

Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Diocesan Council of Phoenix

Standards of Affiliation for Conferences

All of the standards listed here comply with the Part I and II of the RULE of the Society, which was approved internationally in October 2003, and Part III of the Rule approved for the United States in May 2006. These are the minimum standards that shall be included and followed in every Conference set of guidelines. Operational guidelines should be included by the Conference but none shall contradict this minimum standard set.

Membership

Participation in the works of the Society is open to all (as defined in Part III of the RULE, only Catholics may be "Full" members or officers). There are no exclusions based on gender, age, race or ethnic background. Diversity within Conferences is both welcome and healthy. Youth (minors) should be accompanied by a parent or designated adult. Meetings should be planned to include people who work. The Conference regularly invites new people to become members.

Training

To live the Vincentian vocation fully and to assure quality of services TRAINING IS REQUIRED. Training takes place at the Conference level for day-to-day works. It is supported by formalized training sessions offered by the Council for new and veteran members alike. All new members of the Conference are obligated to attend the Ozanam Formation Experience (4 sessions) before becoming a full member of the Conference. All Officers of the Conference must have taken or will complete within one year of taking office the Ozanam Formation Experience. This training should be retaken every three or four years as a refresher.

Safe Environment Training

All members of the Society must comply with the training requirements of the Diocese of Phoenix.

Spirituality

Prayer and reflection are indispensable elements of Conference meetings. About 15-20 minutes of each meeting should be devoted to spirituality. Spiritual readings and discussions of those readings should in some way be based on our ministry. An active Spiritual Advisor is a requirement of each Conference. The Spiritual Advisor is encouraged to attend at least one Spiritual Advisors Workshop each year for reminders of his/her role and responsibilities.

Fellowship and Friendship

Besides the spiritual uplift, the most important outcome of Vincentian meetings is the support and encouragement members give to each other through friendship and mutual good example. Members treat each other with respect. Camaraderie is developed. They discuss encounters with the poor and how the issues were resolved. They encourage others to participate in serving those in need.

Meetings

Regular meetings of the Conference are absolutely essential. Weekly meetings are most desirable. As defined by the International Rule of the Society (Part I), twice a month is an absolute minimum frequency of meetings. Meetings should be held on a day and at a time which would welcome parishioners to be members whether they work or not. There should be a specific agenda to be followed for each Conference meeting; on the back of the standard prayer card, there is a sample meeting agenda.

Home Visitation

Home Visitation has always been the core of the Society's ministry. Person-to-person contact with the needy in their homes is viewed as the most basic and necessary Vincentian activity. 100% is the ideal. Conferences who have not reached this level of home visitation should begin with at least 20% of all cases served by home visits. Home visits and/or interviewing in pantries or other sites should always be done in two's. Charity offices are contrary to the spirit and RULE of the Society.

Non-Discrimination

Vincetian services are offered to those in need without discrimination. Offers of help are not made or denied based on race, religion, sex, national origin or choice of lifestyle. Each Conference usually works within their parish boundaries but should always make sure that those who call are helped by direct contact or referrals to the appropriate Conferences or agencies.

Outreach

It is important that the Conference and its services be known both in the parish and in the broader neighborhood. Vincetians need to reach out and seek the unfortunate.

Networking

Conferences cannot and do not stand alone. Being part of the Vincetian family means communicating and cooperating with neighboring Conferences and networking within the Districts and Diocesan Council. When a Conference has abundant resources such as food, funds and members, the Conference should share its resources with a Conference in need. **Conferences are required to be represented at District Council meetings and Diocesan Council functions. (See Diocesan, District and Conference bylaws for specific requirements)** If unable to attend, the **1st** Vice-President may stand in for the President or the President may designate a proxy in writing.

Reporting

Submitting a quarterly (*Quarterly Conference Report*) and an annual accounting of activities (*Annual Conference Report*) is required for affiliation with the Society in the Diocese of Phoenix. Timely submission of quarterly reports makes the task of preparing an Annual Report less burdensome. Such reports or a summary thereof should be shared with the parish priest(s) and the parish community as well. The Conference tithes 10% of all new income to the District Council quarterly **and the District tithes 10% of their income to the Diocesan Council quarterly.**

Stewardship

As good stewards of Conference resources, the following principles need adherence. Conferences do not hoard; Conferences do not build up excessive funds in bank accounts; all funds given to a Conference are expected to be spent on behalf of those in need (in direct aid, operational costs, and to fulfill the Mission of the Society) within a reasonable timeframe. No decision related to helping someone in need should be made in favor of keeping money in the bank. Conference resources are not to be given to outside organizations; funds given to the Society are expected to be used by Society

members for Society purposes. Having excess resources does not relieve members of the responsibility of discernment of need and proper use of resources; do not say "yes" simply because you have extra resources. When a Conference has excess resources, twinning with a Conference in need is encouraged.

Officers^B

The Conference must have four or more full members with a full slate of officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. **The Conference/Council President and Treasurer may not be related to one another by kinship, marriage, adoption and /or any other familial relationship or domestic partnership. Furthermore, such relationships may not exist between the Conference/Council President, Treasurer and any other member who is designated as a signer on Conference/Council financial accounts.**

Conference Funds

The Conference maintains a bank account separate from the parish, under the control of the Conference. The account must be in the name of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (**insert name of conference**) Conference. The Account must be set up using the Tax ID of the Diocesan Council. Each Conference shall conduct an audit of the Treasurer's records on a regular basis, no less often than when a new President is elected. Conferences are encouraged to request an audit by a neighboring Conference, and, in turn, to offer that service to their neighboring Conferences

Types of Assistance

The Conference's assistance to those in need should include a variety of offerings, such as spiritual aid, food, rent, utilities, furniture, prescriptions, transportation, day care, work shoes, funerals, etc. Referrals to other organizations where our guests can be further assisted should be encouraged.

Parish Relations

The Conference will make every effort to maintain a good relationship with the Pastor, parish staff and parish community.

Attitude

Conference members are expected to treat every guest and each other with dignity, respect, compassion, kindness and love.

Conflict of Interest

Annually, all members of the Conference who have fiduciary responsibilities (President, Treasurer, and all others with signing ability on Conference accounts) must read, comply with and accept the Diocesan Council's Conflict of Interest Policy as well as reveal to Conference members any existing or potential conflict of interest as it occurs.

Operational Guidelines

Every Conference is expected to have a set of operational guidelines approved by the Conference members. The operational guidelines are in addition to these Standards of Affiliation. This set of Standards of Affiliation should be printed and distributed to all members so everyone understands what the Conference will do and when. The operational guidelines should be reviewed at least once each year by all members in order to add, change, or delete guidelines as necessary.

(Approved by the Board of Directors for Vote by Conferences, 05/17/2006)

(Approved by the Conferences at the General Membership Meeting, 06/24/2006)

(Approved by theon 6/21/2014)