

SPONSORING RABBI



What does it mean to be a sponsoring Rabbi for a conversion candidate?

The GPS (Geirus Policies and Standards) *Batei Din* network requires each conversion candidate to have a sponsoring rabbi before they apply to the *Beit Din* for conversion. The sponsoring rabbi plays a crucial role in guiding a conversion candidate through the conversion process leading up to the candidate becoming a full member of *Klal Yisrael*. The experiences of a conversion candidate are profoundly shaped by their relationship with their sponsoring rabbi. The sponsoring rabbi has a tremendous *zekhut*, while at the same time, a great responsibility, in the development of a new member of *Klal Yisrael*.

Who may serve as a sponsoring rabbi?

A conversion candidate must live within walking distance of an Orthodox synagogue. Typically, the conversion candidate should live in the sponsoring rabbi's community so that the sponsoring rabbi can be best positioned to facilitate and monitor the candidate's religious growth and integration into the Orthodox community.

Must the sponsoring rabbi serve as the candidate's tutor?

While the sponsoring rabbi may choose to study with a candidate, he need not take on the role of primary tutor. The sponsoring rabbi does guide the candidate through the entire process, overseeing the candidate's formal and informal educational experiences. The sponsoring rabbi monitors the candidate's progress.

May the sponsoring rabbi serve on the *Beit Din*?

GPS *Batei Din*, as a matter of policy, do not allow a sponsoring rabbi to serve on the *Beit Din* that converts his candidate. The *Beit Din* performs the ritual conversion of the candidate. The sponsoring rabbi, nevertheless, plays a significant role in the conversion of the candidate. In addition to overseeing the formal and informal educational experiences of a conversion candidate, he communicates and works with the *Beit Din* regarding the candidate's level of observance and readiness for conversion. He represents the candidate to the *Beit Din* and represents the *Beit Din* to the candidate. A sponsoring rabbi should communicate with the *Av Beit Din* to make sure that everyone is "on the same page" and that the process is working efficiently and effectively for the candidate.

It is appropriate for the sponsoring rabbi to accompany the candidate to *Beit Din* meetings in order to provide support and to ease communication.

What does the GPS expect of a sponsoring rabbi?

The following are the basic expectations of GPS sponsoring rabbis:

Sensitivity to Candidates

- This includes respect for and adherence to proper boundaries between the rabbi and the candidate.
- It is vital that the sponsoring rabbi understand the inner and personal experiences of the conversion candidate.

He must maintain:

- Awareness of the vulnerability and scrutiny felt by many conversion candidates
- Respect for their life-changing commitment
- Appreciation of the life experiences of candidates who were raised as Jews
- Sensitivity to the emotional, psychological, personal and economic stresses experienced by conversion candidates.

Professionalism

- Efficient and timely communication
- Respect for timeliness and punctuality of appointments
- Appreciation of the financial and professional consequences of meetings on converts

- Communication and cooperation between the *Beit Din* and the rabbi

Transparency

- Providing, early in the process, information regarding the lengthiness of the conversion process
- Financial obligations
- Curriculum
- Demands of the convert in terms of knowledge
- Economic and life-style expectations post-conversion

Who is available to the sponsoring rabbi if he needs to consult with anyone regarding his candidate or his responsibilities?

The sponsoring rabbi can always reach out to the Av *Beit Din* or to the Administrator of the candidate's *Beit Din*.

If there are concerns or questions regarding the *Beit Din* itself or questions that might best be discussed outside the *Beit Din*, the sponsoring rabbi can contact:

- Rabbi Michael Zylberman, Director of GPS Conversions, 212-807-9000 x 3, mzylberman@rabbis.org
- Mrs. Abby Lerner National Director of Conversion Services, 516-661-1072, alerner@rabbis.org.

They are always happy to speak with you.

Please consult the Sponsoring Rabbi's Handbook for more comprehensive guidelines.

Participating Batei Din

Atlanta

Administrator: Rabbi Karmi Ingber
rabbiingber@gmail.com

Chicago

Beth Din Zedek of Chicago Rabbinical Council
Administrator: Rabbi Alan Abramson
773-465-3900
abramson@crcweb.org

Cincinnati

Beth Din of Cincinnati
Rabbi Ezra Goldschmiedt
347-443-8613
rabbi@shaareitorahcincy.org

Cleveland

Administrator: Rabbi Binyamin Blau
216-381-4757
rabbiblau@greenroadsynagogue.com

Los Angeles

Rabbinical Council of California
Rabbinic Administrator: Rabbi Avrohom Union
213-389-3382 x 13
Email: runion@rccvaad.org
www.rccvaad.org/beth-conversion.html

Miami

South Florida *Beit Din* for Conversion
Rabbi Efrem Goldberg
561-394-0394
reg@brsonline.org

Montreal

Administrator: Eddie Shostak
514-482-4252
eddie@geirutmontreal.org
www.geirutmontreal.org

New York City

Manhattan Beth Din for Conversions
Administrator: Rabbi Zvi Romm
(212) 807-9000x189
geirusmanhattan@gmail.com

Pittsburgh

Vaad HaRabbanim of Greater Pittsburgh
Administrator: Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel
412-421-0111 x101
rabbivogel@alephne.org

Seattle

Va'ad Harabanim of Greater Seattle
Rabbi Moshe Kletenik
206-760-0805
rabbikletenik@seattlevaad.org

Teaneck, NJ

Bet Din of the Rabbinical Council of Bergen County
Administrator: Rabbi Yaacov Feit
862-437-8115 x 8115
conversionrcbc@gmail.com

Greater Washington DC

Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington
Administrator: Rabbi Mordechai Rhine
301-770-0078 ext 5
rabbirhine@capitolk.org