# Procedures for Members and Volunteers

These procedures apply to Members who are associated through member services.

The Society aims to provide accessible, person-centred services and recognises that meetings or ‘visitation’ could be at a Vinnies Support Centre, Care and Support Centre or in a person’s home. For members, activities must be conducted in line with the Vincentian Visitation Guidelines (VVG).

Conferences align their offer of material assistance and friendship to those seeking assistance with the mission and vision of the Society through good practice.

Good practice includes ensuring your own safety and the safety of others during any form of visitation, defined in the Vincentian Visitation Guidelines (VVG) as any encounter between members and the people we assist that occurs in a person’s home, in Care and Support Centre, at a Vinnies’s Support Centre, at a Hub or somewhere else (VVG p 4).

There are several practical steps to take to ensure your safety and the safety of others during these visitation activities.

#### Before the visitation

1. In accordance with The Rule, visitation must be conducted in pairs. A preferable form of visitation is for the pair to be constituted by a male and female. This combination can be perceived as less threatening than two (2) males visiting, reducing the risk of confrontation and/or a negative response from those being assisted. At least one (1) of the assisting pair should be experienced and you should adopt a trauma-informed approach. The Society approaches its work with empathy, compassion, and respect, recognising that people accessing our services and programs are likely to have experienced trauma and loss.
2. Assess the level of risk when planning a visitation. If the person is an existing person we assist, review relevant systems for historical information and check for any alerts or flags. Consider whether the venue is safe, or an alternative option is more suitable.
3. Complete a risk assessment for the first home visitation. Discuss the risk assessment with your Conference President.
4. Acknowledging home visitation often occurs in the evening or outside of business hours, have a communication strategy in place by making sure other people (e.g. other conference members) know where you are going and when.
5. Record the destination of the home visitation (specific address and name of the person/family), your contact details and estimated time of return.
6. Contact the person we assist/family prior to the home visitation to confirm consent to visit, location details and time of visit. This is also a good opportunity to discuss some of the pre-visit questions in the Risk Assessment Checklist. For example, will anyone else be present during the visit and do they have any pets.

#### During the visitation in a Care and Support Centre or Vinnies Support Centre or Hub

1. Make sure that you are familiar with the environment including the site emergency response procedures before you bring the person we assist/family into the facility. Consider how the room is set up so that it is both supportive and safe.
2. During the visitation, position yourself in an optimal place to promote an equal relationship with the person, and so that you can move away quickly if needed. For example, this could be sitting adjacent to the person we assist and closest to the door.
3. Plan and practice how to exit the room in an emergency.

#### During the visitation in a home, hospital, institution, or environment not controlled by the Society

1. If visiting a hospital, institution or environment not controlled by the Society, as a visitor you must adhere to their induction and safety requirements.
2. During the home visitation you should continually evaluate/assess risks and respond as necessary to ensure your own safety and others.
3. Before entering a home, when you arrive, drive past the house to gain an awareness of the property and the available exit paths.
4. Park your vehicle in a safe and secure location with no chance of being blocked in. Avoid using driveways. If parking in a cul de sac or dead-end road avoid parking down the end of cul de sac, try to position your vehicle between the visitation location and the exit road. Avoid remaining in the car for prolonged periods before or after the visit.
5. Assess the property to identify possible hazards. Common hazards to look for include:

* unknown persons
* potentially dangerous animals
* clutter or blocked walkways
* construction work, uneven pavers.

1. Avoid taking personal valuables into the home (except for a mobile phone and device used for CAMS if entering visitation notes during the visit).
2. Be respectful of the persons’ home and that you are a visitor. Consider wearing a name tag or identification that you are part of the Society. However, in the initial risk assessment consider the location you intend to visit and how your association with the Society might be perceived. In some cases you may choose not to use Society identification.
3. Be aware of your surrounds and escape routes. Ensure there are no obstacles between you and the exits. Make sure doors are not locked behind you. Scan the location of any dangerous items and continually monitor the environment.
4. Carry your mobile phone with you, ensure it has a fully charged battery and switched on for the entire time. If there is no mobile phone reception at the home or visitation venue, the meeting location should be moved.
5. Ensure car keys or personal belongings are not left in a place accessible to others. If possible, keep the car keys (and only these) in the pocket of your dominant hand. That is, if you are right-handed, keep the car keys in the right pocket for quick easy access.
6. If you feel threatened or unsafe during the visit, take measures to protect yourself, finish the visit and leave the location as soon as possible. Call the Police if the situation warrants it. Additional steps to take are:

* if in the car, ensure windows are closed and the doors are locked
* if it is considered unsafe to drive away, sound the horn long and loud and if appropriate ring the Police (Dial 000) on your mobile phone
* if it is considered safe to drive away, proceed to the nearest Police Station
* do not leave the car until it appears safe to do so.

1. All incidents must be reported to your Conference President as soon as possible and recorded in the Society’s Incident and Risk Management System (IRMS). Any concerns or incidents involving children or young people, must be reported to the Safeguarding Team on 1800 478 776 or the Regional Director.

#### After completing the home visitation

1. After each visit to a home, people we assist interaction details are to be recorded. Potential hazards or risks, such as aggressive behaviour, risks associated with the property or other safety risks need to be documented, flagged for the next visit, and also discussed with Conference President or Volunteer Manager. Use the information you have obtained during any visitation to create or update an alert on CAMS.
2. Any persons involved in or who have witnessed a distressing incident are able to participate in an internal debrief, pastoral support or counselling as appropriate for their engagement with the Society:

* Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 1300 687 327 (available to members and volunteers as well as employees).
* debrief with their Conference President or Volunteer Manager
* if the incident involves sexual assault or domestic violence, it may be appropriate to contact Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia phone 1800 RESPECT or 1800 737 732
* personnel may be provided with an internal debriefing or access to pastoral support as appropriate
* people we assist or their families, visitors, or public members may be offered access to external counselling services or pastoral support.

1. Any members or volunteers involved in support through a critical incident such as a natural disaster, will be supported by best practice supervision and debrief as guided by the Rapid Response EAP service and/or their Conference President or Volunteer Manager.

Risks may be identified at any stage of the person we assist's engagement. If it is determined that the risks cannot be managed or are too high for an in-home visit, an alternative arrangement should be implemented for the next visit. This may include support at a Care and Support Centre, Vinnies Support Centre, Hub, or referral to another service