Guidelines for Effective Conferences
(Manual, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul; Chapter 2.1)

• **Effective Conferences are reachable.** Conferences must provide a clear means for being contacted. Some use the parish office address and phone number and check in regularly to retrieve messages and correspondence.

• **Effective Conferences meet regularly.** The Rule requires weekly or biweekly meetings. At these meetings, all members offer their thoughts and support for providing Christian care to the needy.

• **Effective Conferences are committed to grow in spirituality.** Members become friends, care for one another, and earnestly follow the Society’s religious practices. Like Christ, they identify with the poor, whom they visit promptly, regularly, and attentively.

• **Effective Conferences show initiative.** Routine, tradition, and habit do not dictate current thought and action. Can the Conference do more? Alert officers and members continually and deliberately ask, answer, and act on such questions.

• **Effective Conferences have members committed to formation.** They read, study, attend lectures and courses, and participate in formation sessions organized by their District Council and the Council Office to learn more about helping people and solving problems.

• **Effective Conferences recruit continuously.** One reason Conferences give for not tackling new problems is lack of members. Dramatic vistas are unveiled when members invite new Vincentians to join in the service of our Neighbors.

• **Effective Conferences have competent leaders.** The officers of the Conference handle their specific duties with whatever competence they have naturally or can cultivate. They work hard but share with members the responsibility for decision-making and action.

• **Effective Conferences maintain ties to the community.** Helping Neighbors today requires knowledge of and referrals to other public and private agencies. The Conference deliberately makes itself known to these groups and cultivates relationships of mutual respect to facilitate referrals to and from such agencies.

• **Effective Conferences participate in their Council activities.** The President or a proxy represents the Conference at District Council meetings. Conference members take part in general meetings and religious observances, and provide support and personnel for the special works of the District Council.

• **Effective Conferences understand the national and international dimensions of the Society.** Members show practical concern for the work of the Society in less developed or disaster-stricken areas by generously sharing their resources. If possible, they “twin” with needy Conferences domestically or internationally. National Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc. 29

• **Effective Conferences are both wealthy and poor.** Their members generously support the work of the Conference and elicit similar generosity from friends of the Society. But the Conferences always seem poor, because they share, thoughtfully and intelligently, whatever they have. They do not save for a rainy day, knowing that many are in need here and now.