

Home Visitation – Frequently Asked Questions?

How often should an assessment on our Neighbour be done?

Any time you visit, you can certainly ask, what has led you to call? There should be some reason your Neighbour needs you. There will always be a Neighbour who simply needs help on a routine basis, but for many, there should be a catalyst for the call.

What is an assessment? If it is confirmation of information previously provided, once a year would be appropriate, if it's to determine if some large amount of material aid is needed, then make it happen when it is needed.

What do we say regarding money that does not appear to be well spent?

SSVP funds are meant to help folks who find themselves in difficulty. We are not, and cannot be, the judge of our neighbours' spending habits. We have no realistic control over how they spend their money or the assistance we provide. If you have built a relationship of trust and respect, affirming their dignity and celebrating their independence, it is possible and supportive to ask questions and talk about a budget or better ways of feeding the family or finding efficiencies that help to get the basics that are needed to survive. No need to be judgemental, but perfectly fine to ask some honest questions.

We went on a Home Visit and the smell of marijuana was overwhelming, do we still have to visit? And what about the fact that funds are being spent on recreational drugs?

Any time you are not comfortable, you don't have to visit. You can tell your Neighbour that you do not manage the presence of marijuana or cigarette smoke well, so you will re-schedule the visit to a different time or place. The fact that funds are being spent on marijuana, junk food, big televisions, pets etc. is secondary and needs to be part of the discussion with the Neighbour, once you establish a relationship. Do they need help with budgeting, can they manage the expense of the recreational drugs if they don't have enough money for food, or is the pet the only joy in the person's life? All these issues can be discussed and appreciated, once a relationship is established.

Visiting in Pairs, who should visit who?

Vincentians visit in pairs, that is the basic Rule of the Society, and that is what our insurance provides for. When visiting a single woman, one of the two Vincentians, if not both, should be women.

We only provide \$25 a call because that is all the funds we have, is that okay?

Not really. Talk to your Particular Council and request funds to assist your conference to meet the equity of service guidelines developed for your council. Do your due diligence, are you regularly providing funds to people who are not in need? Is that because you don't know how to stop? Sometimes, an honest conversation is needed, that we can't help you every month as others also need our help, and finish with a, please call us only when you really find yourself in need.

What tools do you use to determine need?

Do some work before you visit, have a basic understanding what ODSF and OW rates are. You can ask about source of income, and how much rent is being paid. Those two items will give you a basic framework for how your Neighbour manages on a monthly basis.

How do I go on a Home Visitation and not judge? It's really hard sometimes.

Part of our challenge is to determine need versus want, and it is not easy. We go to the first visit with an open mind, and heart; when we get called again, that is when we must remember to judge the situation, and not be judgemental. Discussing situations with your Vincentian visitation partner and your Conference is a critical part of our outreach, hearing from our Vincentian colleagues about how to respond, about concerns, about opportunities, all supports our outreach. Letting our Neighbours know that you simply cannot visit every month, or two or three, but that you will respond when they find themselves in difficulty.

How do we best respond to someone who calls regularly?

It is best to be honest with your Neighbours right from the start. We set the expectations, so tell Neighbours that you cannot visit every month, that there are others who are also in need, that funds are finite and come from members of the same community, not the government, and for some, the offer of connecting with agencies that provide financial counselling can be a real help. The Society simply cannot supplement everyone who does not have enough income, we need to assist when the need is pressing, it is okay to ask why the call has come in, what has changed for the Neighbour to have to reach out. Remember, not every Vincentian visit is a financial transaction, sometimes it is about listening, supporting and offering other types of help if needed.

Once a relationship is established with your Neighbour, you may find they have other supports and you can encourage them to reach out to those supports as well.

What do I do if I get called to an area that is not safe, or I don't feel comfortable?

Plan your visit accordingly, and go with your gut. If you and your Vincentian colleague do not feel safe, don't follow through. Make arrangements to call another day, or at another time of day, or to meet elsewhere if need be.

If we don't visit in someone's home, where can we visit?

In a place where we can protect the confidentiality and privacy of our Neighbour; a coffee shop, the church, a park. If we can't visit at someone's home, find out what the barrier is, and plan accordingly.

We mailed assistance to people who called in during the pandemic, that was so easy we are going to continue to help that way.

No. Mailing vouchers out during the pandemic was a practical, safe way to assist our Neighbours. All Conferences must have an honest discussion about moving back to Home Visitation, where practical and reasonable. Mailing out assistance may continue as we ride the pandemic wave, however, we must work hard to connect with our Neighbours, and nothing does that better than a visit. If you are not quite ready to visit in someone's home, are you meeting outside, or in an open space? The Society is not a mail order organization. We do what we can no matter what the challenge. Home Visitation is our core service, everyone is encouraged to do what they can to keep all or most of the elements of Home Visitation, alive and present.