



## Residential Agreement and Policies

### Tara Mandala Buddhist Retreat Center

*Effective as of April 2025*

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 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, Communication Agreement, and Leadership Values
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 was founded by Lama Tsultrim Allione in 1994. It is strategically guided by the Board of Trustees who provide overall governance and set policy, work on the strategic and master plans, and implement and follow its bylaws. Spiritual direction is provided by the Prajna Council. Overall operations and staff are managed by the CEO/Executive Director.

Tara Mandala's day-to-day operations are overseen and managed by the following management staff and committees:

**Executive Director.** The Retreat Center is overseen by the Executive Director and Retreat Center Director. The Executive Director reports to the Board of Trustees.

**The Executive Council (EC) aka "Upaya Council,"** supports the Executive Director on key policy and operational issues. The EC is currently composed of the President of the board, a Dorje Lopön, the Executive Director, the Dorje Gyaltsab, and another board member or senior teacher.

**The EDI Council** oversees the operational implementation of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for Tara Mandala programs, and policies. Members include Teachers, Sangha leaders, and Sangha members at large who are invited to participate on the Council.

**The Prajna Council** is comprised of the Spiritual Director, Dorje Lopöns, and Dorje Gyaltsab who oversee the Programmatic and Spiritual Direction of Tara Mandala. The role of the Prajna Council is to oversee the Wisdom Streams/Lineage Programs, Tara Mandala's dharma offerings, and to guide Program strategy, planning, and scheduling. The Prajna Council oversee the progress and development of the Teacher Training program.

## **2. Code of Conduct, Communication Agreement and Leadership Values**

The Code of Conduct establishes principles all individuals working and participating with Tara Mandala are expected to honor in the performance of their work, whether they are staff, residents, contractors, teachers, living dharma program participants, volunteers or members of the board (defined as "staff members" herein) or are participants in Tara Mandala programs onsite, offsite and online.

Tara Mandala is a non-profit 501c3, Buddhist organization whose mission is to benefit all beings through teachings leading to the development of wisdom and compassion. The Code of Conduct is based on the five precepts and the 10 virtuous and 10 non-virtuous actions common in Buddhism.

The Five Precepts:

1. *To abstain from taking life, to care for and protect all living beings, our mothers.*
2. *To abstain from taking what is not given, to respect the property and boundaries of others.*
3. *To abstain from false speech, to tell the truth with compassion.*
4. *To abstain from sexual misconduct: refraining from breaking the sexual boundaries of your own or others committed relationships.*
5. *To abstain from intoxicants which tend to cloud the mind, cause harm, and lead to breaking the other precepts.*

The Ten Non-virtuous Actions, the Ten Virtuous Actions, and the Karmic Results:

1. *By avoiding killing and harming others, and by protecting life, we will gain a long life and good health.*
2. *By avoiding stealing and practicing generosity, we will have wealth, not be bothered by thieves, and have a strong body.*
3. *By maintaining pure sexual conduct, we will have a good faithful partner and few enemies.*

4. *By avoiding lying and speaking sincerely and directly, we will be appreciated and our words will be respected by everyone.*
5. *By avoiding slander and being a peacemaker, we will have good disciples and respectful employees.*
6. *By avoiding harsh words and talking calmly, amiably and gently, we will hear positive words.*
7. *By avoiding useless talk and gossip and talking about meaningful wholesome things, our words will be listened to respectfully.*
8. *By avoiding greed and cultivating an open and generous attitude, our aspirations will be realized.*
9. *By avoiding negative covetous thoughts and by cultivating love and goodwill, we will be free of fear and harm.*
10. *By avoiding wrong view, and by cultivating right view and practicing it, we will have a direct experience of reality.*

As staff members of Tara Mandala, we do our work ethically and to the best of our ability in order to honor the mission of Tara Mandala, add value to our community, and preserve our reputation of trustworthiness.

We are dedicated to creating an inclusive, considerate, respectful work and living environment in our communications and dealings with staff members, fellow residents and Tara Mandala participants. We commit to behaving in a professional and ethical manner, and to turn differences into strengths. We find richness in diversity and view differing perspectives as valuable contributions to problem solving and generating new ideas. We also hold the view that differing perspectives are not wrong and that conflicts can lead to new awareness, understanding and growth. At Tara Mandala, we see all that arises as the path to awakening.

The basic principles and values of Tara Mandala are set forth in the Code of Conduct (Attachment A), the Culturally Inclusive Communication Agreement (Attachment B) and Leadership Values (Attachment C). Any violation of these codes and agreements could result in termination of your employment or discontinuation of your membership with Tara Mandala.

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

*Adopted June 2019, Updated April 2025*

When Lama Tsultrim and David Petit founded Tara Mandala 30 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 7 am during the warm season for Prajna Paramita (PJP) meditation. This is a quintessential aspect of living at Tara Mandala, one that has touched many people deeply. For this reason, Lama Tsultrim would like us to hold consistent daily morning and evening practice. Morning practice is held at 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 values your presence at 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**

We practice the Six Paramitas in order to cultivate compassion and mindfulness while living and working in community. Paramita means "perfection." 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**

From May to September every year, we ask that residents attend community practice at least five times per week as a way to foster depth practice and community related to Lama Tsultrim's practices and lineage. This creates a deep point of connection and camaraderie 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 to Tara Mandala 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 depth 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, personal) and because we live in perfectly imperfect and amazingly wonderful community, we have developed these guidelines in the spirit of walking the middle path between the two extremes of not "too tight" and not "too loose."

- All residents are required to go to at least **5 practices per week**, either 7 am

morning practice or 5 pm evening practice. We feel this builds communal bonds and supports us living in a spiritual community, and it upholds the container (the sacred space—both literal and metaphorical—that holds and supports spiritual work).

- If you would like guidance organizing your practice schedule, please reach out to Tulku Ösel Dorje or your Kalyanamitra (spiritual friend) to help map out your week.
  - For 7 am Prajnaparamita practice: If you do not know this practice yet, you may do Shamatha or Mindfulness meditation on the ridge until you learn Prajna Paramita from Lama Tsultrim or one of the Dorje Lopöns.
- Sign in at practice:
  - Please sign the practice sign in sheets (sign in sheets are in the kitchen hanging near the staff lockers) 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 the Retreat Center Director 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 a text to Tenzin our Temple Manager.
- Accommodations may be made on a case by case basis 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.
- 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 7 am 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 and Naga pujas. 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 and abide by 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 (the 2 shrine rooms), 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 staff and volunteers 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 Retreat Center Director 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 "tendrel" or auspicious 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 tendrel.

Khatas (traditional white or colored Tibetan scarves) are also traditionally 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 on their table (money is considered unclean and therefore we don't offer it directly to the teacher's hands, but place it on their table) and then the scarf. While bowing, the teacher will return the scarf to you over your head.

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

*Adopted 2016; Revised May 2018; Revised March 2025*

Tara Mandala provides housing for its Residents which ranges from camping tent sites, shared or private rooms in Prajna, to shared or private yurts and small cabins. All Residents are guaranteed a tent site for camping (Tara Mandala provides sturdy "glamping" tent and raised cot), at a minimum, and may be considered for other housing options as they become available. The HR 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 Residential 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 current leadership team; in case one of the above reviewers is an interested party, such party will recuse themselves from the review.

### **Housing Application:**

Tara Mandala maintains the right to evaluate housing based first and foremost upon business need. 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.

### **Staff Housing Guidelines**

As a resident of Tara Mandala, it's important to take care of your assigned housing during your stay. Please follow these guidelines to ensure a smooth and respectful experience for everyone:

- **Report Maintenance Issues:** Notify the Land and Facilities Manager of any needed repairs as soon as possible during your stay, and before you move out.

- **Clear Out Personal Belongings:** When moving out, make sure to remove **all** of your personal items from the residence.
- **Final Walk-Through:** At the end of the retreat season, the Retreat Center Director or Personnel Manager will conduct a final walk-through with you using a housing checklist.
- **Leave It Better Than You Found It:** Please leave your housing clean and in even better condition than when you arrived.

Thank you for helping maintain a beautiful and respectful living environment at Tara Mandala!

### **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 or Tulku Ösel Dorje 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 or Tulku Ösel's blessing.

Request for use of one of Tara Mandala's retreat cabins can be made as part of using Staff Benefits. If the request is a longer amount of time than what it allotted in the Staff Benefits, this requires payment by the resident for use of the cabin. Tulku Ösel's cabin may be used by residents at a discounted rate per Tara Mandala's current Staff Benefits and based on availability. 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 or Tulku Ösel 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 Executive Director, Retreat Center Director and the Dorje Gyaltsab.

**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:** work-related duties the applicant performs and how these may impact an applicant's need for solitary retreat experience;
- **Practice Performance:** the consistency with which the Resident meets or exceeds practice and community expectations;
- **Work Performance:** showing consistent high-quality work and meeting your work deadlines.

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attachment A**

[TM Code of Conduct and Ethics \(2025\) - ACCEPTED.pdf](#)

**Attachment B**

[UPDATED Communication Agreement 3.4.25.pdf](#)

**Attachment C**

[UPDATED Tara Mandala Leadership Values 03.10.25.pdf](#)