

ZCLA PROTOCOL FOR FORMER INMATES
By Many Hands and Eyes-Prison Circle (MHAE-PC)

FINAL Approved draft by ZCLA Board, January 5, 2010

This proposal outlines the entry process into ZCLA for former prisoners, who are interested in practicing at ZCLA. These persons will already be known to the Angulimala Prison Project volunteers, although it is possible that people who do not come through the APP will apply.

1. After a former prisoner has been out of prison for one year* and has verifiable proof of clean and stabilized living, the person may apply to practice at ZCLA. Examples of verifiable proof of clean and stabilized living may include (but are not limited to):
 - a. Having a place to live and a history of good landlord/tenant relations.
 - b. Having a source of income and no unreasonable debt.
 - c. Being free of substance abuse.
 - d. Meeting the terms of probation.
2. The application forms will be available through the ZCLA office. It is the applicant's responsibility to pick up and fill out the application, although a member of the Angulimala Prison Project, or other point person, may facilitate the process. The application fee is \$30 or such other amount as may be set by the Zen Center of Los Angeles.
3. The completed application is submitted to the MHAE-PC, which assigns one of their members to review the application and fact check the application's content. The checking will include a standard criminal background check by a certified agency.
4. Upon completion of fact checking, the application is reviewed by the MHAE-PC and by the Teachers Circle. If the fact checking shows that the application is substantially correct and complete, then the process continues with the following steps. If not, the process stops here, with a written explanation to the applicant.'
5. The applicant is invited to an interview. The interview team will be comprised of three persons, from the Teachers Circle and MHAE-PC.
6. At this juncture, one of two outcomes may unfold: a favorable interview or an unfavorable interview. In either case, a written response will be given to the applicant.
 - a. If the interview is favorable, the MHAE-PC will draw up a recommendation. The points of the recommendation will include the following:

- i. The length of a probationary period (normally one year) and the schedule of the review process. The review process will be carried out by the initial interview group as set out in point 5 above. (Upon successful completion of the probationary period, the person may apply for ZCLA membership.)
 - ii. Whether there will be any restrictions to the applicant's access to the Center.
 - iii. The name of the recommended dharma buddy, who will provide orientation to ZCLA and help facilitate the applicant's integration into the Zen Center. (The criteria and guiding questions for a dharma buddy are set forth in a separate document.)
 - iv. The frequency of the applicant's meeting with the dharma buddy.
 - v. Whether the applicant's background needs to be disclosed and to whom.
 - b. If the interview is not favorable, a MHAE-PC representative will communicate the feedback to the applicant. This feedback will include what the Zen Center would like to see happen before the application can go forward.
7. If a favorable recommendation is made, the recommendation is forwarded to the Abbot (or Abbot Seat Holder) and the applicant will then have an interview with the Abbot.
8. If the Abbot (or Abbot Seat Holder) approves, then the recommendation goes to the Board of Directors, which is responsible for all legal issues on behalf of Zen Center.
9. If the Board of Directors approves of the recommendation and the Abbot (or Abbot Seat Holder) is in agreement, the applicant is approved for practice at ZCLA under the conditions specified in the recommendation. The dharma buddy will initiate the contact with the applicant and the MHAE-PC will oversee the probationary period. (Note: The Abbot or Abbot Seat Holder will have final approval of a candidate's application and the specific terms of each applicant's agreement with the Center.)
10. This protocol may be amended as needed. The MHAE-PC will oversee amendments to this protocol. The amendments will be reviewed and approved by the Abbot (or Abbot Seat Holder) and Board.

* In rare cases, petitions to modify the one-year application requirement may be considered.