



IMMERSION SITE PROCEDURES MANUAL

Revised April 2020



**A network of friends, called to holiness
by walking with the formerly incarcerated
as they reenter their communities.**

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INTRODUCTION & PROGRAM BACKGROUND

- The National Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul IMMERSION Reentry Program, (hereafter referred to as “IMMERSION”) was developed in mid-2018 by a consortium of Vincentian volunteers and staff from around the country who have been assisting returning persons to permanently reenter their community. It was given the name, IMMERSION, as a “point of entry” to symbolize an entering into community not unlike entering the water of baptism experienced by candidates on their journey of faith into the Catholic Church.
- Developed through an exchange of research, best practices, and much discussion, the result was the identification of eight (8) KEY COMPONENTS and a Self-Sufficiency Assessment tool. As the first national program of the National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul, (hereafter referred to as SVdPUSA), IMMERSION guidelines are designed to set uniform standards to ensure a quality program with the ability to measure outcomes and effectiveness using a logic model that collects quantitative evidence of each IMMERSION site.
- The 2018-2021 SVDPUSA STRATEGIC PLAN identifies five (5) focus areas of attention (see Attachments). The IMMERSION program addresses three (3) of the five (5) focus areas: III. ADVOCATE FOR AND WORK TOWARDS A MORE JUST WORLD; IV. PROMOTE DEEPER AND MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE WE SERVE; and V. DEVELOP, IMPROVE, AND EXPAND SERVICES.
- SVDPUSA IMMERSION is the model program to maximize community impact on the returning citizen’s community. Statistics demonstrate that more than 30% of those in poverty are returning citizens or family members affected by incarceration.
- Nationwide, our prisons are overpopulated with a 3-year recidivism rate of 68% as reported by the DOJ Bureau of Justice Statistics. ([Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2018](#)).
- The goal of IMMERSION is to provide alternatives to reoffending, thereby helping foster healing within our communities and families. IMMERSION provides guidance and support within a consistent and reproducible framework to track the outcomes of the components that the formerly incarcerated participate in. IMMERSION empowers each active participant with the skills and abilities to improve to the level that they are not likely to recidivate, and over a three period, become a valued, permanent member of the community.
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NATIONAL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

SVDPUSA IMMERSION was formally adopted on February 28, 2019 by National President Ralph Middlecamp as a SVDPUSA National Program. The development and initial oversight of the program was charged to a National Reentry Task Force composed of a Chair, Co-Chair, SVDPUSA National Director of Prison Reentry Services and five task force members approved by the National President.

Support

SVDPUSA National Support provides quality assurance and oversight, as well as day-to-day operational support and guidance to local IMMERSION sites.

- **Funding** – IMMERSION sites are encouraged to seek local funding and grant opportunities while participating in the SVDPUSA grant resources. National fundraising is in constant process and, if funds are received, they will be made available through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to local IMMERSION sites with a matching fund requirement.

Governance

Local Program oversight and program compliance assurance is the joint responsibility of the IMMERSION Site Coordinator and sponsoring administrative Council or Conference under the leadership of the Director of Prison Reentry Services. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by local site administration and the National SVDPUSA IMMERSION Program provides the mutual agreement with the local IMMERSION site.

National Program oversight and compliance assurance is the responsibility of the Director of Prison Reentry Services and the Chair and Co-Chair of the Reentry Task Force. Program activity shall be reported by each site as directed by the Director who shall conduct an evaluation and review of the data. The Director and the IMMERSION Site Coordinator will cooperate to conduct follow-up communication for regular program updates and for any corrective actions that may be needed to improve reporting data procedures.

Site visits will be undertaken by the Director and a second Task Force Member on a mutually agreed upon schedule to assure quality control compliance. The Site visits will include review of IMMERSION hardcopy participant files, program volunteer files, the local Program MOU File as well as data collection and reporting procedures.



A written **site visit report** shall be prepared by the Director after each site visit and provided to the IMMERSION Site Coordinator with copies to the National Reentry Task Force, the sponsoring Council/ Conference President, and the National President.



SITE REQUIREMENTS

Preliminary Requirements

Prior to operating as a nationally approved SVDPUA IMMERSION site, a formally agreed upon and signed MOU between the local IMMERSION Site and the National SVDPUA President will be completed. Once the IMMERSION Site is formally approved, staff, volunteer and operational procedure training shall be coordinated in a mutually agreeable manner between the IMMERSION Site Coordinator and the Director of Prison Reentry Services.

File Requirements

Program Participant Files

At a minimum, local IMMERSION sites shall maintain the following **hardcopy files**, in a **PENDING, ACTIVE** or **EXITED** status filing system, depending on the status of the participant. **A separate file folder shall be maintained for each IMMERSION Program Participant.** The *Program Participant File Checklist* shall be used as a log of contents of the **folder and be displayed as the TOP SHEET on the left side of the file folder.** An “x” in the checkbox shall indicate a copy of the document is present in the folder. This folder shall contain, at a minimum, the following completed/executed forms:

- 1. Program Participant File Checklist**
- 2. Initial Contact Intake Form*
- 3. Participant Information and Ongoing Contacts*
- 4. Participant Authorization for Release of Confidential Information*
- 5. Confidential Case Record Information*
- 6. My 72-Hour Reentry Plan (if applicable)*
- 7. SMART Goal Worksheet (if applicable)*
- 8. Program Associate Self-Sufficiency Assessment Form (LW-SSM Assessment)*
- 9. Notice of Decision*

Volunteer and Employee Files

Volunteer and Employee Files – a separate **file folder** shall be maintained for each SVdP IMMERSION Volunteer/Employee. A *Volunteer Forms Checklist* shall be used as a log of



contents of the folder. It shall be displayed as the TOP SHEET on the left side of the file folder. An “x” in the checkbox shall indicate a copy of the document is present in the folder. This folder shall contain, at a minimum, the following completed/executed SVdP IMMERSION documents:

1. *Volunteer Forms Checklist*
2. *Volunteer Application*
3. *Background Check Waiver*
4. *Results of Criminal Background Check*
5. *SVdP IMMERSION Volunteer Manual Acknowledgement*
6. *Photograph, Video and Testimonial Release (if applicable)*
7. *Volunteer/Employee Contact*
8. *Vincentian Confidentiality Agreement*
9. *Volunteer/Employee Authorization for Release of Confidential Information*
10. *Waiver and Release of Liability*
11. *Proof of training for all Vincentian volunteers and staff employed, in Safe Environment Practices to protect minors and vulnerable adults, this includes a background check.*
12. *Health and Safety Disclaimer and Questionnaire*
13. *Volunteer/ Employee Training Documentation*
14. *Activity Log*

MOU Files

A file shall be maintained containing MOU's entered into with SVDPUA IMMERSION Program as well as local community partner organizations, institutions and correctional facilities.

Miscellaneous Files

Additional local files as deemed necessary should also be maintained. They may include items such as participant contact logs, monthly program activity reports, and Weekly activity reports, funding reports, local community resources and other program reference materials.



Processes, Forms and Procedures for IMMERSION Participants

Forms needed for program implementation will be kept current and maintained in a secure area on the IMMERSION website accessible to authorized users. The status of the participant at INTAKE dictates which forms are applicable for use. For instance, if a potential participant is currently incarcerated, a contact will be recorded but active participation in the IMMERSION Program Initial Intake form is not required until they are released. In the explanation of forms usage below we will identify which forms are “required”, “if applicable” or “if needed.”

Pending Participant Intake Forms

Program intake is the process of identifying and registering a potential IMMERSION participant. Potential participants may be referred to us by prison officials as well currently institutionalized, recently released, or long-released offenders. They may come to us from a website visit, community partner organization referral, court referrals, as well as contacts by Vincentians at correctional facilities, etc.

These participants shall be put into a file designated as PENDING PARTICIPANTS. Following is listing of forms to be used, along with instructions on WHEN and HOW to use the form:

- 1. Initial Contact Intake Form** – This form is to be completed at the first contact with a potential participant, regardless of their current custodial status. This form is designed to present standardized information of the nature of the program and expectations of the participant so that both the potential participant AND the IMMERSION site administration team can work together to determine the components they might choose to take part in.
 - a) **Filing and Distribution** – Two copies of the form should be completed, one for the perspective participant and the other to be returned to the IMMERSION site coordinator for administrative filing. If the perspective participant does NOT indicate an interest in participating NOW, the OFFICE COPY of this form should be filed in a Pending file and followed up on the date indicated if applicable.
- 2. Participant Information and Ongoing Contacts** – This form shall be completed at the initial visit, and “ Intake” checkbox at the top of the sheet should be checked. All information blocks applicable at the first INTAKE should be checked. Be sure to have the participant sign at the bottom of this form.



- (1) Filing and Distribution – the original should be filed, and relevant data entered into the IMMERSION database.

Active Participant Forms

If and/or when the Pending Participant is accepted, the OFFICE COPY of the IMMERSION Program Initial Contact-Intake Form should be filed.

Required

1. **Participant Information and Ongoing Contacts** – This form should be used to document each contact with the IMMERSION participant, whether in person or otherwise. It can be checked at the top of the form to indicate the nature of the contact, either Follow-up or Program Exit/Close Out. Subsequent use of this form for other contacts should be for updated or new information in the information blocks and entered into the IMMERSION database as applicable.
 - a. Filing and Distribution – the original should be filed, and relevant data entered into the IMMERSION database.
2. **Notice of Decision** – Once a perspective participant indicates they are interested in working with IMMERSION, an initial contact with the participant will be scheduled. When the participant decides which support and services best meet their current needs this form is completed and signed for IMMERSION registration. A copy should be provided to the participant.
 - a. Filing and Distribution – the original should be filed, and a copy provided to the participant if requested.
3. **Authorization for Release of Confidential Information** – This form should be completed upon registration of the participant into IMMERSION. This form may be required when making inquiries or advocating on behalf of the participant. A copy of this form may need to be shown or provided to entities to acquire desired information or results for the benefit of the participant.
 - a. Filing and Distribution – the original should be filed, and a copy provided to the participant if requested.
4. **Confidential Case Record Information** – This form should be completed at the initial registration meeting to document the participant's contact information and the nature of the family dynamics useful in assessing and assisting needed support.
 - a. Filing and Distribution – the original should be filed, and a copy provided to the participant if requested.



If Applicable or Needed

1. **My 72-Hour Reentry Plan** – This form should be completed when working with each IMMERSION participant. It should be completed in collaboration with each active participant whether prior to their release or at release, to assist in developing a clear and safe plan to implement during this critical period in their community reintegration.
 - a. **Filing and Distribution** – the original should be filed, and a copy provided to the participant if requested.
2. **SMART Goal Worksheet** – After assessing needs and developing an action plan, this form may be used to help the participant focus on a self-improvement plan.
 - a. **Filing and Distribution** – the original should be filed, and a copy provided to the participant if requested.
3. **All Program Associate Self-Sufficiency Assessment Form (LW-SSM Assessment)** – The forms shall be completed upon program intake (post-prison release only), at quarterly intervals, and program completion. These assessments are an aid in evaluating the participant’s self-sufficiency status, current needs, and local and national program effectiveness.
 - a. These forms shall be filed in the Program Participant Folder and recorded in the IMMERSION database as applicable.

Completion of Program Services (Required)

All of the following forms are required and must be filed in an EXITED PARTICIPANT FOLDER/FILE:

1. **Participant Information and Ongoing Contacts** – This form shall be completed with comments in the VISIT NOTES information block upon the participant’s completion of the program or the IMMERSION site’s administrative closure of the case file. The “ Program Exit/Close Out” checkbox should be checked on the “Exit” contact form. Obtain a participant signature if possible or explain in the VISIT NOTES block why this was not possible.
 - a. **Filing** – This form shall be filed in the EXITED PARTICIPANT Folder/File.
2. **Notice of Decision and/or Completion Certificate** – This form shall be completed upon the Active Participant’s completion of the program or the IMMERSION site’s administrative closure of the case file. The “Termination of Services” section should be completed, and the appropriate checkbox checked:
 - a. Satisfactorily completed program in good standing. – THIS box shall be checked when the Active Participant has completed their IMMERSION program goals and believes they have successfully attained their self-sufficiency status.



- b. Administratively closed. Explanation in “Details” below. – THIS box shall be checked when the IMMERSION Site Coordinator closes the Active Program Participant’s case filer due to the participant’s decision to leave the IMMERSION program for reasons other than completion of goals.
- c. Filing and Distribution – The original should be delivered to the Participant, if available, and a copy filed in the Exited Participant Folder. If the form is unable to deliver to the Participant, an explanation should be offer in the “Details” information block, such Participant “Last program contact was (date) and participant’s whereabouts are unknown.”

IMMERSION Volunteers or Employees

A separate IMMERSION Volunteer Folder shall be maintained for each volunteer working in the IMMERSION program. The following forms are required to be included in this folder. Other locally generated forms as desired may also be contained in the folder.

1. **SVdP IMMERSION Volunteer Manual** – Each site should have a volunteer manual for their volunteers. A sample or generic IMMERSION Manual is available but may be modified by the site to reflect site-specific requirements and guidance.
 - a. Filing – The checkbox on the folder log of contents of the Volunteer Folder, should have the date the manual was provided to the volunteer recorded.
2. **Volunteer Application** – Each site shall have a volunteer application available to be completed by their volunteer candidates. A sample or generic form is available but may be modified by the site to reflect site-specific requirements.
 - a. This form shall be filed in the Volunteer Folder.
3. **Authorization for Release of Confidential Information** – Each site shall have a volunteer Release of Information available to be completed by their volunteers. A sample or generic form is available but may be modified by the site to reflect site-specific wording.
 - a. This form shall be filed in the Volunteer Folder.
4. **Waiver and Release of Liability** – Each site shall have a volunteer Waiver form available to be completed by their volunteers. A sample or generic form is available but may be modified by the site to reflect site-specific wording.
 - a. This form shall be filed in the Volunteer Folder.
5. **Health and Safety Disclaimer and Questionnaire** – Each site shall have a volunteer Disclaimer form available to be completed by their volunteers. A sample or generic form is available but may be modified by the site to reflect site-specific wording.
 - a. This form shall be filed in the Volunteer Folder.



6. **Background Check Waiver and Results of Criminal Background Check** – Each site shall do a criminal background check on each of their IMMERSION volunteers.
 - a. This report shall be filed in the Volunteer Folder once it is completed.
7. **Volunteer/ Employee Training Documentation** – Each site shall have an IMMERSION volunteer training module available to be completed by their volunteers. Sample or generic training material is available but may be modified by the site to reflect site-specific training preferences.
 - a. This form shall be filed in the Volunteer Folder.
8. **Training for Safe Environment with Children and Vulnerable Adults and Background Check.** It may consist of log entries and dates to reflect training and material provided.
 - a. This form shall be filed in the Volunteer Folder.
9. **Activity Log** – Each site shall have a method to record volunteer time and activity completed by their volunteers. A sample or generic form is available but may be modified by the site to reflect site-specific wording. Volunteer time and activity may be recorded in the IMMERSION database as an alternative to a hardcopy record. Both may be required based on National and local administrative preferences.
 - a. This form shall be filed in the Volunteer Folder.

Goals:

- Reduction in recidivism
- Increase returning citizen's self-sufficiency
- Increase community's support for systemic change

Methods: 8 Key Components

- Education of Vincentians
- 72 Hour Transitional Programming*
- Mentoring
- Community Partnerships
- Housing
- Employment
- Education of Returning Citizens and Family
- Advocacy



Race: All

Age: 18 or older at time of release

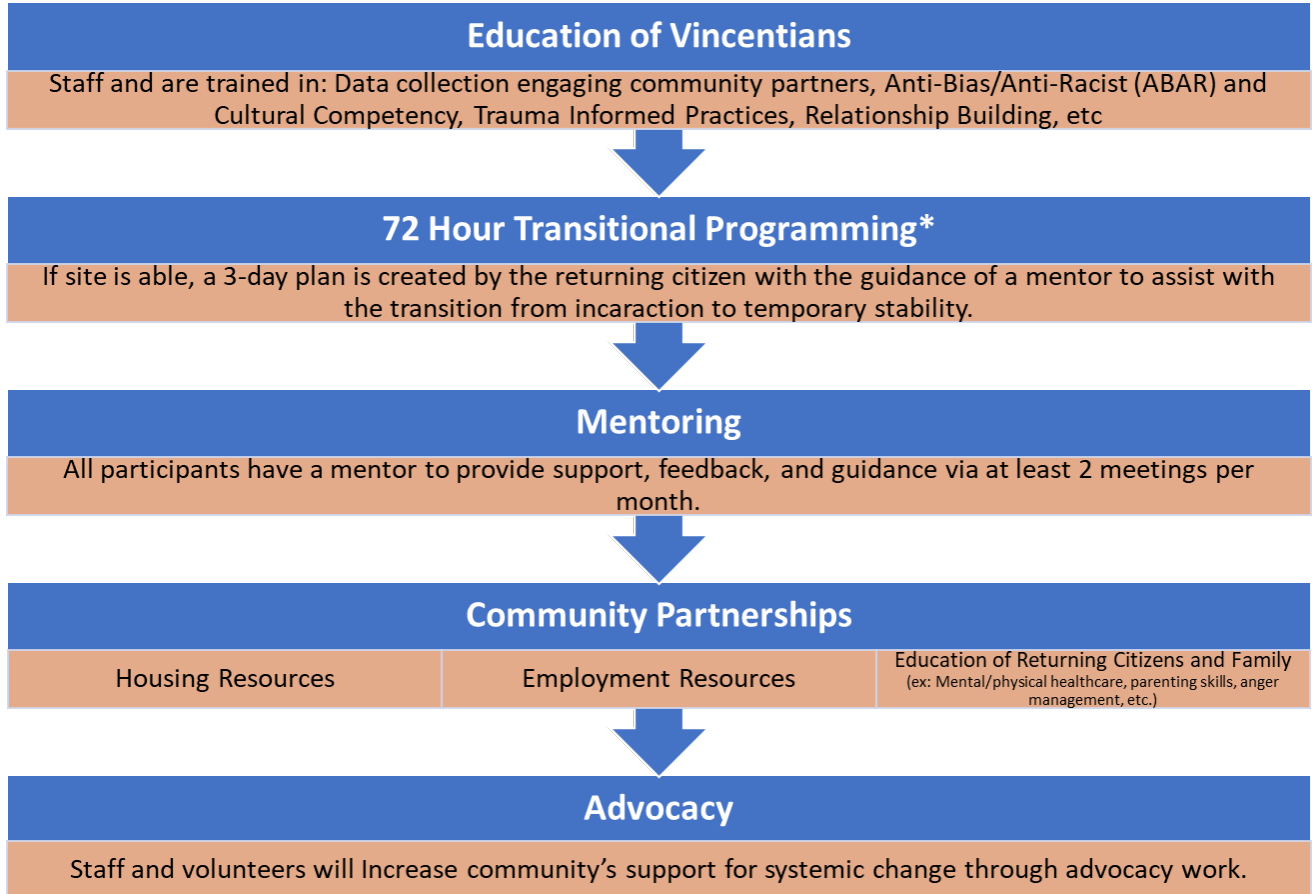
Sex: All

Offense: No Tier 3 sex offenders, murders, or manslaughter convicts

Data will be disaggregated

*Strong emphasis on collaborating with community partners that reflect the identities of the returning citizens (i.e. racial makeup, women's groups, Spanish speaking organizations, etc.)





Participants officially complete program when each of the 24 domains of the LifeWorks Self-Sufficiency Matrix (LW-SSM) are assessed at level 3 or higher. (taken at intake, quarterly, and at program's end)

Total # of program participants (data disaggregated by race, sex, and age)

and % of participants who:

are reincarcerated while in the program

commit an illegal act while in the program

gain safe, sustainable employment at a livable wage

gain safe, sustainable, affordable housing

are connected to community resources and outcome of connection



Number and names of community resources in partnership with sites (disaggregated by type of service)

Number & type of advocacy actions by Vincentians

Pre-, Quarterly-, and Post- LifeWorks Self-Sufficiency Matrix of participants

*No “Expected Results”

Mentors will follow up with program graduates 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12- months after completing Immersion.

APPENDICES

Glossary of Terms

- **Active Participant** – a returning citizen enrolled in IMMERSION.
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** – also referred to as Letters of Understanding or Letters of Agreement. MOUs are written documents entered into by parties, generally defining interaction and establishing policies and procedures, and roles and responsibilities of the parties regarding matters of mutual interest. Memorandums of Understanding or other letters of agreement committing resources or exchanges of assets or information of SVDPUSA may only be entered into by the National President or their designee.
- **Perspective Participant** – a returning citizen that is under consideration for IMMERSION.
- **Recidivism** – re-incarceration after release into the community while enrolled in IMMERSION.
- **Reentry** – the transition process of former prisoners returning to a community after incarceration.
- **Returning Citizen** – former prisoners returning to a community after incarceration.



IMMERSION SVDPUSA STRATEGIC PLAN (2018-2021)

2018 - 2021 	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Society of St. Vincent de Paul USA Strategic Plan</h2> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: small;">A network of friends, inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.</p>
EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN OUR NETWORK OF FRIENDS	
I. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a culture that encourages and values servant leadership • Strengthen organizational capacity at Council and Conference levels • Increase the number of members, Conferences and Councils • Promote Vincentian cultural beliefs of "One Society" and friendship
ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT VINCENTIANS ON THEIR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY	
II. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate our essential element of Vincentian spirituality • Enhance the formation, and grow the number, of spiritual advisors at all levels in the Society • Increase opportunities for Vincentian spiritual formation
ADVOCATE FOR AND WORK TOWARDS A MORE JUST WORLD	
III. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspire membership to embrace Catholic Social Teaching • Establish St. Vincent de Paul as a thought leader on poverty and justice • Be a Voice for the Poor at national, state, and local levels
PROMOTE DEEPER AND MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE WE SERVE	
IV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen our understanding of the challenges of poverty • Advance acceptance of those who are different from us • Reinforce the importance of the Home Visit as a mutual transformational experience
DEVELOP, IMPROVE, AND EXPAND SERVICES	
V. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalize a national process to share and promote model programs that can be replicated by member councils • Strengthen and expand retail operations • Strengthen and support Councils in providing housing and services to those without shelter • Promote efforts to fulfill unmet community needs using the talents of our members



Documents

1. Score Guide(s) for the LifeWorks Self-Sufficiency Matrix

Forms

IMMERSION Participant Forms

1. Program Participant File Checklist
2. Initial Contact Intake Form
3. Participant Information and Ongoing Contacts
4. Participant Authorization for Release of Confidential Information
5. Confidential Case Record Information
6. My 72-Hour Reentry Plan (if applicable)
7. SMART Goal Worksheet (if applicable)
8. Program Associate Self-Sufficiency Assessment Form (LW-SSM Assessment)
9. Notice of Decision

SVdP Volunteer Forms

1. Volunteer Forms Checklist
2. Volunteer Application
3. Background Check Waiver
4. Results of Criminal Background Check
5. SVdP IMMERSION Volunteer Manual Acknowledgement
6. Photograph, Video and Testimonial Release (if applicable)
7. Volunteer/Employee Contact
8. Vincentian Confidentiality Agreement
9. Volunteer/Employee Authorization for Release of Confidential Information
10. Waiver and Release of Liability
11. Proof of training for all Vincentian volunteers and staff employed, in Safe Environment Practices to protect minors and vulnerable adults, this includes a background check.
12. Health and Safety Disclaimer and Questionnaire
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