



# **VINCENTIAN YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS**

**A**

**FOUNDATION DOCUMENT**

**OF THE**

**SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL**



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## **RESOURCES USED**

# INTRODUCTION



## Vincentian Youth & Young Adults

### **A Foundation Document of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

The purpose of this document is to provide the underlying assumptions, vision and structure for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's youth and young adult process. The document is intended primarily for those individuals and groups at the Conference, District, Diocesan and National Council levels who have responsibility for youth and young adults.

Integral to this effort is an understanding and ability to implement organizational and helpful leadership throughout various levels of the Society regarding the young people.

The emphasis in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul on youth and young adults stems from the grassroots membership of the Society's response to God's call of grace and articulates the desire of Vincentians throughout the United States to engage in a process of formation, education and training our young people to advance in holiness of life and mentor our young members with the hope and skills to better serve those who are in need.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

The involvement of Youth and Young Adults is an ongoing process that began with the beginning of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul with Frederic Ozanam and his friends. It is the responsibility of all people in the Society to collaborate and brainstorm with the young people who are the future of the Society. The younger generation has much to offer but they are in need of guidance and support from our senior members of the Society. The young members of the Society strive for the essential elements, personal holiness, service of the needy and friendship as all members.

## **PROCESS**

The Process presented here for Vincentian Youth and Young Adults serves as a foundational document for the formation and education of all youth and young adult groups in the Society in the United States. It is a guide to assist people who are interested in involving young people in the Society.

The implementation of this guide has a two-fold desired outcome: 1) to invite all Vincentians to appreciate and encourage young people to be part of their conference; 2) to renew and revitalize the Society in the United States with future members.

## **ADVANTAGES OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT INVOLVEMENT**

A wide distribution of ages is the sign of a healthy organization, for a mixing of the young, middle-aged and older members produces the best of all worlds.

- Young members keep the Society young.
- They see with new eyes and often look far ahead.
- The young members tend to be very enthusiastic, idealistic and often very up-to-date on the latest trends.
- They find adaptation relatively easy, they are spontaneous and multitask and are very connected to each other and the world through technology.
- The senior members assume the responsibility of assisting them along their path of training, respecting their personal choices and their aspirations of Vincentian service. (Rule: Part 1, 3.7)

## **SECTION I**

### **A. THE SIX MAJOR GROUPS OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS**

#### **1. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Elementary Schools that have a parish conference of the Society St. Vincent de Paul are an excellent place to begin a group in the school that can possibly work with the parish conference on various activities. Elementary Schools may target the six through eighth grade students as the youth conference leaders and have younger students participate as associate members.

The key to an elementary group is to have two animated leaders who enjoy working with youth and have the skills to do so. It is helpful for the leaders to have some background about the Society and possibly partner with the parish conference.

#### **2. MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Middle Schools may follow the same procedure of Elementary Schools to form a youth conference or club. The advantage would be that fifth through eighth grade students are energetic and can take on some responsibility with some adult supervision.

#### **3. HIGH SCHOOLS**

High School Conferences may be formed as part of Campus Ministry. It is an advantage to have a faculty member as the advisor to the high school group. The faculty advisor will guide the students with the structure of the organization and supervise the service activities.

In High School Conferences there are several different approaches. They may be the core group that coordinates all service activities in the school or they may be a group of students that come together to participate in a particular service as well as grow in their own spirituality and friendship with students of common interests.

#### **4. UNIVERSITIES/COLLEGES**

University and College Conferences may be formed under the Student Organizations which the University or College acknowledges or they may form as a Society of St. Vincent de Paul Conference at the University Parish or Newman Center.

The service activities at a university or college may stem from a wide range of opportunities to the most common conference service – home visits. The university or college conference usually has a core group of students who meet

and spiritually share on a regular basis. They do engage other students who may assist in service activities or projects.

University and College Conferences follow the same rules and procedures as the traditional adult conferences with the guidance of a faculty member or campus minister to assist them.

## **5. YOUTH GROUPS**

Youth Group Conferences are similar to high school conferences because the group is attracting the high school age group but in many cases they are formed from young people of a given parish but not exclusively to one parish but consist of a group from a geographical area.

The Youth Group Conferences will meet, plan their service activity and come together to grow spiritually by participating in formation opportunities as well as reflecting on their experience helping others.

The Youth Group participants are encouraged to work with the Adult Conference in the Parish.

## **6. YOUNG ADULTS**

Young Adult Conferences may arise from students who had the Vincentian experience either in college, through a volunteer opportunity or they may be young people who are looking to grow in their faith through service. Many times, they will form a group of similar ages and possibly work with or alongside a traditional adult conference.

At times, a Young Adult conference will develop in parishes where no adult conference exists. The membership is widespread and does not necessarily stem from the parish that hosts the young adult conference.

There is nowhere in the rule that says that young people cannot be a part of the traditional adult conference. Young people who do not attend college but have a desire to continue to serve in their parish would be good candidates for the parish conference.

# **B. Important Steps to Take When Engaging the Young People**

## **1. Adult Leaders for the youth groups**

The Adult Leaders (two recommended for groups with minors) who are working with the youth groups must comply with the Safe Environment Policy (including background check) of the (Arch) Diocese.

The adult leaders are people who enjoy working with youth and have some skills at doing so. They are encouraged to have some background of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul or at least willing to learn.

The adult leader will not only be a guide for the youth group conference but at times will be the organizer, chauffeur and chaperone.

## **2. Education**

It is important for our active Vincentians when interested in engaging young people into the Society to educate them about the Society. The Founders, Patrons, History and Mission are essential areas to begin.

The education of young people about the Society may begin in a classroom setting in a parish school, religious education class or as an invited guest at a high school or college.

Making use of technology and having resources that the young people can do further study of the Society are helpful tools.

The education may continue with the young people participating in projects with our “senior” Vincentians as well as participating in formation opportunities as Ozanam Orientation, attending Regional and National or International meetings and days of prayer and reflection.

## **3. Publicity**

Young people today are extremely connected not only in their local area but also world-wide through social networking and technology. It is important for Vincentians who are engaging the young people to make use of some of these means of connecting and communicating.

Showcasing the works of the Society is important to help others know what the Society is doing. This does not infringe on the “confidentiality” of the cases that the conference members serve but helps to take the “mystery” out of the Society.

Highlighting in the parish bulletin or website the number of people served and the number of volunteer hours given by conference members is one way that parishioners as well as young people know their donation of time and money is being used properly. Having the knowledge that the Society is doing very good work allows others to participate through monetary donations but also when the conference engages participation in parish-wide activities such as a food drive, etc.

Young people as well as others like to know what an organization is doing before they decide to participate themselves.

#### **4. Invitation**

A personal invitation is a great way to involve young people into any organization. It is a way that they feel they are “special” and that they have some talent to contribute.

It is important to engage young people for the ideas and contribution they can make to the organization not just to be someone who can do all the heavy work.

#### **5. Change**

Probably the most important step to engage young people is the willingness of the “senior” Vincentians to change. This change may be an attitude change or in many cases it may be a willingness to change how things are done.

Giving the young people a chance and seeing that they are sincere about their desire to help those in need may be the first step to start a youth conference or having the young people be a part of your conference.

## **SECTION II**

### **ROLES FOR LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL**

#### **RECOMMENDED ROLES FOR LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL**

In order to engage youth and young adults in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, it needs to be embraced and supported at all levels of leadership.

The following objectives highlight four key roles:

- The **Council, District and Conference President**
- The **Youth and Young Adult Committee**
- The **Youth/Young Adult Advisor/Leader**
- The **National Plan and Strategy**
- **Support** by the National Council



It is agreed that all of leadership is responsible for engaging youth and young adults in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The following section describes how the leadership roles are instrumental in promoting the formation of youth and/or young adult conferences as well as engaging young people to participate in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at large, introduces the objectives to be accomplished, and proposes indicators to help in assessing achievement of the objectives. Objectives and indicators are based upon successful practice. They are meant as guides for enhancing and expanding effective Vincentian youth and young adult conferences, and they can be adapted to local needs and circumstances.

### **Objective One: The Role of the (Arch) Diocesan/District Council, and Conference President**

**The (Arch) Diocesan/District Council and Conference Presidents will demonstrate a clear commitment inviting and engaging youth and young adults into the Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

The (Arch) Diocesan/District Council and Conference President bears the responsibility for the Rule and Spirit of the Society in their respective jurisdictions and for ensuring an authentic presentation of the Rule and Spirit of the Society. He/she personally models the Rule and Spirit and its principal advocate. He/she sees to it that Vincentians of all ages have opportunities to be engaged in the Society and to learn and grow throughout their lives. Experience bears out that the involvement of youth and young adults in a conference depends largely on the willingness and encouragement of the President as well as the conference members.

#### **Key Indicators:**

- **Established (Arch) Diocesan/District Council policies and procedures that give priority to the vision of engaging youth and young adults: Council budget funds, staffing, training, and resourcing for youth and young adults to the fullest extent possible.**
- **The (Arch) Diocesan/District Council gives support to youth and young adults by hiring paid personnel or designating a faithful volunteer to promoting and assisting the formation of youth and young adult conferences or including them in traditional conferences.**
- **The (Arch) Diocesan/District Council helps to publicize and “showcase” the participation of the young people in the Society by including them in publications, website and National, Regional and District meetings.**
- **Conference Presidents promote and support the involvement of youth and young adults in their own youth conference or as members of a tradition conference. They will request that youth**

**and young adult involvement be a priority at the (Arch) Diocesan/District Council level.**

## **Objective Two: The Role of the Youth and Young Adult Committee**

**The chairperson of this committee is appointed by the National President. Each Regional Vice-President will recommend a young person as the Regional Representative for Youth and Young Adults, authorized by the (Arch) Diocesan/District Council and personally involved in assisting and promoting the formation of youth and young adult conferences in their Region. They will be members of the Youth and Young Adult Committee. They will actively participate in their Regional meetings and be a resource for any conference member that needs assistance with young people.**

Each Regional Vice President needs an engaging representative to assist and promote the involvement of young people in the Society. This person is a member of the Society who has some life experience in working with people to start new initiatives. While the position is a volunteer position, it is important that the person have a Vincentian background and can represent youth and young adults while assisting Conferences on how to include young people. What is important is that the person has skills of working with young people but also be able to transfer that experience to others who are interested in young people. This representative will possess the time, energy, and commitment to commit to the involvement of youth and young adults in their Region and in the Society as a whole.

### **Key Indicators**

- **The Vice President appoints a Regional Youth and Young Adult Representative – a qualified volunteer Vincentian. The Vice President makes every effort to provide the representative with suitable formation of the Society and participation in Regional and National Youth and Young Adults events.**
- **The representative promotes the Youth and Young Adult Committee within his/her Region. The representative acts as a bridge connecting the Youth and Young Adult Committee with their Region which includes (Arch) Diocesan/District Councils, and individual conferences.**
- **The representative helps every branch of their region to engage and promote young people's involvement in the Society.**
- **The representative will follow the job responsibilities established by the National Council Office.**

### **Objective Three: The Role of the Adult Advisor/Leader**

**The Adult Advisor or Leader of a Youth Conference is responsible for guidance and direction to the young members to comply with the requirements of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.**

Each Youth Conference will have an adult advisor (two are recommended with minors) or leader who will be responsible for overseeing the young people as they prepare and participate in service projects. The adult advisor or leader may be a volunteer or in some cases a paid staff member. What is important is that the person has the formation, vision and competency to supervise young people in the true spirit of the Society.

#### **Key Indicators:**

- **The adult advisor or leader will comply with the Safe Environment Policy of their (Arch) Diocese.**
- **The adult advisor or leader will formally be recognized by the (Arch) Diocesan/District Council or Conference leadership.**
- **The adult advisor or leader will develop their formation in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul by participating in Ozanam Orientation and other spiritual opportunities.**
- **The adult advisor or leader will guide the young people along the proper direction for their service and meetings not impose their own ideas.**
- **The adult advisor or leader will share their experience and their group's activities with other members of the Society.**

### **Objective Four: The National Plan and Strategy for Vincentian Youth and Young Adults**

**The National Council will have a clear strategy for developing (Arch) Diocesan/District Council youth and young adult leaders.**

A primary role of the National Council is to affirm the priority of Vincentian Youth and Young Adults and to provide leadership, personnel, services, and resources to assist Councils in developing ways and opportunities to attract youth and young adults.

#### **Key Indicators:**

- **The National Council builds community and connections among Council youth and young adult leaders, and it provides for their ongoing formation and support. It encourages participation in meetings at all levels.**
- **The National Council supports the Youth and Young Adult Committee in various ways.**

- The National Council offers youth and young adult opportunities to participate in SVDP meetings as well as other youth and young adult conferences.

## **Objective Five: National Support for Vincentian Youth and Young Adults**

**The National Council will allocate adequate personnel and resources for carrying out the mission of Vincentian Youth and Young Adults.**

All or a significant portion of at least one staff person's responsibilities includes advocacy, consultation, networking, communicating, resourcing, and development for effective ways of working with youth and young adults.

### **Key Indicators:**

- The National Council has a staff person whose primary responsibility is to provide resources and network opportunities of (Arch) Diocesan/District Council and Conference leaders.
- The National Council will encourage and promote that all Councils have a paid staff member or designate a dedicated volunteer to promote youth and young adult involvement.

## **RESOURCES USED TO DEVELOP THIS DOCUMENT INCLUDE:**

- **The Youth and Young Adult Vincentian Handbook (2009)**
- **The United States Rule of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (2006)**
- **The United States Manual of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (2007)**
- **Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry USCCB, 2000**
- **Sons and Daughters of the Light, A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults USCCB, 1999**
- **Stewardship and Young Adults USCCB, 2003**

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