

SISTERS IN CRIME, INC.

Orange County Chapter Bylaws

Effective April XX, 2025

ARTICLE I

Name and Seal

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be Sisters in Crime, Orange County Chapter (“the Chapter”). Its seal shall be a design adopted by its Executive Committee, if desired. Its principal location shall be Orange County, California.

ARTICLE II

Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Vision: Sisters in Crime (SinC) sets standards for itself, its members, and the crime-writing community. Through advocacy, programming, and leadership, SinC empowers and supports all crime writers regardless of genre or position on their career trajectory.

Mission: Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986 to promote the ongoing advancement, recognition, and professional development of women crime writers.

Core Values: SinC’s core values are intrinsic to our organization’s identity and are reflected in every decision, action, program, and communication we undertake.

SinC’s core values are:

- **Advocacy:** Championing our mission, vision, and members.
- **Equity:** Ensuring fair and just practices and policies that enable all community members to thrive, participate, and succeed.
- **Inclusion:** Actively, intentionally, and continually creating an environment where every member of our community is valued, respected, and has a sense of belonging.
- **Community:** Fostering a community where differences are valued, everyone feels accepted and free to express their authentic selves, and individual needs are acknowledged and respected. Our community embraces everyone, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, race, age, religion, disability, neurodiversity, national origin, citizenship, socioeconomic status, educational background, publishing path, or chosen genre.

ARTICLE III

Membership

Membership is open to all persons worldwide who have a special interest in crime and mystery writing and in furthering the purposes of Sisters in Crime, Inc., as defined in Article II.

Section 1. Professional Membership. A Professional member is a paid-up member of both Sisters in Crime, Inc. (**SinC-National**) and the Orange County Chapter who is one of the following: an author pursuing a career in crime and mystery writing, a bookseller, a publisher, a librarian, an editor, or one who has a business interest in promoting the purposes of Sisters in Crime, Inc., as defined in Article II.

Section 2. Associate Membership. An Associate member is a paid-up member of both SinC-National and the Orange County Chapter who does not have a business interest in promoting the purposes of Sisters in Crime, Inc. This includes, but is not limited to, fans and readers.

Section 3. Honorary Membership. An honorary member is a person who is elected as such by a two-thirds majority vote of the Executive Committee. No dues at the chapter level are required; however, the individual must be a continuing member in good standing of National Sisters in Crime, Inc. This election does not include an honorary national membership.

Section 4. Youth Membership. A Youth member is aged 18-25. After a Youth member turns 25, said member will be renewed into a Professional membership. Youth members have all the rights and responsibilities of Professional members.

Section 5. Institutional Membership. An institutional member is an organization such as an educational institution, business, or other group.

Section 6. Expansion of Membership Categories. The Executive Committee may create additional or amended categories of membership by a majority vote.

ARTICLE IV

General Management

Section 1. The general management, control, and direction of the affairs, funds, and property of the Orange County Chapter shall be vested in the “Executive Committee.”

Section 2. No part of the net earnings of the Chapter shall inure to the benefit of any member, director, or officer of the organization, or to any private individual. However, reasonable

Sisters in Crime, Orange County Chapter Bylaws

compensation may be paid for services rendered to, or for, the Chapter (subject to the provisions of Article IV, Section 3).

Section 3. The Treasurer shall make disbursements from Chapter funds as authorized by the Executive Committee. The Treasurer may make disbursements of \$50 or less at his/her discretion. Any disbursement larger than \$50 shall require Executive Committee approval unless it is to a vendor or service provider previously approved by the Executive Committee for recurring payments.

Section 4. Any cash surplus at the end of the fiscal year shall be retained in the Chapter's treasury for use to further the purposes of the organization.

Section 5. No substantial part of the activities of the organization shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The organization shall not participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office (including the publishing or distribution of statements) except as authorized under the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended.

Section 6. The Chapter will obtain approval for logos, anthologies, chapter name changes, and bylaw changes from SinC National before moving forward with such logos, anthologies, name changes, and bylaw changes.

ARTICLE V

Officers (the "Executive Committee")

Section 1. The Chapter officers shall be a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. They shall be Professional or Associate members of both SinC-National and the Chapter. These officers shall constitute the Executive Committee.

The Chapter shall make every effort to limit members filling the Chapter's President and Vice President positions to two consecutive terms. However, if after an electronic polling of the membership reveals no new candidates for these roles, then the Chapter may exceed the two-year rule. **Any Chapter with the same member serving in the President and/or Vice President role for more than four years shall seek approval from the National Board.** Members may run again for their former elected office after a period of one year has elapsed since their latest incumbency.

Section 2. The **President** shall preside at (or delegate a representative to) all membership meetings, and call and preside at all meetings of the Executive Committee. The President sets goals and responsibilities, serves as ad hoc member of any standing committees, polls members on major decisions, keeps members informed, serves as group spokesperson, acts as liaison with

Sisters in Crime, Orange County Chapter Bylaws

other SinC-National chapters or related organizations, plans special events, and performs such other duties as the Executive Committee may determine from time to time.

Section 3. The **Vice-President** shall substitute for all or part of the above if the President is unable to fulfill his/her obligations; may attend Executive Committee meetings; and may act as chairperson for special events.

Section 4. The **Secretary** shall take minutes at all general membership and Executive Committee meetings; handle correspondence in coordination with the President; keep a file of Chapter records, publications, and publicity; and perform other duties as the Executive Committee may direct, including the maintenance of a membership roster and information on the Chapter's website. **The Secretary and/or the Membership Chair, as designated by the Chapter, shall be responsible for maintaining the Chapter's membership list on the SinC National website unless the Chapter becomes part of the National dues project. In that case, the Chapter will receive real-time updates as members renew, and their membership will be immediately updated on the SinC National site. Accordingly, the Secretary and/or the Membership Chair will still need to maintain the Chapter's own updated membership list using the information provided by National.**

Section 5. The **Treasurer** shall be responsible for all Chapter financial matters, including the collection of dues and other income; payment of expenses; maintaining bank and online financial account(s); **handling IRS filings**; keeping accurate financial accounting; and preparing and submitting a financial statement whenever the Executive Committee or general membership requests it. The Treasurer, or any person or persons designated by the Executive Committee, may make disbursements from the treasury as authorized by a majority vote of the Executive Committee and general membership.

Section 6. Vacancies. Should there be a vacancy in the Presidency at any time, the Vice-President shall succeed to the Presidency and shall serve until the next annual election. Any other vacancy of an office shall be filled by a vote of the Executive Committee and the successor shall hold office until the next annual election.

Section 7. None of the Chapter officers or any other members of the Executive Committee will receive a salary or compensation for services rendered except for reasonable reimbursement of expenses incurred with their service on behalf of the organization.

Section 8. Expulsion of Officers. Officers can be impeached for dereliction of duty or malfeasance by a majority vote of the Professional and Associate Chapter membership.

If it is alleged that the officer is in violation of the SinC Code of Conduct, please use the SinC National procedures for reporting beginning with filling out the form at <https://www.sistersincrime.org/page/CoCCComplaints>. In respect to an alleged violation of the SinC Code of Conduct, the process shall follow the National guidelines. The investigation and all

Sisters in Crime, Orange County Chapter Bylaws

communications related to the investigation, including all communications with witnesses related to same, shall remain in strict confidence and shall not be disclosed to anyone other than the National Disciplinary Committee members and/or legal representatives involved in the investigation, except where disclosure is required under appropriate legal process. The Disciplinary Committee members and all witnesses associated with the investigation shall execute a Confidentiality Agreement related to the investigation in a form similar to the one attached hereto.

For local dereliction of duty or malfeasance, a general membership vote can be taken in person or by proxy at a regularly scheduled or special meeting, provided that at least 10 days' notice of the matter under consideration has been sent to the membership. The expulsion process includes the following steps:

- **Notification:** The officer will be notified in writing of the local dereliction of duty or malfeasance charge(s) and by whom the charges were made. A copy of the charge(s) will also be filed with the Executive Committee.
- **Investigation:** A committee of members, none of whom are on the Executive Committee, chaired, if possible, by a former president or other officer of [insert chapter designation], will investigate the charges. This committee will be selected by a majority vote of the Executive Committee.
- **Hearing:** If the investigation committee finds merit in the charge by a majority vote, a hearing will be held. The hearing will be conducted in a manner that allows the accused officer(s) ample opportunity to present a defense.
- **Recommendation:** If the investigating committee recommends expulsion by a two-thirds vote, notification of the call for expulsion will be sent to all members, along with a statement summarizing the investigating committee's recommendations.
- **Final Vote:** The membership will vote on the impeachment of the officer(s) at the next membership meeting, after a full and open hearing of both sides.

ARTICLE VI

Committees

Section 1. The Executive Committee shall establish Standing Committees as needed. The Executive Committee shall appoint Chairs of the Standing Committees from the membership. Chairs shall serve at the pleasure of the Executive Committee. They must be Professional or Associate members of the organization.

Standing committees and their chairs may include:

Sisters in Crime, Orange County Chapter Bylaws

1. **Membership Committee.** Keeps an electronic spreadsheet or list of all members, or maintains a member management system, either of which includes the payment of annual chapter dues with current contact information; confirms membership in SinC-National; and maintains the Chapter's group listing on the SinC-National website.
2. **Program Committee.** Works in conjunction with the Chapter's President and/or Executive Committee to plan the Chapter's monthly program meetings, workshops, special events, and speaker or author support at book signing events.
3. **Publicity/Media Committee.** Submits chapter news to the parent SinC newsletter; writes a chapter newsletter on an ad hoc basis, if desired; contacts and responds to media inquiries; keeps a record of member authors' published work; updates information on the Chapter website; maintains Chapter information on social media websites; assists with advertising Chapter meetings; and maintains the Chapter website.

Section 2. The President and/or Executive Committee shall appoint Ad Hoc and Pro Tem Committees as needed.

ARTICLE VII

Meetings

Section 1. The Chapter shall meet at a designated location on a schedule as determined by the Executive Committee. The President or designated Chapter officer shall conduct meetings in accordance with the parliamentary procedure prescribed by the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order, or by any other generally accepted procedure agreed upon by the Executive Committee and announced to the members.

Section 2. Executive Committee meetings may be held when and where the Executive Committee determines, either in person, by proxy, or by conference call or other media access. A quorum of at least three-fourths of the Committee members must be present.

ARTICLE VIII

Elections and Nominations

Section 1. Officer election will take place in November. The vote will be made by secret ballot, by a show of hands, or electronic voting. A Professional or Associate member not named on the ballot shall tabulate the votes. An absentee ballot can be sent to members who are unable to make the meeting in order to vote by proxy. The deadline for returning the absentee ballot is at least one week before the election. Only fully paid-up Professional or Associate members may

Sisters in Crime, Orange County Chapter Bylaws

vote. In the event of a tie, a run-off election will be held. Chapter governance will change hands within 60 days of the vote.

Section 2. General members may make nominations. Nominations should be suggested to the Executive Committee, who will prepare a slate of nominees. The deadline for submission of nominees is the close of the regular October meeting.

ARTICLE IX

Dues

Section 1. Every member shall pay Chapter dues annually. Existing members' dues for the next year are considered due and payable by December 31 of the current year. If a member joins in July through December, the dues paid will be one-half the annual rate.

Section 2. The Executive Committee may propose an increase in dues, which shall be voted on by a simple majority of the Professional or Associate members present and voting at a regularly or specially scheduled meeting with at least 10 days' notice of the increase having been sent to all members.

Section 3. Chapter members must also be members of SinC-National. SinC-National collects its organizational dues separately. Collection of these dues is not the Chapter's responsibility, but the Chapter is responsible for confirming that prospective Chapter members have paid SinC-National dues.

ARTICLE X

Discipline

Section 1. Non-Payment of Dues. Chapter membership may be terminated if dues have not been paid by the end of February of the membership year.

Section 2. Misconduct. "Misconduct" is defined as conduct inimical or harmful to the purposes and/or good repute of SinC-National. **If a person is believed to be in violation of the SinC Code of Conduct, please use the SinC National procedures for reporting beginning with filling out the form at <https://www.sistersincrime.org/page/CoCCComplaints>. In respect to an alleged violation of the SinC Code of Conduct, the process shall follow the National guidelines. The investigation and all communications related to the investigation, including all communications with witnesses related to same, shall remain in strict confidence and shall not be disclosed to anyone other than the National Disciplinary Committee members and/or legal representatives involved in the investigation, except where disclosure is required under appropriate legal process. The**

Sisters in Crime, Orange County Chapter Bylaws

Disciplinary Committee members and all witnesses associated with the investigation shall execute a Confidentiality Agreement related to the investigation in a form similar to the one attached hereto.

If it is believed that the misconduct does not rise to the level of a Code of Conduct violation, the Chapter should reach out to the Community Support Group through the National Chapter Liaisons and/or the National Executive Director for support and guidance in line with SinC's National procedures.

ARTICLE XI

Bylaws and Amendments

Section 1. These bylaws shall constitute the bylaws pro tem of the Orange County Chapter upon approval by the Executive Committee and shall continue as bylaws pro tem until amended and/or approved by a majority of the Professional or Associate membership at a regular meeting or by absentee ballot. The Secretary shall distribute the draft bylaws to the Chapter members thirty days prior to a Chapter meeting, accompanied by an announcement that a vote on the proposed bylaws will take place at that meeting. Absentee ballots may be sent to members upon request. Approval of the bylaws require an affirmative vote of a majority of the Professional and Associate members participating in the vote.

Section 2. Proposals to amend the bylaws must be authorized by the Executive Committee or be presented to the Secretary over the signatures of 20 percent of the Chapter's Professional and Associate members. To be effective, an amendment to the bylaws must be distributed to all members and follow the voting approval process outlined in Section 1 above. **The amended bylaws must be sent to SinC National for approval.**

ARTICLE XII

Dissolution

Section 1. The Orange County Chapter will be dissolved only after such proposal has been accepted by two-thirds of the Executive Committee and notice has been distributed to the membership and to SinC-National. Voting on the proposal shall take place at a monthly meeting or at a special meeting called by the Executive Committee. **Such voting shall be done by the members in person, electronically, or by proxy.** Approval to dissolve the Chapter requires a two-thirds affirmative vote by the Professional and Associate members who participate in the voting in person or by proxy.

Sisters in Crime, Orange County Chapter Bylaws

Section 2. Upon dissolution of the Orange County Chapter, its property and assets shall be distributed as follows:

- All liabilities and obligations of the Chapter shall be paid, satisfied, and discharged, or adequate provision made hereafter.
- Assets held by the Chapter requiring return, transfer, or conveyance, which condition occurs by reason of the dissolution, shall be returned, transferred, or conveyed in accordance with such requirements.
- Any remaining assets shall be sent to SinC National.

Section 3. Information about the dissolution of the Chapter will be posted to the Chapter's website. The notice will include the redirection of interested parties to the contact information available on the SinC-National website or to other nearby chapters.

Section 4. If a chapter is not in compliance with SinC National regulations (e.g., having not filled out the annual chapter survey, maintained communication with SinC National through email or other direct communications, nor met the minimum standards of being a chapter in good standing as per the SinC Chapter Handbook), SinC National may revoke their chapter charter. If that happens, the chapter, through its members and/or Executive Committee, has thirty days to appeal the decision.

ARTICLE XIII

Rules of Procedure and Parliamentary Authority

Section 1. Any policies or procedures not contrary to law or to these bylaws may be approved or amended by a majority vote of the Executive Committee. The Secretary or his/her designee will keep a record of such policies and procedures. The Secretary will send notification of policy or procedural changes to members in the next regular mailing; announced at the next regular meeting; or, published in the Chapter's newsletter.

Section 2. All meetings of the Orange County Chapter and its Executive Committee will be conducted in accordance with the parliamentary procedures described in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*, or by another generally accepted procedure agreed upon by the Executive Committee and announced to the members.

ARTICLE IX

Repeal of Prior Bylaws

These Bylaws constitute the entire Bylaws of the Orange County Chapter. All previous Bylaws or constitutional provisions adopted by the Chapter are hereby repealed.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT ATTESTATION

I, _____, hereby attest to my understanding that all information, communication and/or documentation obtained in the course of the investigation of _____ shall be considered STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. I further agree I shall not disclose, distribute, or discuss to/with anyone other than the _____ Committee members and/or legal representatives specifically involved in the investigation, or as required by a Court or other appropriate legal process, any information, communication, and/or documentation provided, received, and/or otherwise associated with the investigation.

I further agree and attest to my understanding that in the event that I fail to abide by the terms of this Confidentiality Agreement, that such disclosure would be, in and of itself, a material and serious violation of the Code of Conduct and that I may be subject to disciplinary action by Sisters in Crime for such improper disclosure.

SIGNED this ____ day of _____, 20__.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Address: _____
