and to follow these rules and requirements while a resident at Tara Mandala.

Resident: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_