

Standards of Affiliation for Conferences

Minimum Requirements to be a Qualified Conference

In order for a Conference operating under the auspices of the Diocesan Council of Phoenix to be considered a “qualified” Conference, the Conference must meet the Standards of Affiliation contained within this document. Non-compliance can affect a Conference’s ability to vote and/or receive resources and services.

All of the standards listed here comply with the Part I and II of the RULE of the Society, which was approved internationally in October 2003, and Part III of the RULE approved for the United States in 2018. These are the required standards that shall be included with every Conference’s set of guidelines. Conference’s operational guidelines may not contradict the Rule and Manual of the Society, Phoenix Diocesan, District or Conference bylaws or the minimum standards set forth in this document.

Membership

Participation in the works of the Society is open to all, (as defined in Part III of the RULE, only Catholics may be “Full” members or officers). There are no membership exclusions based on gender, age, race, ethnic background, or sexuality preference. Diversity within Conferences is both welcome and healthy. The Conference regularly invites new people to become members. Youth (under eighteen or still in high school) should be accompanied at all times by a parent, guardian or two Safe Environment compliant adults

Safe Environment Training

All Members of the Society (and Conference volunteers) must comply with the Safe Environment training and background check requirements of the Diocese of Phoenix or, in case of fraternal agreement Conferences, with their Diocesan requirements. This includes completing a Foundation course, annual renewals, and regular background checks.

Conference Meetings

Weekly meetings are most desirable but Part I of the Rule defines twice a month as an absolute minimum frequency for Conference meetings. Meetings should be held on a day and time that would allow and welcome

parishioners to participate whether they work or not. A specific agenda should be distributed and followed. A sample agenda is on the back of the standard prayer card. In order to conduct business a quorum (50% of FULL members) must be present.

Officers

The Conference must have four or more full members with a full slate of officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Conference President and his/her appointed officers may not be related to one another by kinship, marriage, adoption and/or any other familial relationship or domestic partnership. Furthermore, such relationships may not exist between the Conference Treasurer and any other member who is designated as a signer on Conference financial accounts.

Election of the Conference President is conducted by secret ballot. A nominating committee shall be appointed by the president and names of candidates submitted to the Conference prior to the election.

All Officers of the Conference must complete the Ozanam Formation Experience prior to taking office. It is recommended that this training should be renewed every three or four years as a refresher.

The term of the President is three years, renewable once. Consistent with the Rule, all other officers are appointed by the President. Their terms and the terms of all committee chairs and members expire at the end of the term of the president who appointed them. These members may, however, be reappointed by the succeeding president.

Spiritual Advisor

All conferences must have an active Spiritual Advisor and every meeting needs to include opening/closing prayers and a Spiritual reflection based on Catholic principles and teachings. The Spiritual Advisor does not need to be an ordained person. The Spiritual Advisor and the Conference President are responsible for providing spiritual resources and support to the Conference and its members.

Conflict of Interest

Annually, all members of the Conference who have fiduciary responsibilities (President, Treasure, 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.

Non-Discrimination

Vincentian services are offered to those in need without discrimination. Offers of help are not made or denied based on race, religion, national origin or choice of lifestyle. The Rule directs Conferences to help the poor within their own boundaries. Conferences should, however, make sure that those who call from outside of their boundaries are offered assistance by referrals to the appropriate Conferences or agencies.

Types of Assistance

A Conference must provide direct services to the poor on a regular basis. The Conference's assistance to those in need should include a variety of offerings, such as spiritual aid, food, rent, utilities, furniture, prescriptions, transportation, car repairs, etc. Referrals to other organizations that might provide additional resources should be encouraged.

Home Visitations

Home Visitation has always been the core work of the Society's ministry. Person-to-person encounters with those in need in their homes is viewed as the most basic and necessary Vincentian activity.

Conferences should make every effort to have home visits be their primary means of helping the poor. While doing so is the overarching goal, every Conference must strive to have at least 10% of their person-to-person encounters with the poor be through home visits. Conferences need to keep in mind that the Rule of the Society centers on ministry through home visits and not through pantry or Conference offices. Our Rule calls us to go to the poor and not to summon them to us.

Conferences should remember that all in-person encounters with the poor must include at least two Safe Environment compliant adult Vincentians.

Conference Guidelines

Every Conference is expected to have a set of operational guidelines approved by the Conference members. The operational guidelines are in addition to these Standards of Affiliation.

The operational guidelines should be reviewed at least once each year by all members in order to add, change, or delete guidelines as deemed necessary. A copy of the Conference's guidelines should be submitted to the Conference's assigned District Council president for review.

Stewardship

As good stewards of Conference resources, the following principles must be followed.

- Conferences do not hoard; Conferences do not build up excessive funds in bank accounts; all funds given to a Conference are expected to be spent on behalf of those in need (in direct aid, operational costs, and to fulfill the Mission of the Society) within a reasonable timeframe. No decision related to helping someone in need should be made in favor of keeping money in the bank.
- Having excess resources does not relieve members of the responsibility of discernment of need and proper use of resources; do not say, "yes" simply because you have extra resources.
- When a Conference has excess resources, twinning with a Conference in need is encouraged.
- Having no funds or resources does not relieve a Conference from helping the poor in their area. Home visits, referrals and prayer are forms of assistance.
- Conference resources are not to be given to outside organizations; funds given to the Society are expected to be used by Society members for Society purposes.

Conference Funds

The Conference maintains a bank account separate from the parish, under the control of the Conference. The account must be in the name of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (insert name of Conference) Conference. The account must be set up using the Tax ID of the Diocesan Council. There must be at least three signers on each account: two Conference officers and the Diocesan Council's CFO.

Each Conference shall conduct an annual audit of the Treasurer's records or when a new President is elected. Conferences are encouraged to request an audit by a neighboring Conference, and, in turn, to offer that service to their neighboring Conferences.

Reporting

Submitting a quarterly (Quarterly Conference Report) and an annual accounting of activities (Annual Conference Report) is required for affiliation with the Society in the Diocese of Phoenix. Such reports, or a summary thereof, should be shared with the parish priest(s) and the parish community as well.

The programs, format, and templates to be used for Conference reporting shall be determined by the Diocesan Council Board and all Conferences are required to use the designated process.

Quarterly reports generate the amount of quarterly tithing assigned to each Conference and District Council. The Conference tithes 10% of all income to the District Council quarterly and the District Council in turn tithes 10% of their income to the Diocesan Council quarterly.

Council Meetings

According to our Diocesan Council and District bylaws, Conferences are required to be represented at 80% of their assigned District Council and 50% Diocesan Council General Membership Meetings (GMM) over the past twelve months.

If a president is unable to attend a Council meeting, his/her 1st Vice President or a designated proxy may serve as the Conference's representative.

Parish Relations

The Conference will make every effort to maintain a good relationship with the Pastor, parish staff, and their parish community.

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