



# Conference Treasurer's Handbook

## The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Georgia

Published May 1, 2018

*"Vincentians should never forget that giving love, talent, and time is more important than giving money. Nevertheless, the Society uses money and property to help relieve the suffering of those in need. The Society's funds must be handled with the utmost care, prudence and generosity...Accurate records must be kept of all money received or spent."*

*The Rule: Part I, Article 3.14*

## **Purpose**

The handling of the Society funds is a serious responsibility. The purpose of this Handbook is to provide the Conference Treasurer with a simple, thorough guide to fulfilling their responsibilities as an officer in the Georgia Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. In addition to this Handbook, we recommend that you read the National Council's policy regarding the use of Vincentian funds.

**The policies in this Handbook are effective beginning May 1, 2018.**

Questions about the policies in this handbook should be directed to your respective District Treasurer, Council Treasurer or SVdP Director of Administration.

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## **I. Introduction**

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### **A. Overview**

Our first words in this Handbook are for you, the Conference Treasurer: “Thank you, thank you, thank you,” for your commitment to conscientious record-keeping and your dedication and generous spirit. We are grateful for each Conference and District Treasurer for their willingness to serve the poor and the Society in this capacity.

We further recognize that no one joins The Society of St. Vincent de Paul to fill out forms and create reports. Members volunteer their time and talent in order to serve the poor and in doing so, grow spiritually and develop friendships with other members and those they serve. Your role in our ministry is unique and serves a vital need in achieving our mission goals, as our loving service is bound by the legal, financial and practical expectations of our donors, supporters and the government.

Our financial accountability is first to God, who provides us the opportunity to serve our brothers and sisters in need. Secondly, our Rule calls us to be accountable to those in need. The Society has held from the beginning that funds donated to the Conference belong to the poor. Thirdly, the Society calls us to be accountable to those who give generously to support our work. Above all, the intention of our donors must prevail. Finally, we have legal obligations. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul must meet the legal, reporting and financial obligations required of all nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations. By providing timely, accurate reporting to our parish, pastor, donors, The Society and tax entities, we demonstrate good stewardship. Evidence of our good stewardship encourages donors to continue to give.

### **B. Legal Requirements**

The Georgia Council is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit entity, under which the SVdP Conference Support Center, all Conferences and all Thrift Stores are provided tax-exempt status. We file one 990 Tax Form with the IRS. The legal officers of the corporation, registered with the State of Georgia are: the CEO, Treasurer and Secretary of the Georgia Council. All leases, deeds and other corporate documents that carry the name of the St. Vincent de Paul must be submitted to these officers for review and signature. We are legally and spiritually one family. Therefore, it is important that every Conference handle all monies donated to The Society in a responsible manner and in accord with the regulations and guidelines set out by the IRS, the State of Georgia, the Archdiocese of Atlanta and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The policies in this Handbook are binding on all Conferences in the Georgia Council.

### **C. Audits**

Independent audits are confirmation of good stewardship. At the end of each fiscal year, the Georgia Council conducts an independent audit to include the financial activities of the SVdP Conference Support Center, every Conference, and every Thrift Store. Additionally, the Bylaws for Conferences in the Georgia Council require that every Conference conduct an Annual Internal Audit. These internal audits are to be conducted by: a. two members with no connection to the financial process of the Conference, b. a qualified professional person or organization, or c. two designated persons from upper Councils. (See page 15 for details.)

### **D. General Principle**

Just as every home visit involves two Vincentians, every monetary transaction must involve two people and have supporting documentation. As examples: at least two unrelated persons should count donations and sign a count sheet; and a Treasurer should not reimburse themselves for expenses, but should submit a check request form to the President (or other unrelated authorized check signatory) who then writes the check.

## II. Protocol for Incoming Treasurer

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### A. Role and Responsibilities of Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be responsible for the Conference funds and securities and maintenance of full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements in books (official records) belonging to the Conference and the deposit of all monies and other valuable effects in the name and to the credit of the Conference in such depositories as may be designated and approved by the Conference.

The Treasurer shall attend meetings of the Conference. The Treasurer shall inform members of the Conference's financial position by submitting a written statement at every meeting, and prepare a budget for the Conference, which shall be approved annually.

The Treasurer shall assure the disbursement of funds, as approved by the Conference, upon receipt of proper documentation and shall keep a record of all transactions. The financial condition of the Conference shall be reported to the President and Conference at the regular meetings.

### B. Establishing a New Treasurer

It is advised that the current Treasurer spend time with the incoming Treasurer for mentoring and training before the official appointment of the new Treasurer.

1. Conference President appoints the Treasurer to the office, which takes effect when the President announces the appointment at a Conference meeting.
2. **Within five days**, the Conference President notifies (via e-mail) the District Treasurer and the Director of Administration at the Conference Support Center (CSC). CSC will update officer information in the National database.
3. **Within two business days** of receipt, the CSC distributes a copy of the latest Conference Treasurer's Handbook and Appendix to the new Treasurer.
4. At the direction of the Conference President, the Conference Client Management System (CMS) Administrator updates the new Treasurer as an officer in the system.
5. **Within 10 days**, the new Treasurer is added to the bank account as a signatory and the outgoing Treasurer removed.
6. **Within 10 days** of appointment, the Conference President and the new Treasurer complete the "Confirmation of New Conference Treasurer" form. (Appendix A)
7. **Within 30 days**, the District Treasurer meets with the new Treasurer to review and collect the "Confirmation" form. Also reviews the process for report submission, and answers any questions the Treasurer may have.
8. District Treasurer signs and submits a copy of the "Confirmation" form to the Director of Volunteer and Vincentian Services (CSC).
9. Internal Audit: The President and/or Treasurer may initiate an internal audit at the time of transition, but it does not replace the annual audit.

### III. Treasurer's Operating Procedures

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#### A. Collecting, Counting, and Depositing Donations

Conferences must:

- **Have written procedures for collecting, counting, recording and acknowledging donations**
- **Ensure that collected money is secured, e.g., in a safe, locked bag, locked box**
- **Have two or more non-related counters involved in the count**
- **Reconcile the count sheet, deposit slip, and bank statement**

##### 1. Collecting Donations

The Georgia Council recommends that a Conference hold monthly second collections which are included in the packet of envelopes for each registered parishioner. This helps to ensure a steady flow of income, although level of donations will vary from month to month. In addition, it is important for Conferences to receive most of their funding from the local parish or community. Some Conferences also collect money at the door of the Church after Mass and/or have a "poor box" in the Church foyer.

##### 2. Written Procedures for Income

Each Conference determines its own protocols for collecting money. They need to have a written set of procedures for how they receive income. Please see (Appendix B) to use as a guide in creating your Conference income procedures. These procedures will be submitted annually with the internal audit by September 20<sup>th</sup>.

##### 3. Securing Donations

It is required that at least two non-related persons be involved in handling the money. It is preferred that these individuals rotate, but it should never be only the President and Treasurer. The recommended method of securing donations is to keep them in the Church safe until they can be counted. If this process is not available other methods must be used to ensure the security of the collected monies.

##### 4. Counting Donations

Though working closely together, the Catholic Church and The Society of St. Vincent de Paul are two separate legal entities and should keep separate financial records and procedures. According to the Archdiocese of Atlanta, St. Vincent de Paul Society receipts should be collected under dual control and properly safeguarded until remitted to the Society for deposit, posting, and tax acknowledgement. The Georgia Council requires that donations be counted by at least two non-related persons. The Council recommends that there be a rotation among the counters. The counters are required to prepare and sign a count sheet, and submit the count sheet to the Treasurer. They may use the "*Count Sheet*" (Appendix C) or other appropriate form. The preference is for the Treasurer not to participate in the count. The President and Treasurer should establish count procedures. At no time should the President and Treasurer count alone.

##### 5. Making the Deposit

The deposit should be made as soon as possible after the money is collected. The deposit slip is given to the Treasurer. It is recommended that the same person should not count donations, make deposits, and enter the deposit into the accounting records. If this is not possible, the same person may be involved in each of the actions as long as there are always at least two non-related persons counting the money and signing the count sheet. The count sheet, deposit slip, and bank statement must reconcile.

## **B. Recording Donations**

### **Summary:**

- **Recommend keeping a log of all donors names and donations**
- **Recommend acknowledgement of each donation**
- **Council requires letter or e-mail acknowledgement of one-time donations of \$250 or more, and retention of a copy or report of letters sent for 2 years**
- **Conference is required to notify the Council of one-time or cumulative donations of \$5,000 or more in one fiscal year**
- **Certain donations are not tax deductible**

### **1. Donation Records**

The Georgia Council recommends keeping a log of donations received, according to individual donor names. It is also recommended that each Conference keep a copy of the front of all checks. Each Conference is required to keep the donation envelopes and copies of loose checks for its financial records.

### **2. Acknowledging Donations**

Many Conferences prepare donor acknowledgments for donations of any amount. This provides the opportunity to thank donors and let them know how the Society has used the donated funds to assist those who are poor and needy in the local area and other parts Georgia. A notice can be placed in the parish bulletin letting parishioners know that written acknowledgments are available upon request. Some Conferences also set up a table in the entryway of the Church to pass out acknowledgments to increase visibility of The Society. Many Conferences mail an acknowledgement which summarizes the donor's gifts for the calendar year.

For the good of the Conference, a general acknowledgement should also be provided to the parish and pastor. Good communication regarding funds donated each month or quarter and the general type of assistance and/or number of families assisted, is vital to continued or increased parishioner and pastor support. At least an annual meeting with the pastor is recommended as is a bulletin notice or insert on a regular basis for the benefit of parishioners. At times, it is helpful to let parishioners know how many people a Conference was unable to help financially due to lack of funds. This can raise awareness of the need in the area.

### **3. IRS Requirements for Donation Acknowledgements**

#### **a. Donor Requirements**

A donor must obtain a written acknowledgement from a charity for any single contribution of \$250 or more in order to claim a charitable contribution on their federal income tax return.

An organization that does not acknowledge a contribution incurs no penalty. However, an organization can assist a donor by providing timely, written statements for gifts of \$250 or more so the donor can claim the income tax deduction. Acknowledgements can be in many forms (letters, postcards, computer generated forms, etc.) and they may be mailed or transmitted electronically. The donor must receive the acknowledgement before filing their income tax return. Nonprofit organizations typically send written acknowledgements no later than January 31<sup>st</sup> of the calendar year following the contribution.

A separate acknowledgment may be provided for each single contribution of \$250 or more or an annual summary may be used to document several single contributions of \$250 or more.



Separate contributions of less than \$250 will not be aggregated. An example of this could be weekly offerings to a donor's church of less than \$250 even though the donor's annual total contributions are \$250 or more.

The acknowledgement should include:

1. Name of organization
2. Dollar Amount of contribution
3. Description (but not the value) of non-cash contribution
4. Statement that, "no goods or services were provided by the organization in return for the contribution", if that was the case
5. Description and good faith estimate of the value of goods or services, if any, that an organization provided in return for the contribution
6. Statement that goods or services, if any, provided by the organization in return for the contribution consisted entirely of intangible religious benefits (described later in this publication), if that was the case. It is not necessary to include either the donor's social security number or tax identification number on the acknowledgment.

#### **b. Organization Requirements**

A charitable organization is required to provide written disclosure to a donor who receives goods or services in exchange for a single payment in excess of \$75.

A donor may only take a contribution deduction to the extent that their contribution exceeds the fair market value of the goods or services received in return for the contribution; therefore, donors need to know the value of the goods or services. An organization must provide a written disclosure statement to a donor who makes a payment exceeding \$75 partly as a contribution and partly for goods and services provided by the organization. A contribution made by a donor in exchange for goods or services is known as a *quid pro quo* contribution.

Example of a *quid pro quo* contribution: A donor gives a charitable organization \$100 in exchange for a concert ticket with a fair market value of \$40. In this example, the donor's tax deduction may not exceed \$60. Because the donor's payment (*quid pro quo* contribution) exceeds \$75, the charitable organization must furnish a disclosure statement to the donor, even though the deductible amount does not exceed \$75.

It is recommended that the Conference retain copies of thank you letters/receipts given/sent to donors for two years.

If any donor (individual, corporation, foundation, government) gives your Conference money or goods equal to or greater than \$5,000 as a one-time gift or a cumulative gift over the course of a fiscal year (October 1 – September 30), that amount, donor and donor address must be reported to the Georgia Council prior to October 30<sup>th</sup> for submission in the Council's 990 tax return, Schedule B.

#### **4. Donations That are Not Tax-Deductible**

Payments for raffle tickets or bingo cards are not tax-deductible.

The value of volunteer services cannot be deducted by the volunteer.

It is not legal to receive a tax deduction by directing a donation to a certain individual through a charitable organization. (For example, Mr. Jones may NOT give money or goods to Mr. Smith by first giving the items to SVdP and specifying Mr. Smith as the recipient. Such a gift may be made personally, but neither a deduction nor "pass through" handling by SVdP is permitted.) Collections taken up by the parish to benefit a specific named individual are not tax-deductible and may not be "passed through" Conference accounts.

However, funds that are received by the Conference in which the donor specifies that his/her donation be spent on a specific program must be spent on that program. (For example, Mr. Jones gives \$500 to the Conference to help pay for funeral expenses of needy clients. The \$500 must be spent in the way Mr. Jones requested.)

You cannot deduct contributions to specific individuals, including:

- Contributions to fraternal societies made for the purpose of paying medical or burial expenses of deceased members.
- Contributions to individuals who are needy or worthy. This includes contributions to a qualified organization if you indicate that your contribution is for a specific person. But you can deduct a contribution that you give to a qualified organization that in turn helps needy or worthy individuals if you do not indicate that your contribution is for a specific person.

### **C. Disbursing Conference Funds**

**Summary:**

- **Disbursement of Conference Funds should be made according to written guidelines**
- **Checks over \$3,500 require two signatures**
- **The preferred method of payment is by paper check. Online bill pay is acceptable. When necessary, a Conference may use a debit card by following the same procedures as for a check request. No Conference is allowed to use a credit card or automatic draft from the SVdP account**
- **Never give a blank check to anyone, including Conference members**
- **Never give a check to a client**
- **Every check written must agree with the supporting documentation of a receipt and/or case record, paper form or e-record. (For example, the case record and check memo line should include account number and client name or ID number)**
- **No money may be given to another organization, no matter how worthy the cause**
- **Conferences blessed with an abundance should share with Conferences in need**
- **St. Vincent de Paul, like other charities in Georgia, must pay state & local tax**

#### **1. Written Guidelines**

Each Conference should have written guidelines for type, amount and frequency of aid to be given. The Conference determines the guidelines which may specify a range of help. For example, "Our conference provides rental assistance in the range of \$400 to \$800." These are guidelines, not strict policy, which can be adapted to a unique situation. Exceptions should be noted in meeting minutes. The guidelines can be amended at the Conference's discretion. Conferences must submit their guidelines annually with the internal audit by September 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### **2. Establishing a Conference Checking Account**

Society funds are to be maintained by the Conference, not by the parish. The Conference must have its own, separate checking account. It does not require the signature of the pastor. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Georgia Council Tax ID (58-0967972) must be used on all bank accounts for Conferences, Thrift Stores, and any other Council activity. Society funds must not be commingled with parish or individual accounts.

When opening a checking account, include the name of the Society and the name of the Conference in the title/name of the account. An example would be: *St. Vincent de Paul Society, St. John the Baptist Conference*. Including the Conference name in the title of the account, and on the check, helps to minimize confusion with other St. Vincent de Paul Conferences. It also facilitates cashing of checks that include only the parish name but are donated to the parish Conference during the second collection. To avoid stop payment fees some Conferences also include the phrase "void in 90 days" on Conference checks. This practice can simplify the reconciliation of monthly bank statements.

To open an account, many banks require a copy of the IRS determination letter stating that St. Vincent de Paul Society, Georgia Council is a non-profit organization, which includes the tax ID number, and/or a copy of the organization's Articles of Incorporation. A copy of both of these may be obtained from the Georgia Council office.

### **3. Signature Authority on Bank Accounts**

The Georgia Council requires that more than one member of the Conference have signature authority on the account. The Conference Treasurer and President seem to be the most practical and logical for this responsibility. In addition to these two, many Conferences find that having a third Officer, such as a Vice-President, Assistant Treasurer or Secretary, on the account is helpful for instances when the President and/or Treasurer are out of town or otherwise unavailable.

### **4. Methods of Payment**

Many Conferences establish a policy that any expense, direct aid to a client or otherwise, over a certain dollar amount (as determined by the Conference) must be approved by both the Treasurer and President. If this approval is made verbally it should be noted in the meeting's minutes. As Council policy, checks over \$3,500 require two signatures. Cosigners should not be relatives.

A paper check written with appropriate notations in the memo line after a Check Request has been submitted, provides the most comprehensive documentation for a disbursement of funds. This is the preferred method of payment.

Online bill pay is acceptable with required documentation to be maintained, e.g., check request, case record, etc.

A Conference may only use a debit card under the following conditions:

- Cases where a paper check cannot achieve the same result. (For example, Aldi's grocery does not accept checks, but some Conferences can obtain significant savings by shopping there.)
- Only the signatories on the account obtain a card from the bank and the individual signatory's name is on the card in addition to the SVdP name.

Signed blank checks are prohibited for distribution to anyone. Checks are never given directly to a client.

### **5. Supporting Documentation**

#### **a. Reimbursement**

Reimbursement to members from Conference Funds for any reason should be kept to a minimum. Routine reimbursement to members regarding cases should not be permitted because funds for cases are to be disbursed through the Conference account. If reimbursement is required, please use the "Check Request" (Appendix D) or a similar form, attach all receipts to it and keep for financial records. A check signatory should not reimburse him/herself for expenses but should submit a Check Request Form to another non-related authorized check signatory who then writes the check.

Members should not write personal checks to clients and should not expect a tax deduction if they do. Charitable donations for tax deduction purposes must be given to charitable 501 (c) (3) organizations, not individuals. Again, it is not legal to receive a tax deduction by directing a donation to a certain individual through a charitable organization.

#### **b. Case Record**

A link between Case Records and checks written to assist clients must be established and maintained. For example, every check written to help with a client's utility bill should have a corresponding Case Record (including amount requested and account number) which is filled-out by the Caseworker. The Treasurer should note the

client name and/or ID number and the account number in the memo of the check and in the register. (With this documentation, a copy of the bill is recommended, but not required.) It is required that Caseworkers contact the vendor or other agency to verify the legitimacy of the need and note in CMS.

## **6. Disbursing Conference Funds**

### **a. No Contributions to Other Organizations**

Conferences are encouraged to coordinate efforts with other organizations and agencies. However, no matter how worthy the cause, funds shall not be diverted in the form of donations or contributions to other organizations or charities.

### **b. Sharing Resources with other Conferences**

Blessed Frederic Ozanam intended The Society of St. Vincent de Paul to “embrace the whole world in a network of charity.” His vision is realized when Conferences throughout Georgia, the United States and the World share their resources.

Money must not be hoarded. Decisions regarding the use of money and property are to be made after reflection in the light of the Gospel and Vincentian principles. Council policy prohibits the investment of Conference funds in CD’s, stocks, bonds, mutual funds or similar accounts.

Donations to Conferences—are meant to address today’s needs. It is wrong for a Conference to seek financial security by building up a large balance for the needs of the future. Conference balances at any point in time, should not exceed what they typically spend during an average quarter. Surplus Conference funds should be shared generously with more needy Conferences or the special works of the District Council.

### **c. Sharing funds within the Council**

Conferences in need of funds can benefit from other Conferences who have a temporary surplus. Conferences should direct requests for funds to the District President who will then circulate the request among Conferences in the District. If Conferences in the District are unable to help, the District President will then forward the request to the other District Presidents. Conferences should also notify the District President when they have a surplus of funds.

### **d. Council Solidarity**

The Georgia Council requires Conferences to contribute a percentage of their income as a means of solidarity with other levels of The Society. Likewise, the Georgia Council pays both regional and national dues and the U.S. National office in St. Louis, Missouri supports the International office of St. Vincent de Paul in Paris, France.

For conferences with annual income of less than \$50,000 the contribution is 7.5%. For those conferences with annual income greater than \$50,000 the percentage is 10%. Annual income excludes qualified grant money received, funding expenses and contributions from other Conferences/Councils. Money sent to another Conference or Council may not be used to reduce the solidarity payment. (Make checks payable to: St. Vincent de Paul Georgia and mail to: 2050-C Chamblee Tucker Rd, Atlanta, GA 30341)

A qualified grant is defined as in defined in Appendix E – Definition of Qualified Grants. All grants must be reviewed and approved by Council. The determination of a Qualified Grant will result in an exclusion from Solidarity and inclusion on Line 5a of the Monthly Conference Report. Those grants determined not to be qualified will be treated as regular income.

**e. International and Domestic Twinning**

Conferences and Councils help others in need, both at the national and international level. Conferences may establish an ongoing relationship with a Conference in need in the U.S. or in another country through the National Council office.

**f. Aid to Members and their Family**

It is not the intent of SVdP that members of a Conference or their family lose eligibility for support and aid in a time of need as a result of their volunteer work with SVdP. However, due to the potential for conflict of interest, the following policy guidelines are provided:

1. Any request by a Conference member or family member of a Conference member for financial or material support from the Conference must be handled as any other case. This includes a home visit and completion of a case record.
2. The amount and frequency of financial or material support to a member of the Conference or family member shall conform to the amount and frequency of support policies in place for all clients served.
3. Approval for any financial and/or material support to a member of the Conference or family member, in any amount or frequency, will require the written approval of both the Conference President and the Conference Vice President.
4. A copy of this approval along with the case record must be forwarded to the Conference Support Center, ATTN: CEO, in an envelope marked as 'CONFIDENTIAL' within 48 hours of approval by the President and Vice President.
5. The requirement to forward to the Executive Director shall not delay providing any support once approved by the President and Vice President.

**7. SVdP Pays State and Local Sales Tax**

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is not exempt from paying state and local tax. Georgia has strict rules which require churches and other charities to pay state and local tax on purchases.

Any questions regarding this policy should be addressed to the Executive Director of The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Georgia.

**D. Conference Treasurer's Reports**

**Summary:**

- **Treasurer gives a report to their Conference at each meeting**
- **Conference Treasurer and President send "Monthly Financial Report" to District Treasurer who forwards it to SVdP Conference Support Center**
- **Monthly Financial Report includes: Report Form, Check Register, copy of bank statements, Reconciliation of outstanding checks & deposits and a copy of count sheets**
- **Solidarity Payment is due monthly to the Conference Support Center**
- **The Annual Report is prepared by the Treasurer and Secretary, approved by the President and submitted to the District President by October 30<sup>th</sup> each year**
- **An audit team is required to conduct an internal audit annually and to submit the verification form to the District Treasurer no later than September 30<sup>th</sup>**
- **The District Treasurer serves the Conference and Council in significant ways**

**1. Treasurer's Report to the Conference**

The Conference President should be aware of all major activities of the Treasury. Each conference meeting should include a monthly financial report from the Treasurer.

## 2. Monthly Conference Financial Reporting

The five items described below are required for each report. The reports are required monthly. The District Treasurer should receive these items no later than the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month following, and then submit the items to the SVdP Conference Support Center by the 30<sup>th</sup> of the month following

- a. **“Conference Financial Report” form** – A copy of this form, along with instructions, can be found in Appendix E. This form is automatically generated by CMS, providing the Conference has previously entered all of the necessary case record information.
- b. **Check Register** – The check register for the month is produced by CMS.
- c. **Copy of the bank statement(s) for the reporting period** – Monthly bank statements (a copy of every page) should be submitted for all Conference accounts.
- d. **Reconciliation** – This is needed if the balance shown on the Conference Financial Report form is not the same as what the bank statement(s) shows as the ending balance. This difference can be due to outstanding checks or deposits in transit or the fact that the bank statement goes beyond the end of the report period. The reconciled balance should be the same amount as the ending balance on the monthly Conference Financial Report form. CMS has a reconciliation function.
- e. **Copy of the Count Sheets** – A simple form including the amount of cash and checks counted and the signatures of two non-related people responsible for the count.

The Monthly Conference Financial Reporting process reflects activity from the first to the last day of the month. The report and its bank statement reconciliation should be verified by the President via signature or e-mail before submission to the District Treasurer no later than the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. See *“Steps to Review a Monthly Financial Report”* (Appendix F). An email from the President must include the statement that “he/she has reviewed and approved the attached reports and documents.”

## 3. Annual Reports

The fiscal year of The Society of St. Vincent de Paul begins October 1<sup>st</sup> and concludes September 30<sup>th</sup>. Georgia Council compiles all Conference reports and forwards them to the next higher Council, along with their own reports. The National Council, in turn, collects all the Reports and publishes them in a Consolidated Annual Report that is distributed to all U.S. Bishops, all U.S. Congressmen, and all U.S. members of the Society. Donors, Foundations and Federal Agencies processing grant applications frequently request this document. The Consolidated Annual Report derives its value from the timely, accurate reports of the Conferences and Councils.

The Conference Annual Report Form is prepared by the Conference Treasurer and Secretary, approved by the Conference President and submitted to the Conference Support Center no later than October 30<sup>th</sup>.

## 4. CMS – Client Management System

CMS is the online client database ([www.svdpga.org/cmsportal](http://www.svdpga.org/cmsportal)) that is used by all Conferences in the Georgia Council. CMS provides many benefits including: lessening the treasurer’s workload, increased financial transparency and accuracy, ease of reporting and increased Conference collaboration. CMS allows SVdP Georgia to provide better service to our clients, provide better reporting to our donors and ease the record-keeping burden on our members. Its use is required.

## 5. Annual Audits

The Bylaws for Conferences in the Georgia Council state: “Each Conference will undertake annually, an internal audit and report the results to the District Council or next higher Council.” The internal audit should be conducted by two members designated by the Conference who are not usually involved in the financial process. The following should be submitted to the District Treasurer no later than September 20<sup>th</sup>:

- “Template for Collecting, Counting, & Depositing Donations Checklist” (Appendix B)
- “Conference Annual Internal Audit Worksheet” (Appendix G)

- “Verification of Conference Internal Audit Form” (Appendix H)

The District Treasurer will submit these items to the SVdP Conference Support Center no later than September 30<sup>th</sup>. In addition, each year the Council will hire an accounting firm to conduct an audit. When a new Conference President is elected, they may choose to conduct an internal audit. However, this audit does not fulfill the requirement for the annual audit for that fiscal year.

#### **a. Internal Audit**

The Georgia Council requires that each Conference perform an annual internal audit conducted by two members who have been delegated by the Conference, by a qualified professional person or organization, or by delegated persons from an upper Council. The Verification of Audit Form, Internal Audit worksheets, Collection Procedures and Conference Guidelines should be submitted to the District Treasurer no later than September 20. The Conference Treasurer will submit the forms to the Georgia Council no later than September 30. Please retain copies for your records.

1. Become familiar with the Conference/Thrift Store Treasurers’ Handbook.
2. Review any previous audits to determine if the problems outlined have been addressed and corrected.
3. Verify that records are retained according to the Schedule below.
4. Verify signatories on the account with the signature card at the bank.
5. Review the Conference Guidelines for disbursing funds.
6. Randomly select one month from each quarter of the fiscal year being examined. For each of the selected months, check income:
  - a. Verify that the deposits reflected on the bank statements agree with the income recorded in Conference records.
  - b. Select one deposit for each month to verify that the count sheet, deposit slip, Conference records, and bank statement all agree.
  - c. Review the reconciliation of the Conference’s ending book balance (on the Financial Report) with the bank statement to make sure they agree.
7. Check expenditures by selecting at least three (3) disbursements from each of the four months being reviewed:
  - a. Compare the amount on the check with the amount on the bank statement.
  - b. Make sure that checks listed on the reconciliation “clear” the bank on the following month’s bank statement. (If a check has not cleared in the following month, determine if a stop payment is necessary.)
  - c. Determine whether the disbursement is recorded in the correct expense classification on the monthly financial report.
  - d. Determine that the disbursement is supported by proper documentation including case record form, receipt, check request form, and/or invoice.
8. Verify that the Conference acknowledged donors who gave \$250 or more in a single donation.
9. Sign and submit the Verification of Audit form with the appropriate description of the reviewer’s findings.

#### **b. External Audit**

Every year, the Georgia Council hires an accounting firm to audit the financial activities of the Conferences, Thrift Stores, Council and Special Works. The accounting firm relies heavily on the internal controls, policies and procedures that SVdP has in place for the Conference Treasurers.

As a part of the audit all Conferences will submit a copy of the check register for the most recently completed fiscal year.

Check Register confirmation options:

1. If the Conference receives a paper statement in the mail, send the unopened statement, from either September or October directly to the audit firm office. Once the auditors have reviewed the statement it will be returned to the Conference.
2. Online viewing access-Conferences may send their login information directly to the auditors or to the Council Office to allow access. Login information will be deleted once the balance has been verified.
3. The auditors can request a paper confirmation from some of the smaller banks (Larger banks will not respond to a confirmation request). If this option is selected, the auditors will provide a template to be signed by the authorized signatory on the account and returned to them.
4. Larger banks will not respond to a paper confirmation request. However, a paper confirmation can be obtained through Confirmation.com for a fee of \$23.00 per account. If a Conference selects this option, an invoice for \$23 will be sent from the Council Office. Auditors will need to be provided the name, email address and phone number of authorized signatories as well as all of the account numbers. The authorized signatory will then receive an email requesting authorization to provide the information to us.

At random, the auditors will select several Conferences for more detailed review. The details of the review will be communicated from the accounting firm, but the process will be similar to the following:

After reviewing the register, the auditors request documentation supporting several of the transactions. The reviewers meet with the Treasurer and President to examine the supporting documentation and discuss the following items:

1. Method of counting collections (who allowed, how many)
2. Documentation of counts and other records retained
3. Method of securing donations
4. Method of tracking and acknowledging donors
5. Initiation process for payments
6. Types of expenses paid by Conference
7. Approval process for payments
8. Supporting documentation for payments
9. Method of disbursing funds (checks, on-line bill pay, etc.)
10. Signature authority and for what limits
11. Reimbursement procedures
12. Document retention policy

Each Conference will fully cooperate with the audit.

In the course of operation, Conferences generate case records, bank statements, invoices, etc. Confidentiality demands that all records on individuals and families served be kept in a secure, private place.

**c. Record Retention Schedule**

Annual Conference Report *...Permanent	Bank Statements.....7 Years
Letters of Aggregation .....Permanent	Cancelled Checks.....7 Years
Bank Deposits (envelopes, etc) 4 Years	Invoices Received.....7 Years
Bank Reconciliations..... 3 Years	Meeting Minutes.....7 Years
Case Records..... 3 Years	Treasurer Statements .....7 Years
General Correspondence.....3 Years	Donation Acknowledgement ..2 Years

*\*including statistics, membership list, and items with historical significance.*



**6. Interest Bearing Accounts**

Forms 1099-INT from the bank should be submitted to the Atlanta Council by February 15<sup>th</sup>.

**7. District Treasurer Role**

**a. Welcome New Conference Treasurers**

The District Treasurer should provide an orientation to new Conference Treasurer and serve as a local resource for comments or questions. The District Treasurer will collect and submit the New Conference Treasurer Form.

**b. Support Conference Treasurers**

The District Treasurer should keep in regular contact with Conference Treasurers in the District to answer questions and to solicit feedback about current policies and/or issues. The District Treasurer will also conduct at least one meeting per year with the Conference Treasurers in order to build community, share best practices and discuss current Council-wide policies and procedures.

**c. Review Conference Financial Reports**

The District Treasurer will review each Conference’s monthly financial report for accuracy and compliance with the policies in this Handbook. See “Instructions for Completing the Conference Financial Report Form” (Appendix E). The District Treasurer will view, but not be able to edit, Conference information in CMS and banking tools where appropriate.

**IV. Funding Grants Protocol for Conferences**

In order to prevent duplication and competition between grant applications from Conferences, all grant applications must be coordinated with the Georgia Council’s Development office. This includes local Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP, which was formerly known as FEMA) grants for rent and utilities, as well as any solicitation of a foundation or corporation. Coordination through the Development Office also prevents mishandling and misinformation which can affect the Society in Georgia or nationally. Again, the officers of the corporation, the non-profit status, and all corporate functions reside with the Council.

The St. Vincent de Paul Georgia Conference Support Center (CSC) recognizes that your local Conference is more familiar with and aware of local grant/fundraising opportunities. Therefore, you are the best resource for local funding opportunities. The CSC staff is here to support your efforts, and increase the efficacy of your work through strategic coordination of both internal and external services.

The non-profit status belongs to the Council and the final responsibility, both legal and financial, for the Society rests with the Board of Directors and the Council Officers who operate on their behalf. It is the policy of the Council that all grant applications be reviewed and endorsed by the CSC Development Staff.

Conference Fundraising/Grant Allocation process:

- a. Conferences soliciting funding from foundations, organizations and/or institutions must contact the CSC Development Office before making any requests. The CSC Development Office is responsible for reviewing all applications prior to submission and assisting with subsequent reports and evaluation.
- b. When the CSC receives a grant funding on behalf of, or to be shared among conferences, Conference Services will evaluate matters concerning the Rule, Officers, Membership, Tithing, etc., for compliance and advise the Development staff for appropriate allocation.
- c. The Development staff will determine an allocation method with a tracking method for reporting.
- d. The Development staff will issue instructions and manage the processing of funds, such as EFSP, etc.
- e. The Finance and Development Offices will monitor the fund distribution process and offer guidance and direction where needed.

- f. Conferences receiving unsolicited grant funds are required to report the fund restrictions of the agreement to the Development staff who will then inform Finance for 990 reporting.

## **V. Conference Best Practices**

### **A. Tracking Donor Information**

To track donor records, a Conference may use an Excel spreadsheet, database, or other method. One Conference recommends purchasing the “Fundraiser Basic” software to keep track of all donors’ information and their donations. This product is available at [www.FundraiserSoftware.com](http://www.FundraiserSoftware.com) . The Fundraiser Basic version can hold a donor list of 50,000 names with an unlimited number of contributions for each. With its built-in word processor and simplified mail merging, you can batch-print thank-you letters (and labels and envelopes), and appeal letters and standard reports. You can download a free evaluation copy from the website to test out the software.

### **B. Verifying Client Bill Information Prior to Payment**

The caseworker will call the utility company to verify the amount owed by the client, and record it in CMS. If the utility company refuses to give the information to anyone other than the person on the bill, there are several options:

1. Establish a relationship with the utility company, so that they recognize St. Vincent de Paul and are willing to work with you.
2. Require the client to call the utility company to authorize “St. Vincent de Paul” to speak with them about the bill.
3. During a home visit, call the utility company with the client.
4. Call the client and while they are on the phone, ask them to call the utility company for a three-way call.

### **C. Keeping Track of Gift Cards**

When a Conference purchases Gift Cards, the expense is recorded under the food category. As the cards are given out, they are recorded as “In-kind” food given to a client. The number on the Gift Card should be entered in the notes section in CMS. The Conference should keep a log of when the Gift Cards are purchased, how many, and when they are given out and to whom they are given. A similar procedure should be followed for Gasoline Cards or other Gift Cards.