

**BOARD RESOLUTION
REQUIRING ALL ACTIVE AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS
TO COMPLY WITH SAFEGUARDING REQUIREMENTS**

At the Thursday, July 27, 2023 meeting of the Board of Directors of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul Archdiocesan Council of St. Louis the following resolution was approved.

WHEREAS the National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent De Paul adopted a National Safeguarding Policy in June, 2020 and recommended all Member Councils create a similar policy; and

WHEREAS the Society of St. Vincent De Paul Archdiocesan Council (SVDP) seeks to ensure that, not only is abuse prevented and reported, but also works to create safe and respectful environments to protect the human dignity and confidentiality of our Neighbors-in-Need; and

WHEREAS the St. Louis Archdiocese already provides and requires Safe Environment training for all individuals who work with or near minors and/or vulnerable adults to attend a Protecting God's Children workshop and complete online training updates every three years; read and sign the archdiocese's *Code of Ethical Conduct for Clergy, Employees, and Volunteers Working in Ministry*; and complete a national criminal record check and agree to regular screening updates; and

WHEREAS recognizing that there are different levels of Active and Associate Membership and activity in Conferences, including Non-Member Volunteers defined as:

- **Active members** (listed in ServWare as Conference Members): participate regularly in the prayer life, meetings, and charitable activities through personal contact with the poor and have access to confidential Neighbor information and Conference finances
- **Associate members** (listed in ServWare as Conference members): affiliated with the Society by formal action of the Conference, publicly accept the Rule, and have access to confidential Neighbor information and Conference finances
- **Non Member Volunteers** (listed in ServWare as Non Member Volunteers): provide in-kind support such as in stocking a food pantry, scrap metal collection, appliance repair, clipping coupons, etc., but have no personal contact with Neighbors-in-Need and have no access to confidential Neighbor information or conference finances.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that it is the policy of SVDP that all Active and Associate Conference Members complete the Archdiocesan Safe Environment training within fourteen days of joining a Conference and comply with Archdiocesan updating requirements.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that current Active and Associate Members who have not yet completed the Safe Environment training program do so by November 1, 2023 and report the relevant dates to the SVDP Council Office and to their Conference Presidents who will ensure that the dates are entered into the Member's ServWare page.



Board Secretary

Date: July 28, 2023

Safeguarding Policy for all Member Conferences of the St. Louis Archdiocese

This policy does not include Council Staff and store personnel who are subject to policies and practices of the Human Resources Department of the St. Louis Area SVdP Council.

Safeguarding is the act of protecting from harm people who are vulnerable. It involves reducing and preventing risks of harm and working to ensure that vulnerable individuals and communities are safe and empowered. Safeguarding involves recognizing the human rights of all persons and working to ensure that those rights are not violated.

In the context of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, safeguarding involves working to ensure that we are committed to do no harm to the health and wellbeing of people seeking assistance or put them at risk of abuse or neglect. This policy seeks to address safeguarding as it applies to our Neighbors in Need who could be vulnerable to abuse or neglect by reason of their age, physical or mental disability, or poverty and reliance on support services.

As Vincentians, the nature of our work means that there is often a power imbalance when we encounter a person in need; a person's circumstances, whereby they are seeking help, and our position as a provider of financial, material, or personal support, creates a risk and renders vulnerable the person seeking help. In committing to safeguarding, we are not just seeking to ensure that abuse is prevented, reported, and acted upon; we are also seeking to create safe and respectful environments.

The Rule, Our Mission, and Our Value

Charity as lived by the Society's volunteers is inspired by the example of St. Vincent de Paul, a great apostle of charity in his day and the Society's patron saint. SVdP members live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor. Inspired by the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, members strive to deepen their faith by meeting real needs, undertaking concrete action in neighborhoods, towns, and communities. In that work, we are called to embody these values:

Empathy — to listen to and understand those we assist and to work together as members to support those in need.

Simplicity and Humility — treating each other, and those we assist, as equals in a fraternal relationship.

Justice — respecting people's convictions and beliefs and helping them to regain and retain their autonomy and human dignity.

Commitment to Minimum Standards

This policy recommends minimum guidelines and standards for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable people within the care of SVdP personnel (defined throughout this policy as Vincentians).

Active members (listed in ServWare as Conference Members): participate regularly in the prayer life, meetings, and charitable activities through personal contact with the poor and have access to confidential client information and Conference finances

Associate members (listed in ServWare as Conference members): affiliated with the Society by formal action of the Conference, publicly accept the Rule, and have access to confidential client information and Conference finances

Non Member Volunteers (listed in ServWare as Non Member Volunteers): provide in-kind support such as in stocking a food pantry, scrap metal collection, appliance repair, clipping coupons, etc., but have no personal contact with Neighbors in Need and no access to confidential client information or conference finances

Based on the forgoing, the St. Louis Area Council recommends that each Conference maintain the following safeguarding policy and practices:

- The welfare of the people we assist is paramount.
- Concerns or allegations of abusive or exploitative behavior are always taken seriously, investigated and acted on as appropriate.
- We support the participation of all those we assist by valuing, listening to and respecting them and giving them a say in decisions that affect them.
- All Active and Associate members have access to and are familiar with safeguarding policies and procedures and know their responsibilities within those policies and procedures.
- All Active and Associate members and people being served have access to information about how to report concerns or allegations of abuse.
- Our practices do not create or allow conditions in which Neighbors in Need are put at risk of abuse or exploitation.
- All Active and Associate members are responsible for actively promoting safeguarding and ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are complied with and are updated on a regular basis.

Topics and Measures

Creating safe environments — Each Conference must adhere to this policy and ensure practices designed to convey respect and the dignity of those who we serve, to include but not limited to positive and respectful language and interactions, the protection of personal information, and the obtaining of written consent before sharing personal likeness, stories, or information with anyone beyond the Vincentian direct service providers and our immediate partners.

Confidentiality has both legal and ethical implications and falls naturally within the scope of Safeguarding. Prospective members and visitors to Conference meetings where sensitive information is shared must agree to refrain from sharing any information learned in the course of the meeting or event. **(Manual Chapter 2.1 and the January 2023 Board Resolution Prohibiting the Collection of Sensitive Personally Identifiable Information)**

Media, audio, and visual recordings that involve interviewing a companion should always ensure that the companion is at no risk of being endangered, or adversely affected. This includes ensuring their privacy and not disclosing identifying information about a child or a vulnerable person, i.e., their full names, addresses or identifying their home, host community, or general location and being vigilant of street signs, advertising boards or any other background information that will indicate to a viewer where the person may live. Do not publish any story or image that might put a vulnerable person or their family at risk. This is the case even when

identities are changed, obscured, or not used. Use only a friend in need's first name and provide a general location such as a city or county to avoid their being identified.

Still photographs and videos must never be demeaning, or disrespectful of the dignity of the persons portrayed. The rights, safety, and wellbeing of the persons being portrayed are always to be protected. The gratuitous portrayal of extreme suffering is always to be avoided. Editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic and video images' content and context. No changes should be made that distort the context of the image, or that make a situation look worse than it actually is.

Participation — Each Conference ensures practices that include input from those we serve, and reviews this policy, protocols, and services annually.

Prevention — Each Conference screens potential members to ensure that we do not admit into the Society persons who are known or reasonably suspected of posing a risk to vulnerable persons due to their past conduct or criminal history.

Risk management — Each Conference ensures that supervision, checking, and reporting processes are in place and all Vincentians must know what to look out for and how to report suspicions of abuse and the importance of speaking up.

Our “two adult rule” (Rule Part III, Statute 8) serves to keep vulnerable persons safe, and to protect against false/malicious allegations being made against Vincentians and others providing services. Whenever possible no fewer than two Vincentians should be always present during any meeting with those we serve, and a Vincentian should not be involved with a vulnerable person in the course of the Vincentian work without another adult being present.

If for some reason a one-on-one discussion must take place, the interaction should be conducted in as open and observable a way as possible. In any circumstances where one-to-one contact is part of the role or is anticipated, it is important to consider and mitigate any safeguarding risks and to ensure that such contact is notified to leadership to ensure they are aware of it and the actions being taken to safeguard the vulnerable persons involved.

Recruitment — Practices are robust enough to ensure that Conferences will not recruit persons if they pose a known risk to the safety or wellbeing of those we assist or people with whom we come into contact. Practices include:

- When advertising, promoting, or documenting roles within SVdP Conferences, it should be made clear that SVdP upholds safeguarding principles and practices and that all volunteers, whether Active or Associate, must adhere to said safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Holding interviews with a consistent list of questions asked to each candidate.
- Asking about values as well as skills making sure they align with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul values.
- Have each candidate meet with the parish secretary or Safe Environment Coordinator to initiate a background check and register for the Archdiocesan Prevent and Protect Program

Training — Formation and training is required both upon a person's entry into the Society and on an ongoing basis, which instills in all Vincentians, whether Active or Associate, the importance of safeguarding, not just as a legal/policy requirement but also as a reflection of our values.

The safeguarding program must inform all members and volunteers about the warning signs of potential abuse, the safety measures that are in place to protect others, and the means by which boundary violations and abuse are to be reported.

Initial training through the St. Louis Archdiocesan Safe Environment / Prevent & protect program should occur at the time of joining the Society as an Active or Associate member, within 14 days of entry. This includes:

- Submitting a "Background Check"
- Attending a "Protecting God's Children" workshop
- Completing a "Mandated Reporter" online training module
- Completing a "Code of Conduct" online training module
- Sign the "Code of Conduct" form

The schedule for renewals will follow the St. Louis Archdiocesan policy to renew training every three years.

It is the Member's responsibility to provide certificates of completed training dates to the Conference President who will ensure that the dates are entered into the Member's ServWare page.

Reporting and responding — Each Conference ensures that victims and those who come forward with concerns or reports are met with compassion, and shows compassion to those accused, while putting necessary measures in place (such as suspensions) while matters are investigated (i.e., accused persons are afforded natural justice and procedural fairness).

Each Conference needs to identify the person/position, normally the Conference president, to whom all reporters of potential and realized abuse will communicate. This information then needs to be forwarded to the Council Office and the appropriate government/law enforcement officials. Conferences should act decisively where an abuse situation is found to exist.

Expectations of our Partners and Vendors — We expect that SVdP partner and vendor organizations will operate effective safeguarding procedures. If a Conference has a safeguarding concern about a partner or vendor organization, the Conference president will inform the Council Office.

Communicating the safeguarding message — A hard or electronic copy of the Conference Safeguarding Policy should be kept in each parish office. Copies will be provided to the general public in hard copy or through email upon request.

Policy Review — This Conference Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed by the local Council Board of Directors at least every three years, with new processes, changes in legislation and guidelines and practices to be incorporated in accordance with lessons learned.