



2010

# Standards of Affiliation for Effective Conferences



Council of San Bernardino-Riverside, CA

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*This Document has been approved and adopted for use by the Board of Directors serving  
the Diocesan Council of San Bernardino-Riverside, CA*

**These Standards of Affiliation will become effective January 2010**

## **Privilege of Association to SVdP Network**

The following are the minimums that District/Diocesan Councils should expect from their Conferences and these expectations should be shared with each new Conference when it is formed and also reviewed with veteran Conferences periodically. These form the grassroots base from which the SVdP network draws its strength and continues to grow in service to the needy in the name of Jesus in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and Frederic Ozanam. These also provide the structure from which each member's spiritual growth will flow...through their person-to-person service to the needy, members come closer to Jesus. If these minimums are not being met by Conferences, it is the Council's responsibility to see if the Conference is at fault (uninteresting meetings, no challenges, no structured agendas, no training, etc.). Consultation with the Conference should then be undertaken to get their input on needed changes, etc.

If a Conference still does not act to meet these minimum standards, they may already have separated themselves from the SVdP network by their own actions and decisions. In other words, as a result of a group's deliberate decision not to follow certain expected minimum standards of structure/service of the umbrella organization, they may have already separated themselves from that organization and may have automatically lost the right to be part of the umbrella organization by their own actions. Belonging to the SVdP network is a privilege and Councils run the danger of damaging the SVdP name and tradition by allowing groups who do not act in a Vincentian way or spirit to continue to use the SVdP name.

-United States National Council (Excerpts from SVdP Leadership Roles and Responsibilities handbook)

## Guidelines for Effective Conferences

### 2.1 United States Manual of the National Council

- **Effective Conferences are *reachable*.** Parish-based Conferences must provide a clear means for being contacted. Some use the parish office address and phone number and check in regularly to retrieve messages and correspondence.
- **Effective Conferences *meet regularly*.** The Rule requires weekly or biweekly meetings. At these meetings, all members offer their thoughts and support for providing Christian care to the needy.
- **Effective Conferences *are committed to grow in spirituality*.** Members become friends, care for one another and earnestly follow the Society's religious practices. Like Christ, they identify with the poor, whom they visit promptly, regularly, and attentively.
- **Effective Conferences *show initiative*.** Routine, tradition, and habit do not dictate current thought and action. Can the Conference do more? Alert officers and members continually and deliberately ask, answer, and act on such questions.
- **Effective Conferences *have members committed to formation*.** They read, study, attend lectures and courses, and participate in training sessions organized by their Council in order to learn more about helping people and solving problems.
- **Effective Conferences *recruit continuously*.** One reason Conferences give for not tackling new problems is lack of personnel. But dramatic vistas are unveiled when members invite new Vincentians to join in the service of the poor.
- **Effective Conferences *have competent leaders*.** The officers of the Conference handle their specific duties with whatever competence they have naturally or can cultivate. They work hard, but share with members the responsibility for decision-making and action.
- **Effective Conferences *maintain ties to the community*.** Helping people today often requires knowledge of and referrals to other public and private agencies. The Conference deliberately makes itself known to these groups and cultivates relationships of mutual respect to facilitate referrals to and from such agencies.
- **Effective Conferences *participates in their Council activities*.** The President or his proxy represents the Conference at District and/or Council meetings. Conference members take part in general meetings and religious observances, and provide support and personnel for the special works of the Council.
- **Effective Conferences *understand the national and international dimensions of the Society*.** Members show practical concern for the work of the society in less developed or disaster-stricken areas by generously sharing their resources. If possible, they "twin" with needy Conferences domestically or internationally.
- **Effective Conferences *are both wealthy and poor*.** Their members generously support the work of the Conference and elicit similar generosity from friends of the Society. But the Conferences always seem poor, because they share, thoughtfully and intelligently, whatever they have. They do not save for a rainy day, knowing that many are in need here and now.



**The Society of St. Vincent de Paul  
National Council of the United States  
Minimum Requirements for Existing  
Traditional Conferences**

Existing Traditional Conferences must:

- Adopt Bylaws within one year.
- Review the following “Minimum Requirements for Existing Traditional Conferences” and develop a plan to correct areas in which the conference is not meeting the requirements of the Rule.
  1. The Conference excludes no one from membership based on age, sex, race or ethnic background. Rule, Part I, 3.2
  2. The Conference meets regularly and frequently, and not less often than twice a month. Weekly meetings are desirable but not mandatory. Rule, Part I, 3.3.1, Part III, Statute 5
  3. The Conference has four or more active members and a full slate of officers: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Rule, Part III, Statute 12
  4. Prayer, spiritual readings and reflection are a part of each meeting. Rule, Part III, Statute 7
  5. The Conference has an active, trained Spiritual Advisor who attends full meetings regularly and accepts responsibility to promote the spiritual life of the Conference. Rule, Part I, 3.13, Part III, Statute 15, U.S. Manual Pages 48-49
  6. The Conference is aggregated or has filed an application if has been in existence for one year or more. Rule, Part I, 3.8, Part III, Statute 6
  7. The conference serves all those in need regardless of age, sex, race, ethnic background or life style. Rule, Part I, 1.4 Part III, Statute 8

8. All home visits and other interviews are made by two Vincentians. Rule, Part II, Statute 8
9. The Conference has person-to-person contacts with the needy, whenever possible.  
Rule, Part I, 1.2, Mission Statement
10. Home visits are the primary focus of work for traditional conferences. U.S. Manual Page 23
11. The Conference maintains a bank account separate from the parish, under the control of the conference Treasurer. Rule, Part III, Statutes 12 and 24, U.S. Manual, Pages 26 and 30
12. The conference attends District meetings and takes part in programs and events sponsored by their District/Diocesan Councils. Rule, Part I 3.6, Manual Page 36
13. The Conference sends its members to formation and training sessions offered by the Society, particularly the Ozanam Orientation. Rule, Part I, 3.6, 3.12, Part III, Statute 10
14. The Conference submits Annual Reports to the District/Diocesan Council.  
Rule, Part III, Statutes 22 and 23
15. The Conference presents at least an Annual Report of its activities to the Pastor and people of its parish, preferably through the parish bulletin.  
Rule, Part III, Statutes 22 and 23, U.S. Manual Page 30
16. The Conference maintains a positive relationship with the clergy. Rule, Part I, 5.1
17. All donations go to the works of the Conference. No donations are used to fund other charities no matter how worthy. Rule Part I, 3.14, Part III Statute 26
18. The Conference provides required support for Councils/Region. Rule Part III, Statute 25
19. The Conference knows and follows the Rule of the Society. U.S. Manual Page 14

## **MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS FOR SVDP CONFERENCES FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE SVDP NETWORK**

“The following standards were gathered from various SVDP sources: the aggregation application, the SVDP Rule and the United States Manual. These standards should be a Council’s expectations for each Conference in its jurisdiction.”

-United States National Council, (Excerpt from SVdP Leadership Roles and Responsibilities handbook)

### **A. IN RELATION TO THE LOCAL COUNCIL**

The Parish Conference:

1. Has been approved and formally accepted by the local SVdP District/Diocesan Council. The Conference is open to pursuing aggregation one year after being formally established.
2. Considers itself a part of the SVdP organization and uses the SVdP name.
3. Is represented at all Council meetings as requested and this information is shared with their other Conference members unable to attend.
4. Encourages its members to participate in Council formation/continuing education sessions.
5. Sends in its annual report in a timely manner when requested.
6. Does not engage in activities contrary to the policies of the local Council or that interfere with the operation of neighboring Conferences.
7. Donates money for local and National Council’s support as requested and assists in other local, regional, national and international appeals as local funds permit.
8. Participates in the Council’s Special Works and Committee activities outside their parish area as members’ time permits.

## **B. IN RELATION TO CONFERENCE OPERATION**

The Parish Conference:

1. Will be knowledgeable of and faithful to the Rule and United States Manual.
2. Confidentially serves the needy (materially, emotionally, etc.) in their area as time and resources permit without regard to race, religious affiliation, age, etc. in a person-to-person manner in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and Frederic Ozanam; also engages in home visits bringing the assistance to the needy in their homes.
3. Meets regularly
  - a) Opening/Closing prayers are said at each meeting.
  - b) A spiritual reading is read and discussed by members in depth.
  - c) A Spiritual Advisor (priest, deacon, lay person) provides spiritual guidance to the Conference.
  - d) Cases are discussed and treated confidentially.
  - e) A secret collection is taken up among members for the poor.
  - f) Members have a working knowledge of the history of the Society, the SVdP Rule and structure, community resources, etc. and cooperates with other organizations and services in their area.
4. Keeps written records on its finances and services to the needy and reports regularly on its activity to its local parish community that supports it; uses SVdP Minute Book and Treasurer's Book.
5. Knows that it should have four special Masses offered each year for:
  - I. The Four Intentions of the Society (Church, Pope, United States, the SVdP);

- II. For the deceased members of the Conference;
  - III. The deceased poor; and
  - IV. The sick and troubled seeking help through Ozanam's intercession.
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- 6. Knows that funds donated to the SVdP can only be used for St. Vincent de Paul Society work within the SVdP network and should not be diverted to other projects or organizations regardless of their merit.
  - 7. Its President is elected for a three year term which may be renewed once.

**MINIMUM POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR  
SVDP AFFILIATION  
IN THE SVDP NETWORK  
OF THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF  
SAN BERNARDINO-RIVERSIDE**

“In keeping with the Rule of the Society and in compliance with the rules governing the Society’s tax exempt status, the following Policies and Procedures have been approved and adopted for use by the San Bernardino-Riverside Council Board of Directors, to serve as the Council’s minimum requirements for each Conference in its jurisdiction.

These are in addition to the minimum standards and expectations  
listed previously in this document.

The Council formed these Policy and Procedures to ensure the financial, legal, and moral responsibilities of the Council and adherence to the Rule are maintained.

All Policy and Procedures listed exemplify the roles and responsibilities of Conferences (as stated in the Rule and U.S. Manual) whereby there is due obligation by all Conferences to be accountable to all legal and financial realities of the Society. The Policy and Procedures are necessary in maintaining the legal responsibilities associated with the Council as a “Corporate Entity” whereby all activities of the

SVdP Conferences and Special Works are attached.

Adherence to these Minimum Standards and Policy/Procedures are necessary in maintaining membership status within the Council of San Bernardino-Riverside”

-San Bernardino-Riverside Diocesan Council - 11/15/09

## **A. IN RELATION TO THE LOCAL COUNCIL**

The Parish Conference:

1. Must strive for Solidarity and ensure the following :
  - Will provide the Diocesan Council with a letter from their parish Pastor or Pastoral Coordinator expressing his/her approval for the existence and operation of a SVdP Conference in the parish.
  - Will comply with the Solidarity dues associated with the Diocesan, Regional and National Councils.
2. Who wishes to provide for a Special Work of the Society must submit to the Council for approval of the Special Work (Thrift Stores, Food Pantries, etc.), the details of the work and all policy and procedures to support it. Once approved the Conference agrees to follow proper procedures, keep the Diocesan Council informed of its activities, financials, follow directives, etc... since the Council is ultimately responsible for all SVdP activities in its area as the legal corporate entity.
3. President will attend all quarterly Leadership District/Council meetings. If the President is unable to attend – a Proxy will be sent in his/her place. Important information is distributed and discussed at these meetings – to ensure all membership are properly informed, it is the responsibility of the President to communicate and share with their members this information.
4. Networking with other persons and agencies of good will are important to the work of the Conference. Good networking allows the Conference to multiply its resources while avoiding duplication of services. However, Conferences have a responsibility to ensure those persons and agencies chosen to partner with are in good standing within the community, while also ensuring that their mission is aligned with the Society's mission and does not go against the Catholic Social Teachings of the Church. *If a Memorandum*

*of Understanding is required between your partnership, the Conference must seek approval and signature for the MOU from the Council Board President.*

## **B. IN RELATION TO CONFERENCE OPERATION**

The Parish Conference:

1. Will actively seek and strive to obtain the goals as stated in the **Standards of Excellence** for Conferences *(as approved by the National Council)*.
2. Home Visitation has always been the core of the Society's mission. Person-to-person contact with the needy in their homes is viewed as the most basic and necessary Vincentian activity. Conferences should strive for 100% home visits made to those served. *(Conferences formed prior to the date of this document and who have not reached this level of home visits should begin with 30% of all cases receiving a Vincentian home visit – increasing the percentage each quarter and striving for 100%)*. Conferences should avoid becoming charity offices which are contrary to the spirit and Rule of the Society.
3. Is expected to have a set of operational guidelines approved by the Conference members. The operational guidelines are in addition to these Minimum Standards. These operational guidelines should be printed and distributed to all members so everyone understands what the Conference will do and when. The operational guidelines should be reviewed annually by all members in order to make changes and improvements as necessary. A copy of these operational guidelines should be on file with the Diocesan Council.
4. Has approved Conference Bylaws *(using the approved template from National Council)* and a copy of the Bylaws and Approved Acknowledgment form must be on file with the Diocesan Council.
5. Maintains written minutes of all Conference meetings.

6. Provides Diocesan Council with Confirmation of Aggregation status of Conference or submit Aggregation application to begin the process (*after existence of 12 months*).
7. Provides the Diocesan Council with a complete list of Conference Officer positions and valid contact information for each. (*President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Spiritual Advisor*) – will also notify Council as changes occur.
8. Provides the Diocesan Council with a current Membership Roster of all members (*Active and Associate*), using the approved Council Member application form. Notifies Council when changes occur.
9. Maintains appropriate insurance coverage as required by Council.
10. Will provide good oversight for Risk Management on a Conference level – guard against loss of resources: financial, human and reputation.
11. Will use the Council's approved forms in the Vincentian Toolkit for good business practices in association with Confidentiality, Photo Releases, Release of Information, Financial Accountability, Conflict of Interest, etc...
12. Members who have fiduciary responsibilities (Conference Officers 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.
13. Officers will be email accessible to the Council whereby correspondence, reports and additional information will be communicated via email which allows for

quicker communications, is effective in minimizing postage costs and paper use resulting in good stewardship of resources.

### **C. IN RELATION TO CONFERENCE FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Parish Conference:

1. Will be knowledgeable of and adhere to the Statutes of the Rule and the United States Manual in all aspects of financial accountability and reporting.
2. Understands that the maintenance of financial records for the Society begins on a Conference level with the Conference Treasurer whose obligation it is to accurately maintain records of all financial transactions of the Conference on a monthly basis. *The proper keeping of these records cannot be ignored, if the Society is to maintain in good standing before the law and among people.*
3. Will use the approved Monthly Report form as found in the SVdP Treasurer/Secretary's Handbook.
4. Will provide the Conference Membership with a Monthly financial and services report every month using the report forms found in the Vincentian Toolkit. A copy of this report should be kept on file for Council's review.
5. Will provide the Diocesan Council with a copy of the Conference's Quarterly Report as well as additional supporting documentation as requested by the Diocesan Council. The documents to include with your Conference's Quarterly Report to Diocesan Council will be the following:
  - ✓ Completed Bank Reconciliation forms for each month of quarter
  - ✓ Copy of Monthly Bank Statements w/Cancelled Checks

**Due Dates for Conference's Quarterly Reports:**

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter due by January 15<sup>th</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter due by April 15<sup>th</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter due by July 15<sup>th</sup>

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter due by October 15<sup>th</sup>

6. Will provide the Diocesan Council with completed Bank Verification forms annually and when any changes in banking occur (*which includes all information pertaining to all Conference bank accounts and signatories*).
7. Will maintain accurate records, good supporting documentation and will adhere to the Records Retention Policy as stated in U.S. Manual.
8. Will ensure all donations given to the Conference will adhere to the "Donor's Bill of Rights" as found in the Vincentian Toolkit distributed by Council. Conference will also send donor a thank you acknowledgement with an approved tax receipt within 7-10 days of receiving donation.
9. Will ensure that funds are used appropriately with no accumulation of excess funds (as required by the SVdP Rule).
10. Will be audited at least once a year, and at the change of the Conference President. The audit can be performed by two (non-leadership) members who have been delegated by the Conference, by a qualified professional person or organization, or by delegated persons from upper Councils.
11. Will follow the proper procedures for Conference Auditing as outlined in the approved National Secretary/Treasurer's Handbook.
12. Will provide the Diocesan Council with an annual Audit Verification Form once audit is complete.

13. Officers will attend the required Auditing, Compliance and Reporting Workshop offered by the Diocesan Council annually and will adhere to the financial accountability and auditing policies and procedures set forth from these workshops to ensure good stewardship and transparency.
14. Will notify and request permission from the Diocesan Council before pursuing and/or submitting for a local, state or federal grant.
15. Will provide Pastor (or Pastoral Coordinator) with a monthly and/or quarterly (whichever is preferred by the parish) financial/services report giving insight to the use of the funds collected from the parish community.

#### **D. IN RELATION TO VINCENTIAN MEMBERSHIP**

The Parish Conference will ensure that each member of their Conference

1. Has completed (annually) a membership application form. This must be completed in full by each member and returned to the Diocesan Council to validate their membership into the Society.
2. Attends the required formations and trainings as it pertains to their membership position which is necessary in retaining their membership in the Council.  
Required Trainings and Workshops are as follows:
  - Approved National Ozanam Orientation (*required for all members*)
  - Diocesan Safe Environment Workshop and Finger Printing (*required for all members*)
  - Approved Spiritual Advisor Certification Training (*required for all active Spiritual Advisors*)
  - Approved Leadership Formation (*required for all Conference Officers*)

- Conference Financial Auditing, Compliance & Reporting Workshop (*required for all Conference Officers*)
  
- 3. Provide the Diocesan Council with a copy of the completed certification and finger printing approval for safe environment for every member/volunteer of the Conference (no exceptions). *Note: If volunteer assists the Conference less than 20 hours per year the fingerprinting is not required – however no Un-Fingerprinted volunteer may assist in any SVdP program and/or function where children may be present.*
  
- 4. Are non paid Conference volunteers (*except for reimbursable expenses*) and no Conference Officer is a paid parish staff member.
  
- 5. Does not receive benefits from Conference resources of any kind for their personal need, gain or want. This includes cash payments for personal assistance and/or in kind resources such as food, clothing, furniture, etc... all resources are collected in the name of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for the sole use and benefit of the poor we serve (also known as clients).

The primary role of the Vincentian is not to pay bills, furnish groceries, or clothe someone.

The role of the Vincentian is to provide loving and compassionate interest in individuals.

If that interest calls for food, clothing or other assistance, so be it.

However, It is in loving where the contact with Christ emerges.

That contact with Christ is what separates  
The Society of St. Vincent de Paul  
From just another social agency.