

Home Visits

Conducting a Quality Home Visit



Who am I

- **Linda Dollard**, National Council President
- **Vincentian** for 18 years
- **Doing home visits** for past 8 years



My name is Linda Dollard, and I am currently the National Council President. I have been a Vincentian for 18 years having held several leadership roles including secretary, Conference President, Particular Council President and Ontario Regional Council President.

I have been doing home visits for the past 8 years, and have probably done about 500 home visits to date. I am still very involved with my home Conference in London, Ontario and do home visits every second week.

Getting to know you

- **How** long have been involved with the SSVP?
- **Have** you done home visits?
- **How** has your time of Service impacted you?
- **What** do you hope to learn today?



How long have you been involved with SSVP? Raise your hand if you have been involved less than 5 years? 5 – 10 years? 10 – 20 years? More than 20 years?

Raise your hand if you have done home visits with SSVP?

Raise your hand if you currently do home visits?

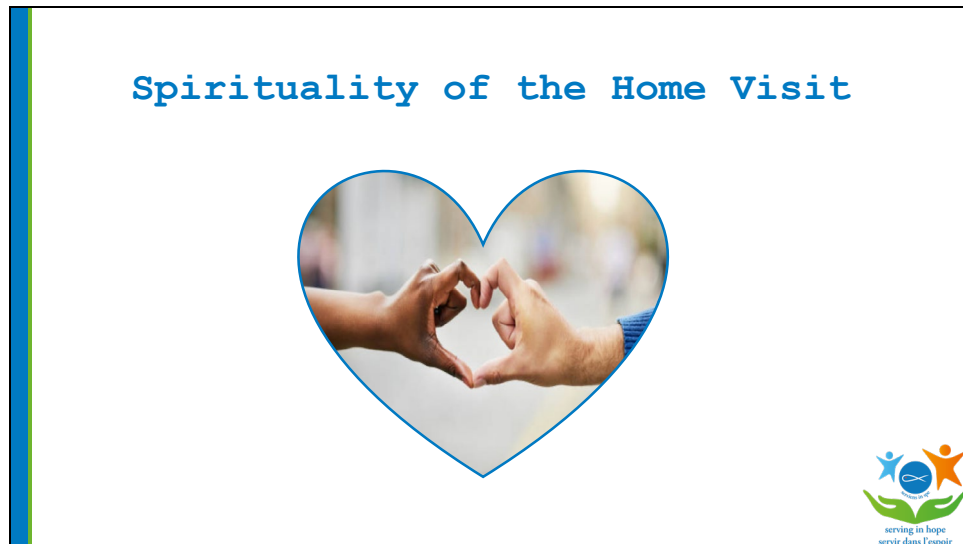
Call upon 2 – 3 people to share how their time of service with SSVP has impacted their life and what they hope to learn today.

What we will cover today

- What is a Home Visit?
- Vincentian qualities necessary for Home Visits
- Conducting a quality Home Visit and preparation
- Home Visit scenarios
- Post Home Visit



Read the slide on what will be covered. I am circulating a sheet on which you can write your name and email so that I can email you this presentation.



We are profoundly touched and transformed by the home visit. When going on home visits, we let go and go outside of our comfort zone, we let go of our sense of being in control and we come face to face with our own vulnerability.

Our Vincentian hearts are formed and softened when doing a home visit, and we grow in spirituality following Christ's example bringing hope to those who we serve. After doing the home visit, ask yourself these questions "Where was God present in this visit either in the person being visited, your partner with whom you did the home visit, and in yourself?"

I can definitely say that my heart was transformed once I started doing home visits listening to the stories of those being visited. This resulted in my own personal spiritual growth and deepening my relationship with God.

I will now share a home visit I have done.

What is a Home Visit?



The Rule of the Society states that our founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and his friends emphasized Love of God and Love of Neighbour.

This love was expressed by the development of Conferences whose purpose was to visit people in need in their homes.

The Canadian Rule states that “home visitation is a fundamental activity of the Society and has been carried out in pairs since the beginning of the Society in the 1830’s”.

Through the home visit, we have personal contact with people in need. This is how the Society is unique and different from other social organizations. We have conversations and build relationships with the person/family we are visiting.

It is not just a “food card/food delivery” service.

We help in all possible ways as stated in our Mission and Values.

Who should conduct home visits?

- Not everyone can conduct home visits.
- Why is this important?
- Many different skills are required in Vincentian work beyond the Home Visit.



Not everyone can conduct a home visit. It is important to have certain Vincentian qualities to be comfortable doing home visits which we will talk about.

For those who are not able to do home visits, there are many other ways you can help. For those with financial skills, you can help with bookkeeping/treasurer role. For those with administrative skills, you can help with secretarial role taking minutes. Those interested in social justice issues can assist with social justice initiatives. There are many works you can be involved with.

Vincentian qualities needed for home visits

- **What** are they?
- **Which** of these qualities are the most difficult to deal with when visiting a family?
- **How** do you overcome your emotions/feelings at that point in time?



Ask the attendees “What are some Vincentian qualities needed to do home visits?”

Non-judgmental, compassion, patience, love and kindness, respectful, listening, friendly, open-minded and open heart.

We must suspend judgments to be able to really hear and understand their story. We must listen, empathize and be fully present and recognize our personal bias, prejudices and judgments. Listening is often the greatest gift we can give to another.

Treat those we are visiting as a fellow brother or sister of Christ and meet them where they are with no judgments. Our role as Vincentians is to nourish, encourage, assist, support, stimulate and empower those who we visit.

The grace of home visits leads us to a deeper awareness of how to live our Vincentian virtues of humility, simplicity, gentleness, selflessness and zeal (energy/enthusiasm). These virtues are molded into our hearts.

Which quality is most difficult to deal with?

I overcome emotions/feelings that I should not have by asking the question “What would Jesus say or do?”

First point of contact

The family in need calls the church, **what is the process?**

- **Why** is this important?
- **Telephone response** by responsible person.
- **Answering machine** response requirements.



Now we will talk a bit about the process.

At my conference in London, Ontario and I believe many Conferences have a designated phone line for SSVP on the parish phone where people calling for food assistance can leave a message. It is important to have a friendly and welcoming voice on the answering machine and the person returning the call should also have a friendly and welcoming voice. It is sometimes difficult for people to pick up the phone and ask for help, and the message/person returning the call should help to make the person requesting assistance be comfortable. The voicemail message should ask the person to leave their name, address and telephone number and then a designated person can retrieve these messages from their home to call the person back and arrange for assistance to be provided.

We have someone designated who returns these calls or divides them up among the home visiting teams, and one of the persons assigned the visit will return the call and provide a time when the visit will be made.

The home visit

- Always visit in **pairs**
- **Prayer before a visit** – Why is this important?



Always visit in pairs. It is important to pray before the visit which helps to eliminate distractions in our life; ask that you will have an open mind and open heart during the visit and conduct yourself as Jesus expects. Prayer is personal so you can pray individually or along with your partner.

At my conference, we have a printed prayer that my partner and I pray together before starting the home visits. I have printed copies of this prayer should you wish to take a copy. As stated earlier, the home visit is a vehicle for spiritual growth and development.

Scenario 1

Arriving at a property of a family to visit – public housing project

- Row of houses, yards are littered, grass/weeds overgrown.
- Door of home damaged, screen missing, door bell wires exposed.



We will go through some scenarios of home visits you might encounter. I will ask that you reflect on your thoughts as I describe each scenario to you and which Vincentian Home Visit Quality might be challenged in the scenario and how you can overcome any negative thoughts you might be experiencing.

- What are your thoughts at this point of the visit?
- What Vincentian Home Visit Quality might be challenged?
- How do you overcome negative thoughts?

Scenario 2

You are in a residential area with nice homes, a large SUV, late model, is parked in the driveway



- What are your thoughts at this point of the visit?
- What Vincentian Home Visitor Quality might be challenged?
- How do you overcome any negative thoughts?

Greeting at the door

- What do you say when someone answers the door?
- What if no one is home?



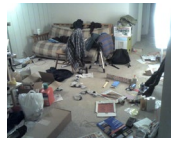
When someone greets me at the door, I identify myself stating that “I am Linda from the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and this is May we come in to talk about how we can help.” After covid when we started doing home visits again, we were not going into the home, but we would have a conversation with them at the door; however, we are now back to going inside when invited to go in.

If no one answers the door, you can leave a note saying that SSVP was there when no one was home leaving the number for them to call and arrange another appointment. We do not know the reason no one was home. An emergency may have come up.

Entering the home Scenario 1

You enter the home and observe the following:

- The home is untidy and has a bad smell.
- Kitchen table cluttered with dirty dishes, clothes and items scattered on the floor.
- Living room couch is rough looking and excessively worn.



- What are your thoughts at this point of the visit?
- What Vincentian Home Visit Quality might be challenged?
- How do you overcome any negative thoughts?

Could they use a store voucher for a better couch since the one they have is very worn?

Entering the home Scenario 2

The apartment is well furnished, nice furniture, and large TV with sound system

- **You observe** pictures of children on TV stand. There is a child's piece of art displayed beside an award certificate.



- What are your thoughts at this point of the visit?
- What Vincentian Home Visit Quality might be challenged?
- How do you overcome any negative thoughts?

Children's photos, artwork or momentos can be a great conversation starter to help the person you are visiting feel comfortable.

Starting a conversation

How to start and maintain a conversation?



Your opening statement has the potential to set the tone of how the conversation will go. What statement do you start with to introduce why you are there and what you hope to accomplish? I start by asking “How can we help you today? What are your needs? I use the word “Needs” vs. “Wants”. Ask open-ended questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” response.

Your conversation is important to build trust and also to learn more about the individual/family you are visiting to know how SSVP can assist – food cards, voucher for clothing, furniture or household necessities at the SSVP store, guidance for dental assistance or educational assistance or recreational assistance for children, etc. Whenever you can, provide a supportive comment such as “your place is kept very tidy” or “I like this momento displayed here” or a supportive comment about something the person has shared with you. This helps to develop the trusting relationship.

I strongly recommend you do not take notes when doing the visit as this can be intimidating to the person being visited. Of course, if you are providing a store voucher for items, you will need to write this out during the visit.

Consider seeing someone who looks different



Consider this neighbour in need. Her outward appearance makes you create your own story about her. STOP doing this. Vincentians have a tendency to apply their own lens to a situation. Remind yourself that people are doing the best they can with the information, resources and perspectives they currently possess. Guard against attributing motives to someone's behaviour without discovering the "why" behind the behaviour.

Think of this neighbour again. Have you criticized in your mind a decision she has made? Have you said to yourself, I would have never done that – maybe I would not have spent money on getting a tattoo. Have we really stopped to put ourselves in her shoes? Have we stopped to consider how her self esteem would have been affected by circumstances of her past.

If we have attributed wrongly any label or characteristic onto someone who looks different, it is time to correct that for the sake of the dignity of that person in whom we are to see Christ.

Preparing to leave the home

What do I say?

What do I do?

Thank them for inviting you into their home.



You have had your conversation and provided the assistance needed. What do you say before leaving?


As I leave, I thank them for inviting us into their home and let them know when they are able to call again should they require assistance.

If they are going through a particular difficult time, I will ask if I can pray for them or will say “I will keep you in my prayers” depending on the conversation that took place during the visit.

After the home visit

Post home visit recap and reporting

- What information do you retain and why? Only collect necessary information.
- Pray for the family privately, as a pair or as a conference.
- Share home visit stories at your conference meeting, especially those that were particularly difficult or rewarding.



After the visit, reflect upon the visit and ask yourself some questions: “How did you feel about going on the visit? What did you find exciting/interesting and/or difficult/challenging? What touched your heart? Reflect on where you found God’s presence in the visit – in the person visited, in your partner and in yourself?

What information do you retain? My conference has a database that tracks information (# of adults and # of children, if on Ontario Works or Ontario Disability, whether family has immigrated from another country and amount of food card assistance provided on specific date. All members doing home visits have access to the database so they are aware of the circumstances prior to providing help, which is very beneficial. If you keep paper records, ensure they are properly stored and only collect necessary information to abide with privacy laws.


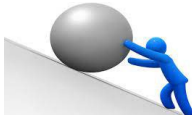
My conference helps families with children every 6 weeks and households with adults can call every 12 weeks. We provide \$35 for first person + \$10 for each additional person up to maximum of \$100. Conferences need to determine amount of assistance they will provide based on their financial resources. Some other Conferences in London provide help every 2 or 3 months and some every 6 months which I personally feel is too long between visits.

After the visit, pray for the family privately, with your partner or as a Conference. It is also recommended that you share home visit stories at your Conference meetings especially those that were particularly challenging or especially rewarding.

Challenges

You experience a situation on a rare occasion where your Vincentian values are challenged?

- A family seeks help every 3 months, they have 6 children, they appear to have sufficient income from OW, child tax credit and other government support.
- What do you do?



You will sometimes experience a situation where your Vincentian values are challenged. Read situation outlined on slide.

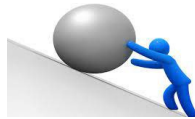
Again we are non-judgmental. Provide assistance, and you may want to delve a bit deeper to try and understand the situation and why they continue to call for assistance. There may be a reason you were not aware of – perhaps medication is needed which is costly reducing the amount they have remaining for food.

I have been asked “What information do you collect when doing a first visit?” At my home conference, we use an Outreach Application (copies available for you) which we ask to be completed by someone who calls for the first time to understand their income/expenses and needs. The person who picks up the messages reaches out and emails the Outreach Application which is completed and emailed back before that first visit is made.

Over the past several years, we have been assisting a number of immigrant families coming to Canada, and it is wonderful to be able to assist them until such time as employment can be found and they then can be self sustaining.

Ask yourself

- If Jesus was your partner making this home visit, how do you feel He would handle the situation?
- What responses would He use?
- What questions would He ask?
- Let this guide you through any challenging moments.



When faced with a challenging situation, ask yourself – read slide.

What was accomplished by your visit

- The family likely benefited financially/materially from your visit.
- What other gifts did you leave behind?
- How did the home visit strengthen your spiritual relationship?



What was accomplished by your visit? Read first bullet.

How else did the family benefit from the visit? Friendship, social interaction for someone living alone.

How did the home visit strengthen your spiritual relationship?

Resources

- Be aware of resources in your community.
- www.ssvp.ca/members/formationressources/vlif3home visiting



It is important to be aware of the other resources available in your community so that if something comes up during the visit, you might be able to recommend another resource as needed. For example, the individual being visited shared a story where they need legal assistance – you could refer them to a legal resource in your community.

In Closing

We covered:

- What is a home visit
- Doing a quality home visit
- Vincentian qualities necessary in doing home visits
- Home visit scenarios, Vincentian qualities that might be challenged & how to overcome negative thoughts



Read slide.

Thank you / Merci

Questions / Questions

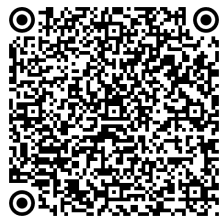


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