Chapter 8: SGI-USA Membership Statistics

SGI President Ikeda’s Encouragement on the Importance of Statistics

_a single individual is important. Everything starts from treasuring just one person. This is the eternal formula for the development of kosen-rufu._ (Faith into Action, p. 180)

Importance of Statistics

The Soka Gakkai will be an organization of shakubuku and kosen-rufu for all eternity. For this reason, membership statistics is the most essential foundation for the Soka Gakkai’s progress, which is the Buddha’s intent and mandate. Membership statistics are a lifeline for our unshakable development into the eternal future of the Latter Day of the Law.

The membership statistics that you compile are the mathematics of compassion that seek to express and actualize kosen-rufu. Only through accurate figures can we see our next move, and our goals will become clear. (December 24, 2002, Seikyo Shimbun)

Importance of Membership Information Cards

A Membership Information Card is not a piece of paper; it is the life of one person. In it his life pulsates, her personality is contained, and the drama of awakening in faith and rebirth is played out. There exist the human-to-human bonds of warm trust. Because we have been cherishing each person to the utmost, we see the magnificent development of the Soka Gakkai today. (December 24, 2002, Seikyo Shimbun)

Introduction

As shown through the Soka Gakkai’s history, phenomenal growth of our organization is based on the care of each individual. This care was crystallized in the Soka Gakkai’s statistics system, which has a foundation that was built more than fifty years ago. SGI President Ikeda shares: “Mr. Toda explained the dignity of our realm of faith in a very accessible manner: ‘Bankers count money. Publishers are always calculating how many books they’ve printed and sold. The Soka Gakkai counts how many people it has introduced to the Mystic Law and led to happiness, while protecting life, the most precious thing on earth.’ As SGI members, we spend each day counting the happiness we have spread, and increasing the amount of that happiness — how noble such a way of life is” (November 24, 2006, World Tribune, p. 3).

The SGI-USA Member Care Statistics Program was created in response to President Ikeda’s February 13, 2004, encouragement to place primary importance on always cherishing and supporting every single member as the SGI-USA continues rapid organizational expansion toward 2030, the 100th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai’s founding. The flow of numerical information provided to leaders through this program is a powerful tool that directly aids them in fulfilling this fundamental responsibility within the district.

The first step in creating a fully functional program is making sure that a Membership Information Card is completed and maintained for each member within the district. This section is primarily intended to provide an introduction to our SGI-USA Member Care Statistics Program.
Description of the Statistics Program

The SGI-USA Member Care Statistics Program is a united group effort centered on member care.

Each member completes a Membership Information Card (see p. 100) that is maintained within each district. Every other month, if not every month, a member care meeting is held to follow up on how each person is doing and to complete the District Membership Statistics Report.

All locatable members should complete a Membership Information Card (see p. 100).

Descriptions such as "active" or "inactive" are not used to describe SGI-USA members as our statistics program is a measure of locatable members. Therefore, a person's Membership Information Card should never be thrown away. When a member is no longer locatable or has decided to end their membership with the SGI-USA, the member may be removed from the statistics once the Application To Remove a Member From SGI-USA Statistics for "Other Reasons" has been filled out and approved by the district, chapter and region level leaders. In these cases, once an approval to remove the membership is received, the white copy of the form should be submitted to the local zone member care specialist and the yellow copy of the form should be kept in the district membership file box. Once this is done, the person's Membership Information Card can be removed.

Member Care Through the Statistics Program

There are three ways to provide member care through our Statistics Program:

Member Care Meeting

Every other month, the district leaders (and group leaders when appropriate) gather to discuss how each member is doing and to complete the District Membership Statistics Report. The main purpose of this gathering is to refresh the foundation of good member care for every member by reviewing each Membership Information Card. This is the heart and essence of this program.

Report Turn-in

A district leader turns in the District Membership Statistics Report, which includes discussion meeting attendance, and any membership changes to their Chapter Statistics Administrator on the 10th of every odd month (January, March, May, July, September and November).

Data Input

The chapter statistics administrator collects, reviews the accuracy of and inputs all of the district data into the Statistics website.

Basic Responsibilities of the Designated Statistics Leaders

District Leader

Every district should maintain and care for all of the Membership Information Cards, hold member care meetings every other month, if not every month and complete the District Membership Statistics Report. The district leader is also responsible for turning in the report to the chapter statistics administrator in a timely manner.

Chapter Statistics Administrator

Every chapter must appoint a chapter statistics administrator who is responsible for collecting and entering statistical data for their districts on the SGI-USA Statistics website. They are also responsible for verifying that the addition or deletion of a member from a district is accurate, and that the name corresponding to the addition and deletion are on the back of the District Membership Statistics Report. Any deletions of members in a district must be approved by the district, chapter and region leaders. The chapter statistics administrator must be a leader at the chapter level.

Region Statistics Administrator

Every region must appoint a region statistics administrator who is responsible for collecting and entering statistical data for their districts on the SGI-USA Statistics website. They are also responsible for verifying that the addition or deletion of a member from a district is accurate, and that the name corresponding to the addition and deletion are on the back of the District Membership Statistics Report. Any deletions of members in a district must be approved by the district, chapter and region leaders. The chapter statistics administrator must be a leader at the chapter level.

Region Statistics Leader

Every region must appoint a region statistics leader who is responsible for overseeing the statistics process for the region. The region statistics leader must be a leader at the region level.
Zone Statistics Leader

Every zone must appoint a zone statistics leader who is responsible for overseeing the statistics process for the zone. The zone statistics leader must be a leader at the zone level.

Zone Member Care Specialist (Zone Office Function)

Each zone has a part-time SGI-USA staff member who performs tasks on the SGI-USA Statistics website. A zone member care specialist creates new member profiles for the zone and is the central administrator for all of the chapter statistics administrators in the zone. A zone member care specialist creates new user accounts in the zone and modifies the organizational structure of the zone as needed. Zone member care specialists review Region Summary Reports and submit Zone Summary Reports.

Territory Statistics Leader

Every territory must appoint a territory statistics leader who is responsible for overseeing the statistics process for the territory. The territory statistics leader must be a leader at the territory level.

Territory Member Care Specialist (Territory Office Function)

Each territory has a full-time SGI-USA staff member who performs tasks on the SGI-USA Statistics website. A territory member care specialist creates scheduled reports for designated individuals in the territory and is the central administrator for all the zone member care specialists in the territory. A territory member care specialist creates new user accounts in the territory and modifies the organizational structure of the territory as needed. Territory statistics specialists review Zone Summary Reports and submit Territory Summary Reports.

Privacy Statement

It must be understood that a Membership Information Card contains information of a confidential and personal nature. The SGI-USA is committed to protecting the individual’s right to privacy and will not allow anyone to give, sell or transfer any personal information to a third party. The information gathered in the course of creating an accurate membership database or in the completion of Membership Information Cards is to be used solely for SGI-USA purposes. Any other use of personal information collected is a violation of this policy and will not be condoned.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Does every member complete a Membership Information Card?

Yes. The basic SGI-USA policy is that a person has the Gohonzon in his or her household in order to be considered an SGI-USA member. However, there are cases in which household members indicate that they do not consider themselves to be SGI-USA members. Also, in the case of children, parents or legal guardians have a responsibility to designate which religious faith their children practice.

Therefore, a Membership Information Card for children or infants should be completed by the parents. Generally, children over the age of eighteen are considered to have reached adulthood and usually have the responsibility to decide their religious preference themselves. It is important that this issue be discussed well within each family.

2. How long are Membership Information Cards kept at the district?

When a member moves to a different location, their Membership Information Card is transferred to the new district and updated. In the case of those members who leave the organization, approval to remove that person from membership cannot be decided at the local level, so please follow the instructions for filling out the Application To Remove a Member From SGI-USA Statistics for “Other Reasons.”

Once approval to remove from membership is received, the white copy of the form should be submitted to the zone member care specialist and the yellow copy of the form should be kept in the district membership file box. Once this is done, the Membership Information Card of this person can be removed; that card should be kept in a separate section of the file box in order to prevent it from getting mixed in with the other district Membership Information Cards. Membership Information Cards should never be destroyed.

For those members who have passed away, their Membership Information Card can be removed from the district membership file box with approval from a region leader and should be returned to the immediate family.
3. My husband does not attend activities or perform gongyo, however, he has supported my practice for many years. Is he considered a member?

There are many cases where a spouse or domestic partner does not actively participate in SGI-USA activities or perform gongyo but has supported a member for many years. In these cases, there are no rigid criteria for determining whether or not these persons can be considered a member. It is an individual’s personal desire and decision whether or not to be considered a member that is important. If they wish to be included, they can be.

4. If a member rarely attends activities for long periods of time, are they still considered to be a member?

As mentioned previously, there are no longer criteria such as “active” or “inactive” membership. According to the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, all members have the potential to awaken the Buddha nature within their lives, which can blossom in the future.

Again, the primary criteria for membership are whether or not the person has a Gohonzon enshrined and if the person is locatable. Even though a person states that he or she no longer wants to be a member of the SGI-USA, it is perfectly acceptable to place this person’s name on a list in order to pray for their earliest return to the SGI-USA.

5. I have a member who does not want to complete or disclose any information for the Membership Information Card. What should I do?

In most cases when a member does not want to disclose any information for their Membership Information Card, simply complete the information that you do have. For example, if a member does not want to complete certain information, such as their date of birth, please do not force the issue. Although the Membership Information Card will be incomplete, having the person’s name and other important information regarding the date of Gohonzon conferral are vital.

6. On the back of the Membership Information Card, there is a space for “Additional Information.” What should be entered?

Every member has an electronic membership card that is automatically updated with this Additional Information.

A district leader can request these electronic membership cards from their Chapter Statistics Administrator so they can update the physical membership information card that goes in the District Membership Card Box.

7. On the District Membership Statistics Report, what is the difference between the “new members,” “returning” or “transferring in” categories?

- “New members” are those joining the SGI-USA for the first time and either they or someone in their household receives the Gohonzon. This applies to each member of the family, including children and infants.

- “Returning” members are those rejoining the SGI-USA after having left the organization.

- Please note: If a returning member no longer has the Gohonzon, they must fulfill the criteria for receiving the Gohonzon. Once they have received the Gohonzon, they would be considered a “returning” member.

- Members “transferring in” are those who relocate into a district, who transfer from one division to another (for example, young men's division to men's division), or who simply transfer from one district to another. For those who relocate or transfer in from another district, their previous district should transfer them out of that district. When a person transfers from one division to another but remains in the same district, the statistics should reflect that they’ve transferred out of one division (for example, young men's division) and into a new division (for example, men's division).

8. How are transfers completed?

There are three main steps when doing a transfer:

1. The sending district leader notifies their Chapter Statistics Administrator of the member transferring along with the member’s new organizational information (district and zone).

2. The sending district leader gives the original Membership Information Card to the transferring member to give to their new district leader.

3. The sending district leader confirms that the transferring
member is connected to the new district. In the case of local transfers within the same organization (i.e., region), the chapter statistics administrator will contact the region for receiving district information.

Once it has been confirmed that a member has officially transferred to a new district, the member’s Membership Information Card will be stored electronically in the District Membership List in our online statistics system. It is very important that confirmation of a transferring member is made by the former and new district to ensure that the member does not get disconnected from the SGI-USA.

In the case of local transfers within the same organization, it is appropriate for the transferring district to help the transferring member find their new district, even to the extent of introducing the member to his or her new organization.

In the case of military service members and their families who are transferred outside of the United States, the Membership Information Cards for these individuals should be maintained within their former districts until they return to the United States. Upon their return, the normal transfer process should be followed. If there is a local organization in the country where the service member or family members are being transferred, in addition to remaining in contact with their former district, the members should be encouraged to contact the local organization where they are living. In the case of a military member transferring to a country that does not have an SGI organization, it is important that the former district maintains communication with the service member and continue to provide faith encouragement in the absence of any local organization.

4. Non-U.S. residents wishing to receive the Gohonzon must:

   a. have lived in the United States for at least six months prior to conferral; and

   b. have plans to live in the United States for at least six months after the Gohonzon conferral.

9. When completing statistics, should we only include members who actually attend the monthly discussion meetings?

   Yes, the SGI-USA statistics program only counts those members and guests that attend the discussion meeting. In some cases, districts will have members who are unable to attend their monthly discussion due to scheduling conflicts or other reasons, but who attend other SGI-USA activities.

   There are also circumstances where guests can attend introductory meetings but not the discussion meeting. In these cases, it can be very difficult for the district leaders to maintain accurate statistics on each activity and its attendance. For that reason, the statistics system focuses on the actual discussion meeting attendance, which should still reflect the growth of the district over time.

   10. I have members whose names do not appear on my district membership list. How can I ensure that they get counted in my statistics?

   In this case, most likely these members do not currently have a Membership ID. If so, please contact your Chapter Statistics Administrator, and they can request to your local zone office staff for Membership IDs to be made for any missing members. Once an ID is made, an electronic membership card is automatically created and stored in our online statistics system for your district. Again, you can request to your Chapter Statistics Administrator to give you the membership information card for any missing member(s).

   11. With efforts to create two groups in a district, in the future, if there are group meetings taking place instead of district meetings in a given month, would we count the group meeting attendance as the monthly discussion meeting attendance?

   Yes. Since we don’t capture statistics for groups, please make sure to compile attendance for both group meetings and include them in the total for that month’s discussion meeting attendance.

   12. Should visiting leaders be accounted for in the monthly discussion meeting attendance?

   Visiting leaders should be counted in the category “visiting leaders” if that is not their home district. However, chapter through national leaders can be counted in their
home district when they attend the discussion meeting that month. They can also be counted by reporting to their district leader that they did attend a discussion meeting in another district that month. They should be reported on the discussion meeting statistics as a member of their home district.

**Forms**

Membership Information Card (see p. 102)—
http://www.sgi-usa.org/leaders/Forms_for_leaders/index.php

Applicant Information (Please print clearly)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SGI-USA</th>
<th>Application to Receive the Gohonzon—Current SGI-USA Members (please use only the ORIGINAL GOHONZON form—see SAMPLE below).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Conferral Ceremony: (Conferral Guidelines Have Been Met)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- **Standard Okatagi Gohonzon ($20)**
- **Establishing a separate household**
- **Establishing a Household**
- **Exchanging a Gohonzon**

**Portable Omamori Gohonzon ($20)**
- **Exchanging a Gohonzon**
- **Replacing a lost or damaged Gohonzon**

**Large Okatagi Gohonzon ($100)**
- **Exchanging a Gohonzon**
- **Replacing a lost or damaged Gohonzon**

Please check one:
- E-mail Address
- Telephone Number
- Date of Birth:
- City                State           Zip
- Street Address                      Apt/Unit #
- First and Last Name
- Signature

APPLICANT INFORMATION (Please print clearly)

- First and Last Name
- Signature
- Date of Birth:
- City                State           Zip
- Street Address                      Apt/Unit #
- First and Last Name
- Signature

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION:

- Name of Chapter
- Name of Region
- Membership ID#

RECEIPT

The SGI-USA has received the sum of $ from

Received by: Representative of SGI-USA

Signature                      Date

Click here to access the fillable pdf:
http://www.sgi-usa.org/memberresources/leaders/forms.php

SGI-USA Leadership Manual
Application To Remove a Member From SGI-USA Statistics for “Other Reasons” (please use only the ORIGINAL form—see SAMPLE below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SGI-USA</th>
<th>Application to Remove a Member FROM SGI-USA STATISTICS FOR “OTHER REASONS”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Other Reasons” means (a) anyone who resigns their membership with SGI-USA and returns their Gohonzon, or (b) anyone who is verified unlocatable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Resigned Membership ❑ (b) Verified Unlocatable ❑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In case (a), the District, Chapter and Region leaders should make every effort to visit and encourage the member to continue his or her practice. If the member still desires to resign their membership and return their Gohonzon, approval up to and including the Region level leader will be needed to remove them from the SGI-USA statistics system. In case (b), every effort to locate the member should be made. If after one year of thorough, exhaustive efforts to find the member, they remain unlocatable, approval up to and including the Region level leaders will be needed to remove them from the SGI-USA statistics system.

**NOTE:** Once an approval to remove the membership is received, the white copy of the form should be submitted to the local Zone office MIS staff and the yellow copy of the form should be kept in the District membership file box. Once this is done, the membership card of this person can be removed.

**MEMBER’S INFORMATION (For Reasons (a) and (b))**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First and Last Name</th>
<th>Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Street Address</td>
<td>Unit #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for Removal</td>
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</tbody>
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**ORGANIZATION & LEADERS SIGNATURE (For Reasons (a) and (b))**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of District</th>
<th>Leader’s name (please print)</th>
<th>Date signed</th>
<th>District leader’s signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Chapter</td>
<td>Leader’s name (please print)</td>
<td>Date signed</td>
<td>Chapter leader’s signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Region</td>
<td>Leader’s name (please print)</td>
<td>Date signed</td>
<td>Region leader’s signature</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SGI-USA Parent/Guardian Consent Form for a Minor To Receive the Gohonzon (see p. 101)—
http://www.sgi-usa.org/leaders/Forms_for_leaders/index.php

* Please Note: The signed original consent form must accompany the Application To Receive the Gohonzon or Request for New Member’s Certificate.
SGI-USA Leadership Manual

Membership Information Card

First and Last Name
Street Address
City
Date of Birth: Month Day Year
Apt/Unit #
Telephone Number
E-mail Address


Sponsor’s Name (Print First and Last Name) Division Phone Number

FAMILY MEMBERS ALSO JOINING WITH APPLICANT (Please make a separate membership card(s) for family members joining)

First and Last Name Please circle one Relationship *Membership Card Completed (check box)
MD WD YMD YWD YMD JHHS YWD JHHS ESD/PRE-ESD MD WD YMD YWD YMD JHHS YWD JHHS ESD/PRE-ESD MD WD YMD YWD YMD JHHS YWD JHHS ESD/PRE-ESD

SGI-USA respects the privacy of your personal information. This information is collected for internal organizational use only and will not be disclosed to third parties outside of the SGI-USA organization.

Additional Information

Subscriptions
Auto-Renewal
Sustaining Contributions
FNCC

Yes No

STUDY EXAMS COMPLETED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essentials 1</td>
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<td>Essentials 2</td>
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<td>Essentials 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ikeda Wisdom Academy 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ikeda Wisdom Academy 2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please check the type of Gohonzon you have:
□ Standard (Okatagi) □ Portable (Omamori)

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION (Please print clearly)

Name
Primary Phone
Relationship
E-mail Address

Date of Conferral Ceremony:
Month Day Year

District
Chapter
Region
Membership ID#
The signed original consent form must accompany the Application To Receive the Gohonzon or Request for New Member's Certificate.

SGI-USA Parent/Guardian Consent Form for a Minor To Receive the Gohonzon

Information About the Minor:

First Name: _____________________  Last Name: ____________________   Middle Initial: ______

Street Address of the Minor: ____________________________________________________________

City: ______________________________   State: _________________   Zip Code: _______________

Date of Birth: ______________________________

Parent/Guardian Information:

First Name: _____________________  Last Name: ____________________   Middle Initial: ______

Relationship to the Minor: _____________________________

Telephone Number: _____________________________

I certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of the minor listed above, and I give my consent for him/her to become a Nichiren Buddhist as a member of the Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA). I understand that he/she will be receiving the Gohonzon (object of devotion in the practice of Nichiren Buddhism) and enshrining it in my home. I have discussed his/her membership with a local SGI-USA leader and fully support his/her practice.

Signature of the Parent/Guardian: ___________________________   Date: _______________