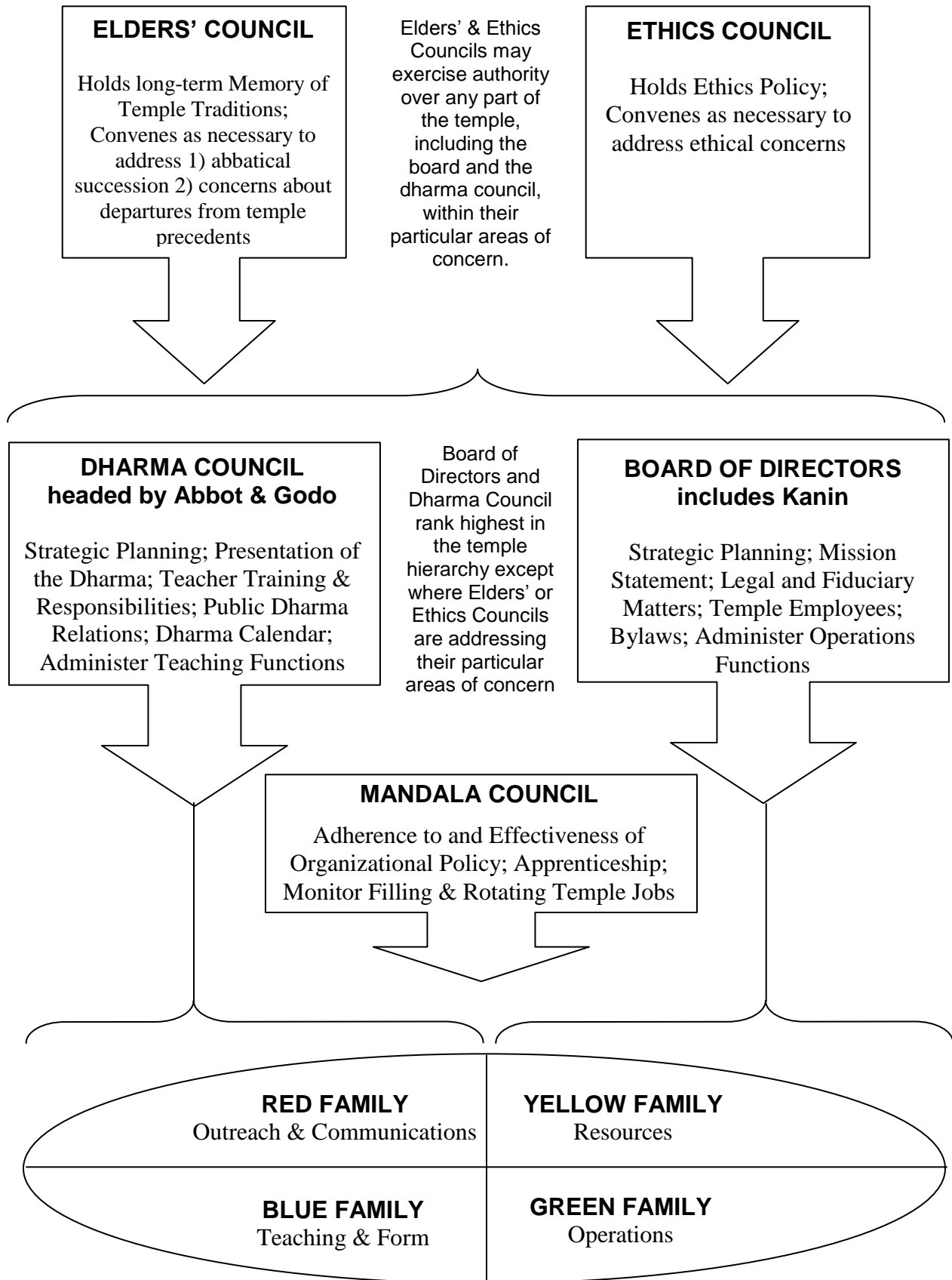


# Relationships and Roles of the White Family Councils



## The Need for Organizational Structure at DRZC

After much discussion, the Abbots, Board of Directors and the DRZC shokkis agreed that there is need for a more conscious and effective structure at the Center. This need has largely arisen because of the growth and change the temple has undergone in the last ten years.

A number of objectives for any organizational structure for DRZC emerged in these discussions:

- 1) Clarity with respect to roles, responsibility, and lines of authority and communication;
- 2) Transparency - a relatively simple structure that is understood by the entire sangha;
- 3) Opportunities for Leadership – sufficient authority & autonomy for those with the responsibility to lead or teach, allowing for efficiency, consistency of direction & creative freedom;
- 4) Shared power and responsibility – provide opportunities to all sangha members for meaningful participation, and avoid overburdening a few people;
- 5) Checks and Balances – make everyone accountable, and moderate the power and influence of any single person, group or decision-making body;
- 6) A unified sense of purpose – include and honor every aspect of zen center function, and provide connections between functions so no one operates in isolation.

The creators of the “Mandala Model” – a proposed organizational model for DRZC – include the DRZC Abbots, Kyogen and Gyokuko Carlson, Board Member Jeanna Moyer, and shokkis Sallie Jiko Tisdale and Domyo Burk. We hope that the model achieves the above objectives.

## Choice of the “Mandala Model”

We started our planning process by examining the existing organizational structure at DRZC, which has served relatively well for a long time. Our existing structure is modeled on a Japanese monastery: the organization is divided into the “East Hall” (Operations), which is headed by the Kanin, and the “West Hall” (Teaching), which is headed by the Godo. Much of this East and West Hall structure is retained in the Mandala Model (see Diagram 1). Also conserved were all of the basic “teams” (formerly known as departments) that exist in the temple, including such things as treasury, newsletter, outreach and children’s programs.

We choose a mandala model because the mandala has functioned well as the basis for organizational policy for Zen Center of Los Angeles. (A *mandala* is a visual representation of a whole composed of many interrelated parts.) A mandala incorporates the idea of interdependence, and acknowledges that every part of a complex system is important and has a particular place and role to play. The Mandala of the Five Buddha Families is a traditional Vajrayana mandala in which the composing parts are categorized into five “Buddha Families” (Red, Yellow, Blue, Green and White), each of which has characteristic energies and ways of manifesting.

## Basic Structure and Function of the Mandala

### Teams

Within the temple, a functional unit with a unified purpose or task is called a “team.” Each team should be of a manageable size (typically between two and seven people) such that a lay volunteer can effectively serve as a Team Leader. (Almost all DRZC teams have evolved gradually into their present composition, size and task.) One person serves as Team Leader for each team and should ideally be given a fair amount of autonomy but also clear instructions about budgets and the kinds of decisions that require approval from above.

### Families

Each team belongs to one of five Buddha Families (see Diagram 1). The teams in a Family manifest some of that Family’s characteristic energy (according to the Vajrayana teachings on this subject). Red and Blue Families comprise the “Teaching” side of the Mandala (also known as the “West Hall”). The Red Family deals with outreach and communication and the Blue Family deals with formal teaching and zendo forms. The Yellow and Green Families comprise the “Operations” side of the Mandala (also known as the “East Hall”). The Yellow Family deals with temple resources, and the Green Family deals with day-to-day temple operations. There are many tasks, jobs and positions that could fit under more than one team or family, so teams will have to acknowledge overlap and cooperate. Effort was made to balance the number of teams in each Family.

All team leaders in a family will meet at least once a term (three times a year) to report on activities, successes and difficulties, thus providing accountability and connection and encouraging cooperation.

### White Family Administration

The White Family deals with oversight and administration. The White Family is made up of Temple Officers (Abbot(s), Godo, Kanin and any assistants, Tanto and Shuso) and five “Councils:” 1) the **Board of Directors**, which administers the Operations side of the Mandala; 2) the **Dharma Council**, which administers the Teaching side of the Mandala; 3) the **Mandala Council**, a managerial body in charge of Apprenticeship as well as communication about, understanding of & adherence to the Mandala Model; 4) the **Elders’ Council**, charged with preserving the lineage tradition over time and providing counsel to the Board in matters of succession in the abbacy; and 5) the **Ethics Council**, which holds the DRZC Ethics Policies and convenes as needed to address ethical issues in the Sangha.