

Coming Together to Get Ahead Program Policies

These policies are intended for all participants in the CTGA Program including investigators, graduates, mentors, facilitators, meal teams, and all other volunteers.

Getting Ahead Workshop Attendance Policy

It is expected that Getting Ahead investigators attend and positively contribute to all workshop sessions, from start to finish, including the pre-session meal. Absences may occur but investigators will call or text CTGA facilitators prior to the session if they cannot attend or will be late. If an emergency requires missing a session, investigators will meet with facilitators to work out a plan to make up the material missed. Three or more absences are a critical concern, and if a sufficient make-up plan cannot be agreed with the facilitators, they cannot continue in the program. Should they wish to join a future class, they will be given priority to join.

Relatives

Investigators cannot be related to someone facilitating the Getting Ahead class in which they participate. Investigators will be encouraged to not attend a class with an investigator who is a family member, as this can inhibit free discussion.

Pre-Class Interviews & Investigator Agreements

In order to join a CTGA class, all investigators must have gone through the program's interview process and investigator orientation in order that they fully understand the program. All program policies will be reviewed in the first session, and investigators must sign the CTGA Investigator Agreement at week two's session.

Participation in weekly GA sessions

With the exception of the pre-class meal, or sessions specifically designated for mentor participation (e.g. Community Assessment reports, and Action Planning), only investigators and facilitators may attend the CTGA class sessions. This is to protect the confidentiality of discussions.

Exchange of Money Policy

Private exchange of money between mentors/facilitators and investigators/graduates is not allowed. If an investigator or program graduate has an emergency financial need, they should call the St Vincent de Paul Society Helpline (309-677-7696). They should identify their need and provide the name of their mentor and the mentor's phone number. SVdP home visitors will be encouraged to contact the mentor who can advocate for their investigator/graduate. Assistance may be provided on a case by case basis by the assigned SVDP conference.

Stipends

Payment of a weekly gift card or end-of-program bank deposit credit is based on full attendance of that week's session. No partial pay-outs will be made for incomplete attendance at a weekly session.

Disputes

If an investigator has a problem with the facilitators or another investigator, they are expected to work that out directly with the individuals involved. If this does not result in resolution, the issue will be referred to the Program Manager and the Steering Committee for resolution.

Alcohol, Drug and Firearm Policies

- **Alcohol Policy**

Participants in the CTGA Program may not be impaired by the use of beer, wine or other alcoholic beverage while engaging in CTGA activities including, but not limited to, mentor/investigator/graduate meetings.

- **Drug Policy**

Participants in the CTGA Program may not manufacture, possess, distribute or use any illegal substance while engaging in CTGA activities including, but not limited to, mentor/investigator meetings.

- **Weapons, Firearms and Other Dangerous Material Policy**

Participants may not possess or use illegal firearms, firecrackers, explosives, toxic or dangerous chemicals or other lethal weapons or material while engaging in CTGA activities, including but not limited to CTGA meetings. The policies of any building in which CTGA gathers will be the first consideration.

Any violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action which may include termination from the program.

Transportation Policy

While transporting participants is explicitly provided by the CTGA program, mentors or facilitators may choose to transport participants in their own private vehicles. **CTGA requires that mentors/facilitators meet the following criteria prior to transporting investigator/graduates:**

- All mentors or facilitators, except those using only public transportation, must certify that as a volunteer driver, they are 23 years of age or older, hold a valid driver's license, have the required minimal liability insurance coverage of \$100,000/\$300,000 in effect on any vehicle used to transport participants.

Crisis Management

In a time of crisis, investigators/graduates may need help in identifying helpful resources. Mentors have information on local resources to share with the investigator/graduates. It is the role of the investigator/graduate to actively seek resource information.

From time to time the day to day investigator/graduate challenges may escalate. Action may be called for which is beyond the scope of the mentor's ability to mediate.

If an investigator needs help because of a situation such as homelessness the mentor may call the CTGA Program Manager and if she is not available a CTGA program leader.

Emergency Situations

If a program participant needs immediate help because of an unsafe situation or may be a danger to him/herself or others, call 911.

Confidentiality Policy

Confidentiality in the CTGA Program means that information shared by investigators and mentors will only be shared with CTGA Program staff and volunteers. Information may be more widely shared with a signed release form from the investigator.

Sexual Harassment Policy

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul and its programs will provide an atmosphere that is free from sexual harassment. All volunteers of SVDP are expected to avoid any action or conduct that could be construed as sexual harassment, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or any other verbal or physical conduct of a sexually harassing nature.

If you feel you have been the victim of sexual harassment, promptly bring the matter in writing to the attention of the CTGA Program Manager or SVdP Council President. All complaints will be handled promptly and discreetly to protect the privacy of the individuals involved in so far as possible. The Society will retain confidential documentation of all allegations and investigations and will take appropriate corrective action, including disciplinary measures, when justified to remedy all violations of this policy.

Non-Discrimination Policy

CTGA, as a program of St. Vincent de Paul Society, provides services for individuals without regard to race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, criminal justice status, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, age or physical handicap.

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