



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE US
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Teaching the Home Visit

Guidelines for Conferences and Councils

Orientation, continuing education, and formation on the Vincentian Encounter focused on the Home Visit

National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul

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Teaching the Home Visit

The foundation of all our Vincentian encounters is a willingness to imitate the gratuitous love of Christ with our neighbors and with one another in any setting. Vincentians have traditionally found home visitation with the neighbor and their family to be the best way to honor dignity and establish mutuality. We also discern patterns that can inspire special works specific to the communities we serve.



The Society has a tradition of incorporating materials developed by national and regional teams into their own formation programs at the Council and Conference Level.

The National Formation Team is organizing the wealth of Formation and Education materials into a Pathway Format electronically to facilitate and optimize access to education and formation.

The current Home Visit Education and Formation Pathway was mapped, and gaps identified. New Home visit education and formation materials have been developed and will be made available through the pathway.

A Guideline for Council and Conference based education and Formation around the Vincentian Home Visit and recommendations based on best practices from across the country has been drafted for your consideration when evaluating and developing conference and council orientation and continuing education and formation.

Home Visit Orientation, Formation, and Continuing Education

The Vincentian encounter with the neighbor, most often in the Home, is the heart of our Vincentian Mission and Ministry.

Orientation, formation, and continuing education begin as soon as a new member becomes part of a Conference and Council.

All Vincentians receive orientation, formation, and continuing education to support the Vincentian Encounter and the home visit. Even if the Vincentian ministry role does not include home visits, ALL Vincentians engage in the Vincentian encounter and must understand the importance of evolving competencies that strengthen our presence and relationship, living our virtues and serving all of God's people without judgment.

“Visiting families is not as easy as it seems; instructions in this regard are extremely useful, and it would be good to repeat them.”

Bl. Frédéric Ozanam

The Vincentian encounter includes all person to person (face to face) encounters, most commonly the Home Visit. During the Vincentian Encounter:

- Vincentians seek out those we serve, visiting them in their environment; we can meet our friends on a park bench, in a coffee shop etc.
- Vincentians *listen* first and for as long as necessary, and then ask questions.
- Vincentians need to do home visits, even when the conference can't offer financial or other assistance. It's about the encounter, the listening, and offering hope as much as it is about assistance "Vincentians should never forget that giving love, talents and time is more important than giving money." (Rule, Part I, 3.14)
- Conference Presidents and Spiritual Advisors need to remind conferences that *continuing* home visit formation is important, not just once or only for new members.
- Conferences should set aside part of their meeting from time to time for Members to exchange their thoughts on what they have learned, and how better to find and to serve Christ in the neighbor.

Council and Conference Servant leader considerations during Formation Planning.

- Assessment of current orientation and formation around the Vincentian Encounter, especially the home visit.
- Is ongoing education and formation available for conferences and council?
- Are basic and advanced home visit workshops available through Formators, Presenters, and Spiritual Advisors?
- Is the conference committed to ongoing formation around the Vincentian Encounter, including the Home Visit?
- Ensure compliance with National Safeguarding Policy (Resolution 189) and all local (Arch)diocesan safe environment requirements.

"Vincentians should never forget that giving love, talents and time is more important than giving money."

Rule, Part I, 3.14

Formation and Education Planning Considerations:

- Conference members collaborate on an orientation/mentoring/continuing education process for new Vincentian Home visitors. Facilitated by Spiritual Advisor and President at Conference level.
- Incorporate National, Regional, Council and Conference resources: Ozanam Orientation, *Home visit as the Heart of our Vocation and Ministry workshop experiences*, Basic Home visit and Advanced Home Visit workshops, Serving in Hope Module VII, Council orientation, and continuing education/formation opportunities that broaden our understanding of the Systemic change and advocacy formation opportunities available across the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.
- Mentoring Strategies: Design home visit practice experience based on the conference guidelines.
 - Based on clear outcomes
 - Intentional matching of mentor and mentee
 - Offers diversity of approaches
 - Partner with an experienced Home Visitor
 - Review Coaching Mentoring Counseling content
- Assure Conference is up to date on Home Visit Education and Formation Pathway resources
- Introduce Serving in Hope, Module VII or the Advanced Home visit workshop.
- Provide, and encourage all Members to use, the *Spirituality of the Home Visit* booklet to journal their home visit experiences, and then share an Apostolic Reflection on them with the Conference.
- Make intentional use of home visit experiences the center of the Conference spiritual reflection, to explicitly connect our service with our spiritual growth.

Council Guideline Checklist

- Ensure that the Council President appoints a Formation Committee, including at least a Council Spiritual Advisor and Formator.
- Assure that the Formation team makes full use of the Ozanam Orientation, Basic Home Visit Workshop, and Advanced Home Visit Workshop materials as part of the Council Formation Plan.
- Councils should hold these workshops regularly – at least once annually, but more often in large Councils, so that all Members have an opportunity to attend.
- Ensure that presenters and formators leading these workshops are active home visitors themselves – don't present from an "ivory tower"!
- Assure Formators and Presenters are trained and prepared to provide the Ozanam Orientation, Home Visit Workshops, Spiritual Advisor Training, and other Systemic Change education and training needed by Vincentians.
- Ensure that Conference officers participate in all of these workshops and are active home visitors themselves. *"It is important that officers at all levels participate regularly in meetings and charitable activities of the Society and visit the poor as often as possible."* (Rule, Part III, Statute 12)



Conference Guideline Checklist

- Ensure all prospective members engage in a process of discernment about the Vincentian Vocation.
- Ensure that Home Visit training is part of welcoming all new members to the Conference
- Ensure each Vincentian is in compliance with National Safeguarding Policy and any local safe environment requirements.
- Assign a mentor – a more experienced member, to accompany new members throughout their discernment. The new member should go on at least one home visit with the mentor during this time, and they can discuss afterwards.
- Keep track of member participation in Ozanam Orientation, Basic Home Visit Workshop, and Advanced Home Visit Workshop. Encourage all members to attend.
- Make sure all members are familiar with Conference home visit guidelines and record-keeping. Do you have paper records? An online database or commercial software such as ServWare?
- Collaborate with Council to encourage attendance at continuing education, training, and formation offerings that strengthen the Vincentian Encounter.