



## **ISSUES MEDIATION COMMITTEE (IMC)**

### **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL - Revised 2021**

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#### **Mission**

##### **Section 1**

The Issues Mediation Committee facilitates dispute mediation for Voting Entities, Intergroups, and other CoDA entities as needed. Decisions at all levels of CoDA are made with the guidance of our Higher Power as expressed through the group conscience. As stated in Tradition One: "Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends upon CoDA Unity." and Tradition Two: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving Higher Power as expressed to our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Thus, as with all our recovery, group conscience is about putting aside the "self" and looking to Higher Power for guidance.

In addition, the Issues Mediation Committee:

- Through the group conscience process, will handle requests to recognize Voting Entity delegate's election process.
- Handles requests from Voting Entities to divide into two or more entities.
- Tracks and reports the status of Voting Entity issues.
- Processes and qualifies VE applicants for Delegate Grant(s) (Formerly known as Travel Reimbursement Opportunity (TRO)).
- Informs and awards Delegate Grant(s) for incoming eligible Voting Entity delegates.

## **Purpose of Policies and Procedures**

### **Section 2**

This manual standardizes and provides the Issues Mediation Committee (IMC) and CoDA, Inc. with internal operating procedures and practices (guidelines).

This Policies and Procedures Manual is a living document meant to be revised as needed by the Group Conscience of the existing IMC members.

## **Committee History**

### **Section 3**

- **1990** National Service Conference (NSC, the name at the time of the CoDA Service Conference (CSC)) adopted guidelines for concerns or issues in CoDA groups.
- **1992** Delegate Relations Committee (DRC) became a standing committee to resolve non-agenda issues that appeared at the CoDA Service Conference (CSC) that year.
- **1998** Delegate Relations Committee (DRC) evolved into the Issues Mediation Committee (IMC).
- **2003** The "Disagreement, Mediation, and Resolution in Our Group Conscience Process," was added to Section 2 of the CoDA Fellowship Service Manual (FSM).
- **2008** Issues Mediation Committee (IMC) was given the task of tracking the status of Voting Entity Issues (VEI).

- **2011** Issues Mediation Committee (IMC) played a significant role in resolving a violation(s) with CoDA's 12 Traditions and 12 Service Concepts threatening CoDA unity.
- **2013** Issues Mediation Committee (IMC) presented a simplified process which is called "Dealing with Disagreements" which is posted on the CoDA.org website.
- **2014** Issues Mediation Committee (IMC) created "IMC Disagreement Resolution Process" providing procedures before, during and after a mediation process.
- **2015** CSC:
  - \* Voting Entity Liaison (VEL) position was created at the CoDA Service Conference (CSC) to work with Voting Entities, Delegates, the Board Secretary, the Events and Finance Committees through the group conscience decision making process with the IMC.
  - \* The Issues Mediation Committee (IMC) was assigned to handle any requests for CoDA to recognize Voting Entities and CoDA Service Conference (CSC) delegates.
- **2015** "Guidelines for the Development and Structure of Intergroup and Voting Entities" was created.
- **2020** TROs (Travel Reimbursement Opportunities) were renamed Delegate Grants.

## **Committee Responsibilities**

### **Section 4**

#### **Duties and Responsibilities of a Committee Member**

##### **1) Members continually strengthen their in-depth knowledge the:**

- (A) Issues Mediation Committee (IMC) Policies and Procedures Manual;
- (B) CoDA's Fellowship Service Manual (FSM);
- (C) CoDA Bylaws.

##### **2) Participates in:**

- (A) Attends scheduled meetings, following the guidelines in FSM Part 5 regarding member meeting attendance.
- (B) Administrative duties as needed (e.g., taking meeting minutes, writing the QSR, etc.)
- (C) Disagreement response teams.
- (D) Writing motions.

- (E) Committee recruiting efforts
- (F) Practices in all of their affairs, the CoDA:
  - i) Twelve Steps
  - ii) Twelve Traditions
  - iii) Twelve Service Concepts
  - iv) Dealing with Disagreements
  - v) IMC Policies and Procedures Manual.
- (G) Avoids whenever possible, occasions which might result in recusal from specific mediation issues/cases.
- (H) Is prudent with any financial costs that could be incurred by the Fellowship.
- (I) Notifies committee as soon as practical when they will be absent from any scheduled meeting(s).
- (J) Reviews and responds to committee communications to the best of their abilities within 48 hours
- (K) Utilizes [imc@coda.org](mailto:imc@coda.org) for email communications. Always email carbon copy (CC) to this email account for archival records.
- (L) Maintain a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for common repetitive email responses that are sent out to the fellowship.
- (M) Handles requests from CoDA's Fellowship recognizing Voting Entities.
- (N) Ensures that the Voting Entity Issues (VEI's) are tracked.
- (O) If approached directly about an issue from the Fellowship, direct them to send email to [IMC@CoDA.org](mailto:IMC@CoDA.org).

### **3) Chair:**

- A) Acknowledge all incoming communication with a response, whenever possible within 48 hours, including BCC to [imc@coda.org](mailto:imc@coda.org) for tracking purposes. Include links from the Fellowship Service Manual (FSM) to "Dealing with Disagreements" & "Meeting Handbook" (FSM Part 2), plus any other material that might be of benefit at the time of initial request.
- B) Email response for "clarification" of the situation may be sent by the chair. With clarification, the requestor may need to be referred to a different committee or board. In addition, clarification will assist with any subsequent IMC Group Conscious (GC) on how to officially respond or proceed with the request.

- C) Maintain and guide the focus of the Committee's duties based on our Policies and Procedures and the Fellowship Service Manual and Bylaws.
- D) Coordinates, facilitates, and prepares the agenda for the monthly teleconference meeting.
- E) Submits a public version of approved meeting minutes for posting on coda.org website. Full minutes, including all confidential mediation details are maintained in IMC private files.
- F) Attends monthly Chairs Forum or assigns alternate to attend when chair is not available. An alternate may attend meeting(s) with no voice, upon approval of the Chairs Forum.
- G) Provides Web Liaison with necessary email addresses for alias and gives committee members a list of IMC members with pertinent information. Updates any changes as necessary.
- H) Initiates Quarterly Service Report (QSR) which includes asking for volunteer(s) to assist/create. QSR to be submitted to full committee for input and group conscious approval a minimum of 1 week prior to submission deadline.
- I) Entertains and maintains list of possible motions for the upcoming CoDA Service Conference (CSC), based on observations from IMC related issues throughout the year. Collaborates with board or other committees as needed to sponsor or co-sponsor motion(s).
- J) Participates with any committee recruiting efforts and/or Board/Chair events
- K) Maintains contact information for the Issues Mediation Committee (IMC) Board Liaison(s) and Finance Committee Liaison(s).
- L) In preparation for CoDA Service Conference (CSC):
  - i) Prepares and submits IMC budget for following year.
  - ii) Guides committee in developing Annual CSC Committee report, Goals & Objectives.
  - iii) Presents Committee report at CSC.
- M) Ensures budget constraints are met.

**4) VEL (Voting Entity Liaison):**

- A) Voting Entity Liaison (VEL) is a neutral party and may collaborate as needed in specific issues/mediations.
- B) Vets VE delegates on behalf of their Voting Entity (VE) for:

- i) Confirmation as a Delegate for CSC and/or
  - ii) Consideration for receiving a possible Delegate Grant to the Voting Entity (VE).
- C) Tracks history of Delegate and Host Grants awarded on the SmartSheet web-based program
- D) Serves as a liaison between the Board Secretary and Voting Entities:
  - i) Confirmation of the vetted CSC delegates
  - ii) Voting Entity contact list information via SmartSheet.
- E) Maintains a list of VE structure contacts.

### **RECUSAL (Removal from process/participation to avoid a conflict of interest)**

#### **Authority to institute recusal:**

- 1) The committee shall have authority to institute recusal by group conscience decision.
- 2) The committee shall inform the member of the recusal without indicating the reason for the recusal but providing the query or case code, due to our obligation of confidentiality.
- 3) Recusal can take place at any time that reasons for recusal become evident.

#### **Reasons for recusal:**

- 1) Direct involvement, currently or in the past, by the member as a party to the disagreement.
- 2) A close relationship with any party to the disagreement.
- 3) Request by a member to recuse him/herself.
- 4) Request by either party to the disagreement that a particular member be recused.

#### **Effects of recusal:**

- 1) All communications about the matter, except the use of the code for scheduling, shall take place through means that are not accessible by the recused member.
- 2) Emails referencing the substance of the matter shall be exchanged using personal addresses and not the committee alias or group email address.
- 3) Documentation shall not be shared with the recused member.
- 4) This will require not including the documentation in any folder that is shared with the recused member.

- 5) Discussion of the case shall take place in the absence of the recused member.

**Reversal of recusal:**

- 1) Group Conscience decision may reverse all or parts of the effects of recusal.
- 2) Members who have requested self-recusal may later submit a request for reversal of recusal.

**IMC Disagreement Initial Process**

**Section 5**

**Inquiry Response Process:**

- 1) No action is taken by IMC without a written request first for assistance.
- 2) Acknowledgement letter sent by Chair within 48 hours if possible:
  - A) Ask if “Dealing with Disagreements” has been followed by initiator.
  - B) Include a copy of “Dealing with Disagreement” diagram.
  - C) Answer any questions presented, as best as you can.
  - D) Use standard response email (asking who, what, when, where etc.)
    - a) Once preliminary information is received, IMC Chair assigns a response team of at least two members which may include the chair.
    - b) Recusal of members, if needed. (See Recusal Process in this P&P)
  - E) The response team sends an introductory email to the initiator. In order to “be available” to those seeking our help, there may not always be a set approach to dealing with requests. Response team may also use direct communication by phone.
    - a) Ask for a copy of any documentation that may assist IMC.
    - b) Gather contact information for all parties concerned.
      - i) Ask 1st and 2nd party (separately) what their perspectives are on the issues/disputes (open-ended questions).
  - F) Continue dialogue with initiator, using the “**Dealing with Disagreement**” diagram.
    - a) No further action until a response is received. If there is no response within six weeks, a follow up email composed by

the response team is sent with an indication that we remain ready to assist.

- 3) If there is any question about proceeding to the Mediation Process, the response group will consult with IMC for further determination.

**Guidelines for the gathering and documentation of facts and relevant information:**

- 1) Obtain from parties to the disagreement and document external facts, documentation, emails, names.
- 2) Contact all relevant individuals in disagreement (from both parties).
- 3) Maintain documentation of all steps in the process for report and conclusions/recommendations.
- 4) Ask WHO; WHAT; WHERE; WHEN; HOW (Facts); Keep confidential.
- 5) Have at least 2 response team members during any teleconference call.
- 6) Response team members do not discuss dispute cases outside of the committee.
- 7) Ask for any relevant documentation from the interviewee.

**General mediation concepts:**

- 1) Listening is essential for IMC work.
- 2) Adhere to strict confidentiality and anonymity.
- 3) Seek to understand all parties' concerns, wants and needs.
- 4) All substantive communications are to be documented.
- 5) Response team members work on the basis of their Group Conscience.
- 6) When possible, at least two response team members are to be on every phone call.
- 7) Response team facilitates information between the two parties until the parties are prepared to communicate with each other.
- 8) End each communication with an inquiry about how the parties are experiencing the process.
- 9) Always allow for questions from participants.
- 10) Remain objective and open-minded; following CoDA Traditions and policies.
- 11) Stay positive right away, acknowledge how hard this might be and thank both parties for their willingness to participate in the mediation process.



- 12) Allow dispute parties to be a major part of the mediation process; part of their own solution. Show mutual respect; remain non-judgmental; try to adopt the interviewee's frame of reference.
- 13) Try to focus our intention on connecting with the underlying feelings and needs of the parties, or the situation.
- 14) Perform a tenth step before and after any interview.  
"Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it".

#### **IMC Internal Discussion:**

- 1) Discuss additional facts of disagreement.
- 2) What is the real problem between two parties?
- 3) What Traditions, Service Concepts, FSM policies were violated?
- 4) Perceived threat to CoDA unity. An example might be apparent or flagrant violations of CoDA principles such as within CoDA meetings, breaking confidentiality, anonymity etc.
- 5) Group Conscience vote taken regarding the disposition of the investigation.
- 6) IMC decides to investigate, refer to Section 5
  - A) IMC determines that the issue(s) has become moot.
  - B) IMC, after investigation, decides not to move forward with the case and retains documentation.
  - C) Refusal by one or more key parties to participate in IMC mediation process.
  - D) IMC decides to defer case to Board or CSC in accord with FSM.

### **IMC Mediation Case Process**

#### **Section 6**

When an issue/concern is escalated to a case and IMC believes CoDA Principles have not been followed:

- 1) IMC assigns a mediation team:**
  - A) Team reports evolving status to IMC.
- 2) Create file in IMC OneDrive:**
  - A) Assign a code to the file:
    - a) First four numbers for the year,
    - b) Followed by a dash,

- c) Followed by the number in sequence of the cases for that year,
  - d) Followed by location identifiers based on time zones, “p,m,c,e” going west to east and “i” for international
  - e) In parentheses (name of VE).
- B) File to include “Mediation Tracking spreadsheet” (Exhibit 10.1) for along with any documentation and correspondence.

### 3) Mediation Steps:

#### A) Initiator Step:

- a) Send **Case Acceptance Form Letter - Initiator** (Exhibit 8.2) inviting a written response.
- b) If no response within 2 weeks, send **“No Reply” Form Letter** (Exhibit 8.3) acknowledging the fact that IMC has not received a response.
  - i) Close case after two weeks if no response to **“No Reply” Form Letter**.

#### B) Respondent Step:

- a) When initiator response is received:
  - i) Send a **Case Acceptance Form Letter - Respondent** (Exhibit 8.4) to the other Party(s), outlining disagreement, describing the process and inviting a reply.
    - 1) If no response within 2 weeks, send **“No Reply” Form Letter** (Exhibit 8.3) acknowledging the fact that IMC has not received a response.
    - 2) If no response to **“No Reply” Form Letter**.
    - 3) Report to initiator inability to bring matter to mediation. Discuss options, including taking the matter to the CoDA Board.
  - ii) Set up a meeting with respondent party(s) to discuss matters of concern.
    - 1) If the matter is resolved with that meeting, report back to the Initiator.
    - 2) If matter is not resolved: Go to Mediation Step

#### C) Mediation Step: Set up a meeting with all parties to discuss.

Let's all parties know that:

- a) IMC keeps disagreements and all information about them confidential.
- b) IMC is the mediator, and we ask that both disputing parties communicate through the IMC & support our confidentiality policy.
- c) State that the interview is being recorded after the recording begins. And identify dates and parties on the recording.

D) Mediation meeting format and structure:

- a) Start all meetings and interviews with the Serenity Prayer.
- b) Request permission to record conversations explaining that the purpose is to avoid misunderstandings and that the recordings will be destroyed after the case is closed. (If they refuse, we do not record).
- c) State that the interview is being recorded after the recording begins. And identify dates and parties on the recording.
- d) Ask for Higher Power's help.
- e) Stay positive right away, acknowledge how hard this might be and thank all parties for their willingness to participate in this mediation process.
- f) Avoid speculation and hearsay.
- g) Ask open-ended questions and allow them to share their respective version of event(s) and/or concern(s).
- h) Ask more specific questions if needed for clarification, trying to focus on the process. This includes asking "what, how, who, when and where" questions, especially about their efforts at solving the problem themselves.
- i) Ask each party what they think is the best solution for CoDA's Fellowship.  
Talk to each party about their experience during the process as it pertains to CoDA's principles and policies.
- j) Discuss possible solutions.
- k) Make sure each party understands what the other party sees as an acceptable resolution keeping in mind CoDA's 12 Traditions and Principles.

- l) Parties do not have to accept and/or follow any mediator's behavioral recommendation.
- m) Define the plan of action for the next step, which may include subsequent meeting(s).
- n) End with Serenity Prayer
- o) Create and send off an email of "thanks" to the interviewee each time for their participation.

#### **4) Mediation Case Resolution:**

Indications for closing a Mediation Case:

- 1) Any party refusing to participate in mediation OR
- 2) No response to a communication by either party within 3 months OR
- 3) Both parties indicate desire to end mediation process OR
- 4) Parties come to resolution between themselves.

#### **5) Procedure when closing a Mediation Case.**

- 1) Send letters to all parties indicating closure of the case and thanking them for participation in the mediation process.
- 2) Anonymous brief status report included in the next Quarterly Service Report (QSR).
- 3) Response team updates the "Mediation Tracking form" (Exhibit 10.1):
  - A) Summary page.
  - B) History of disagreement and steps taken.
  - C) Any Violations of CoDA Principles.
  - D) Conclusions & (Consequences, if they apply).
  - E) Description of Procedures.

### **Voting Entity Split Process Section 7**

#### ***Reference Section 2 in Bylaws as of 9-12-2019***

Any Voting Entity may surrender its two (2) Delegates and request to subdivide. The governing principle is that a member of the Fellowship will only be represented by one set of two (2) Delegates. An entity may request sub-divisions for reasons of geographical separation, language, or other recognizable characteristics. Each entity may request that it be split along an internally agreed

upon division and each sub-division of the entity granted two (2) Delegates. Each sub-division should have enough members and meetings to support a viable service group so that all meetings are still represented.

The Issues Mediation Committee will handle requests for CoDA to recognize Voting Entities. Through the group conscience process, Voting Entities select Delegates and Alternate Delegates to carry the will of the membership of CoDA, Inc. meetings. In order to guarantee voting rights, each Voting Entity service board must be duly authorized by the Issues Mediation Committee. In the absence of a Voting Entity service board, members of that Entity shall present an alternative selection process based on group conscience decision making to the Issues Mediation Committee. This procedure ensures adherence to the program of recovery endorsed by this Fellowship.

***Reference Part 5, page 13 in Fellowship Service Manual (FSM)***

#### **Voting Entity Division Process:**

The By-Laws (Section 2) authorizes a VE to sub-divide; explains the logic and assigns IMC to oversee and approve the division. It also gives some guidance for the VE and IMC. After the division, both VEs will have two delegates. The Process of Dividing a VE may arise for any of many reasons.

The IMC recommends the following issues and process be considered.

- 1) Make sure a division will solve some problem or issue with representation of the membership.
- 2) Consider geographical boundaries.
- 3) Consider division by Language.
- 4) Consider city, county, parish, and state boundaries.
- 5) The division should be agreed upon by both new VE's.
- 6) All meetings from the current VE should be included in one of the new VE's.

Please contact the IMC [imc@coda.org](mailto:imc@coda.org) for an application, VE division requirements and deadline for submission.

## **Voting Entity Issue Tracking Process**

### **Section 8**

**Voting Entity Issues (VEIs)** are those issues that are formed as a result of a group conscience process at the Voting Entity level. They are submitted to [VEI@coda.org](mailto:VEI@coda.org) on Motion/VEI form. They are usually assigned either to the Board or to a Committee for further action

- 1) The board either takes on VEIs or assigns VEIs to appropriate World committee.
- 2) Issues Mediation Committee (IMC) tracks the Voting Entity Issues.
  - A) Obtain copies of the submitted Voting Entity Issue(s) and notes if the board assigned to themselves or which world standing committee.
  - B) Update the "Voting Entity Issue (VEI) Tracking Spreadsheet"
- 3) Monitor QSR's of assigned committees for reports on progress.
- 4) If progress is not reported in the committee QSR, contact the committee requesting information on progress. *(This will function as a reminder to the committee.)*
- 5) Continue this process until final resolution is reported by the committee or accomplished at CoDA Service Conference (CSC).
- 6) Request reasoning for final determination regarding any decline to the Voting Entity's request if not reported by committee.
- 7) Update "Voting Entity Issue (VEI) Tracking Spreadsheet" with final resolution and the reason for it.
- 8) Include report of progress on Voting Entity Issue resolution in IMC Quarterly Service Reports (QSR) and annual report to Conference.

## **Group Conscience**

### **Section 9**

This Operations Manual was accepted by the following Group Conscience procedures (GC) and shall constitute Group Conscience procedures for IMC.

#### **GROUP CONSCIENCE PROCEDURE VIA EMAIL:**

- 1) Any member of the committee may call for a GC at any time about any topic.

- 2) The initiating member is urged to introduce/explain subject matter via email when proposing a GC.
- 3) "GC" is to be in caps in the title if sent by email
- 4) A specifically worded proposal is to be presented.
- 5) A deadline for voting is proposed.
- 6) The person calling the GC is to keep track of the votes and announce the results.

**EXHIBITS (See IMC OneDrive Account):**

1. **Exhibit 8.1** - Initial Reply Form Letter
2. **Exhibit 8.2** - Case Acceptance Form Letter - Initiator
3. **Exhibit 8.3** - "No reply" Case Form Letter
4. **Exhibit 8.4** - Case Acceptance Form Letter – Respondent
5. **Exhibit 9.1** - CoDA IMC Voting Entity Liaison Volunteer Position Description
6. **Exhibit 10.1** - Mediation Tracking form