Rabbinical Council of California
4221 Wilshire Blvd Suite 390
Los Angeles, CA. 90010
Phone (213) 389-3382 Fax (213)234-4558
www.rccvaad.org

Dear Applicant,

Enclosed please find the application for conversion which you requested. Once we receive your completed application form, our office will contact you to set an appointment with the Rabbinic Administrator. At this time, we will briefly answer some commonly asked questions about our program. Please read this letter carefully because it contains important guidelines for our program.

How Difficult Is an Orthodox Conversion?
Very. Conversion to Judaism is the most significant decision in your life. It requires major lifestyle changes including many basics such as eating habits and work schedule. Conversion to Judaism can strain family ties, and it will certainly alter the way you look at the world. Nevertheless, if you are willing and able to meet these demands, we will encourage you and do our best to ensure a smooth and meaningful process.

What Is Expected of Me?
Gradually and at your own pace, you are expected to learn and live as a religiously observant Orthodox Jew. The Rabbis and your other teachers will help guide you in practicing what you learn, but it is up to you to show motivation and a desire to live the Judaism you are taught.

Living In an Orthodox Community
The RCC program requires you to live within reasonable proximity of an Orthodox synagogue, where you can comfortably participate in traditional community life. We define acceptable distance as "comfortable walking distance". This varies by location, geography, and climate. Relocation is required as a prerequisite for assigning a tutor, except when the planned relocation is definite and imminent. Making arrangements to stay with others on Shabbos is not an acceptable alternative.

Here are some additional guidelines to keep in mind:

- If there are school age children, the community must have easy access to an Orthodox day school in which they will be enrolled.
- Due to a variety of considerations and especially the wellbeing of minor children, we do not accept applications when a mother shares child custody, whether legal or physical, with another parent from a previous relationship.

- If a man is involved in the conversion process, whether as candidate or a significant other, the location should have a daily minyan or access to a daily minyan.
- Preferably the synagogue has a minyan (quorum) of Sabbath observant members. When that is not the case, the Beis Din will have to judge whether the community has enough of a critical mass to provide a supportive environment for the conversion process.
- The synagogue and community must be able to provide the candidate with access to classes and other activities.
- The Beis Din will give considerable weight to the makeup of the community and how it matches/supports the particular candidate. This includes factors such as relative age of community members, willingness to support beginners, opportunities for Shabbos invitations, activities for children, et cetera.

We do understand that moving can be difficult for financial and other reasons. We insist upon it only because we know it is so essential for your future growth and success. Joining a community is one of the first and most important steps we will require.

How Long Does Conversion Take?

This varies considerably, depending upon your previous background and knowledge of Judaism. Generally, you should expect the process to take between 18 to 24 months from the time we receive your application. By submitting your application, you acknowledge this time requirement, and recognize that some cases will take longer. A slow and thoughtful process is a better experience. It is also in the best interest of the converts themselves. "Fast track" conversions can be challenged, and are not universally accepted.

Why Does an RCC Conversion Take So Long?
What Is It That The Beis Din Looks For?

Many applicants come to the Beis Din with a misconception. They think the court's chief function is to measure the sincerity of the would-be convert, and to assess the worthiness of the applicant to join the Jewish people. This leads to much frustration when applicants have amply demonstrated their sincerity, yet the Beis Din still holds back from converting them.

In fact, the Beis Din plays a very different role. Jewish law – not the Beis Din – determines who can convert. Anyone who can fully accept the demands of a committed, halachic Jewish life is theoretically a candidate for conversion. But the Rabbis of the Beis Din have to determine whether the conversion will be in the best interests of the candidate. The Beis Din has to develop confidence that the obligation of full observance is something that the candidate will be able to bear and maintain, given his or her unique situation and challenges. Our failure to do so would be irresponsible to the candidate.

The Beis Din observes the growth and adjustment of the candidate over an extended period of time. How well does he/she integrate into the community? What mentors and teachers are available? How well are they used? What problems, if any, need to be addressed in the short

run and the long run?

An RCC conversion requires more than learning material and finding a comfortable synagogue. It means integrating into the Orthodox Jewish community and developing a support system. This reassures all of us that the decision to convert is a positive and healthy one. It also ensures that your conversion if you complete it will be respected and accepted around the world for its thoroughness and integrity.

Relationships

You undoubtedly know that Judaism does not allow or recognize intermarriage. You can still apply and be accepted in our program even if you are civilly married or have a relationship with a Jewish person. However, if you have a relationship and are considering marriage with a Jewish person, you are both expected to participate in the learning process. Failure to be open with us concerning a relationship is grounds for dismissal from the RCC program.

We also want you to know that civilly married couples are expected to maintain separate living quarters for a three-month period following a conversion. We recognize that this poses hardships when children are involved, and we will try to assist your Rabbi to help you find acceptable solutions where necessary. Singles are expected to maintain an appropriate lifestyle, and at the very least must physically separate for a ninety-two-day period prior to a conversion. We invite you to discuss any difficulties you may have in this regard with the RCC staff.

Family Ties

Conversion means taking on a new identity. Judaism understands and expects that you will continue to treat your family of origin with respect and dignity. Nevertheless, an Orthodox conversion will affect family ties in important ways. You will no longer be able to attend church services, even for weddings and other life cycle occasions. While you might be able to eat some foods in family homes, the kosher diet will severely restrict sharing meals. Holidays that families often celebrate together such as December 25 and Easter will be off limits. We encourage you to consider these issues and speak with your family about the changes they will surely notice.

Children and Students

For children to convert, they must be attending or committed to attend an Orthodox Jewish day school for at least grades K-12. We do understand that some children will prosper in a home schooling environment, or might have special needs which a local Jewish day school is not providing. Nevertheless, there are no exceptions to this requirement. We cannot burden children with the challenges they will face when adhering to an Orthodox Jewish life while in a decidedly unsupportive environment.

For similar reasons we rarely agree to convert children who are already teenagers. Their

parents' enthusiasm notwithstanding, teenagers are in a delicate stage of forming their own identities. We welcome them into our synagogues and communal activities, but we are very reluctant to complete a conversion until they have reached the age when they can make mature decisions without feeling pressured to conform to a parent's expectations.

Our program does not admit college students unless they are close to completing their program. The flux in their lives as well as the challenges of campus life impede the solidity of a lifelong Torah commitment.

Sponsoring Rabbi

The RCC conversion program requires you to have a "sponsoring Rabbi" before applying to the program. This does not mean that your Rabbi is responsible for your conversion. It means you must have an Orthodox Rabbi who is willing to assist you by providing guidance and direction to help you become part of his community. The sponsoring Rabbi should be willing to periodically report to the Beis Din on your participation in the synagogue activities and classes, and give us oral or email updates prior to each Beis Din meeting with you. Before administering a final test, we require the sponsoring Rabbi to send us a written note that he considers the candidate ready for test and conversion.

If you do not have a sponsoring Rabbi at this time, you should first look around for Orthodox synagogues that are welcoming and a good fit for you. The sponsoring Rabbi cannot be from another city or community you do not live in. Please keep this in mind, as this requirement must be met enter to the program.

What Are The Costs?

The RCC is a non-profit organization with a salaried staff. We do our best to keep the costs of conversion down but cannot waive the fees that enable us to meet our overhead and provide our services. A $595 application fee is due with your completed application. When and if the conversion takes place, there is an additional payment of $400 which covers all other administrative charges. The Mikvah charges an $80 fee for the immersion completing a conversion.

Other Study Costs

Applicants who advance in the program are eventually assigned a private tutor who will teach the necessary material. The fees charged by the tutors are paid directly to them and not to the RCC. Tutors generally charge $75 per study hour. The amount of study required depends greatly on previous Jewish learning. Tutoring is required for all candidates, even if they have studied independently in the past.

Attendance at classes available in the community can reduce the number of tutorial sessions required, but some private study to cover our specific and focused curriculum is always required.

Getting Started

The first step in applying for the RCC conversion program is to read this information carefully and decide if this program is what you are looking for. If you believe it is, please send in your completed application to info@rccvaad.org . Sorry, no meetings or interviews can be granted without our office processing your fully completed application to open up your file. Please make sure to complete all relevant sections of this application.

When Do I Know If I Am Accepted?

The conversion process has several stages. Once we open your file, our office will contact you to set up an initial interview in which we explain the program in detail. At that first meeting you will receive a required reading list along with an overview of the RCC's conversion procedures.

If, after completing your reading list, you decide to continue with the program, we will arrange a meeting with a panel of Rabbis (Beit Din) who will decide the terms and prerequisites for your candidacy. This meeting may give you some idea of the likelihood for success, but our agreement to do the conversion is not guaranteed until you have shown significant progress in the total program.

Yours sincerely,



Rabbi Avrohom Union
Rabbinic Administrator
Rabbinical Council of California

Rabbinical Council of California
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RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA
APPLICATION FOR CONVERSION

Date of Application _____ Date Received _____

Please answer each question as fully as you can. Feel free to use the back of the page or a separate sheet, if you need more space.

PERSONAL DATA

NAME: _____
Last First Middle Maiden

_____
Address City Zip

_____
Home Phone Cell Phone Email

_____
Age Date of Birth Place of Birth Occupation of Applicant

_____
Marital Status Name of Spouse Religion of Spouse

If in a relationship/married, please provide the following information:

_____
Name of Friend/Significant Other Age Occupation Phone

_____
Address City Zip

If you have previously married, please provide details on another page:

NAMES OF CHILDREN: _____ _____
Last First Age

_____ _____
Last First Age

_____ _____
Last First Age

EMPLOYMENT

Occupation	Place(s) of Employment	Dates	Position
_____	_____	_____	_____

Describe your work experiences, likes, and dislikes:

Are your coworkers/employer(s) aware of your interest in Judaism? Please elaborate.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Father's Name	age	occupation	marital status	religion	contact info

Mother's Name age occupation marital status religion contact info

How has your father influenced your life?

How has your mother influenced your life?

Names and ages of parents' children (Applicant's siblings):

What is the extent of your parents' religious observance, affiliations, activities?

What is your current relationship with your family?

EDUCATION

Names Of Institution(s)	Degree/Certificate	Date

Describe your experience of high school:

Detail your educational experiences since high school: academic likes and dislikes, relationships with teachers, fellow students, etc.

GENERAL

Present Religion:

Previous religious experiences (please detail **all** churches or synagogues you have belonged to):

What religious education did you receive? How did it influence your life?

How much of an interest in religion have you taken since childhood?

Non-Academic experiences, activities:

TRAVEL TO ISRAEL
When and for how long? What were your impressions?

MEDICAL HISTORY

Current State of Health:

Latest complete physical examination date:

Medication being taken, if any:

Are you currently, or have you ever been, under the care of a doctor or therapist?
Reason:

Any serious illness in your family?

CONVERSION

Please explain, in detail, the reasons you are considering conversion:

How long have you been considering conversion?

Why do you want your conversion to be Orthodox?

What is your knowledge of Judaism?
(Please list books you have read or classes you have taken on Judaism.)

Do you have any relationships with persons of the Jewish faith? Are you married to, or considering marriage to, a Jewish person? If yes, how would you describe that person's level of religious commitment?

Describe your philosophy of life.

Do you have a sponsoring Rabbi?

_____

Name Address Phone Number Email

REFERENCES (TWO)

_____

NAME ADDRESS PHONE NUMBER

RELATIONSHIP_____

_____

NAME ADDRESS PHONE NUMBER

RELATIONSHIP_____

☐ **I acknowledge that I have read the cover letter and agree to all of the terms and conditions of the RCC program.**

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Application for Conversion (Adult)

There is a non-refundable application fee of $595

If paying by check please make out the check to “RCC” and mail to:

The Rabbinical Council of California
4221 Wilshire Blvd.
Suite 390
Los Angeles, CA 90010

If paying by credit card (**Visa, Mastercard only**), please fill out the information below:

CC#_____exp:_____Security Code:_____

Name on Card:_____

Billing Address:_____Zip code:_____

Save Application as PDF

Print Application

You can send this application by email by clicking the button above to save this form as a pdf. Then attach it in an email addressed to info@RccVaad.org

You can send this form in via fax or mail by clicking the button above to print the form and sending it to:

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