



## St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County

Essential Services to Our Unhoused Neighbors During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Updated April 7, 2020

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# Dear Vincentians, volunteers and supporters

## Overview

The novel coronavirus has changed all of our lives, and at St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County, we're certainly no exception. This document will attempt to give all of our supporters an update, as of the first week of April 2020, on where we are: what we're doing, why we're doing it, what we're *not* doing, whom we're working with, what we recommend that you as volunteers and SVdP members should consider doing or not doing, how our staff has been affected, and, most importantly, why we need your help.

On March 16th, Alameda County issued a Shelter In Place order for anyone not involved in providing essential services to stay at home. This was followed by a similar statewide order. It was clear that our thrift stores, just like other clothing and household retailers, should remain closed. (I'll come back to this later in this document.) In consultation with the City of Oakland, we determined that while all of our direct services *could* be considered essential because of whom we serve, it would be best to suspend some congregate settings such as our podiatry clinic and our drop-in laundry, shower, haircut, and clothing services, and instead to focus on the programs that provide essential life-supporting services like food and shelter.

Our dining room began serving take-away meals only, with a smaller but very dedicated team of volunteers working mornings and afternoons not just making and packing sandwiches and fruit, but helping Chef Armando, our kitchen manager, to cook hot take-away items like pizza, burritos, hamburgers, and chicken noodle soup. We're seeing more guests than ever at our door for lunch now, and many of them seem new to our services.

Along with our dining room, our 100-bed emergency shelter is the most essential service we provide, and the entire population we serve depends on us to help them to stay healthy during this crisis. It also requires the most face-to-face interaction with a population that is more vulnerable, and soon to be sicker, than almost anyone else among us. This is asking a great deal from our staff and our shelter volunteers, and I'm so appreciative of their continued dedication, their focus on our mission, and their willingness to go to work each night in such an environment and to treat every guest with such compassion and dignity. We have an amazing staff and they deserve all of our appreciation and support.

The rest of this letter will look more closely at whom we're serving; our current procedures and the safety measures we've taken; how we're working with local government, businesses, and other nonprofits as we work through this emergency; what is happening with our staff, both those continuing to work on campus or from home, and those who are unable to work; what we are recommending for our volunteers and our Vincentian members of St. Vincent de Paul and for the work they are doing in their parish-based conferences; and why we need your help at this difficult time.

## Whom we serve

The unhoused homeless population we serve in our emergency shelter and dining room is perhaps the most vulnerable group in the Bay Area, at high risk to become seriously ill or to die from this virus.

People who sleep in tent encampments, outdoors, or in our shelter are older on average and have far more chronic and often untreated health conditions than the general population. Their nutrition (our SVdP meals being the exception) is poor, their stress levels are high, their sleep is poor, and they often struggle with substance abuse and mental health that makes infection prevention more difficult. They spend much of their time outside in the elements, in queues to receive services, or in congregate settings among other high-risk people. They don't have easy access to bathrooms or even sinks, especially now that so many local cafes, libraries, and restaurants are closed<sup>1</sup>. They share things to help each other, from food and utensils to cigarettes and phones. They don't have easy access to medical care and treatment. And they don't have anywhere to "shelter in place."

We're very concerned that many of the people we've been getting to know through our ministries may not be with us in a few months.

I think most of our staff would agree that this shared concern for our guests makes us a stronger team, and helps us all get through each day in an often difficult, fearful, and uncertain environment.

## What our District Council has done

### Safety procedures

Our programs and management teams have put a lot of time into preparing for the upcoming local outbreak of COVID-19, and its effect on our unsheltered guests, our volunteers, and our employees. Here are a few of the steps we've discussed and will soon be taking to minimize risk and transmission, and to ensure safety:

<sup>1</sup> Before the pandemic, I often stopped for a \$2 breakfast at the Taco Bell a block from SVdP. Inside (they don't let me use the drive-through on my bike) I'd always see two or three of our shelter guests, who can turn a bit of panhandling or a couple dollars set aside from a disability check into a hot meal and an hour or two of time spent in safety, indoors, among friends. It's sad that all of that ended with this crisis. Since drive-through windows don't allow pedestrians, a \$2 fast food meal is a thing of the past if you don't own a car. Using the bathroom in any restaurant is no longer allowed. And there's no place to just sit in safety for an hour or two with a friend.

## **Volunteers**

We notified volunteers to offer them, especially if they are high risk because of age or health condition, a chance to take time off from their volunteer commitment without any guilt, or to perform tasks for us which can be done from home.

## **Health checks**

We require all shelter guests to let us take their temperature with a digital forehead thermometer before they enter the shelter. We are now doing the same daily temperature check when employees and volunteers arrive for work during the day. We ask employees and volunteers how they are feeling, and we require that anyone with a persistent cough or a fever go home or seek medical assistance off of our campus. For shelter guests who are symptomatic, the protocols are changing rapidly as testing sites become more available, and as two hotels have opened and are just beginning to take patients referred from us.

## **Hand sanitizing**

We've installed about 15 foam hand sanitizer dispensers. We have procured enough sanitizer to last through most of the crisis, if we're careful with our usage. Guests are required to stop to sanitize their hands when entering the shelter and are asked to do so before receiving a take-away lunch. Of course staff and volunteers are reminded frequently about handwashing, coughing and sneezing, sanitizing, mask and glove use, etc.

## **Gloves**

Julia Hancock quickly procured as many gloves, masks and disinfecting cleaning supplies as we could, but all of our initial sources have dried up. The gloves are strongly recommended for all program staff and volunteers, and required for anyone handling food or working closely with guests. We still have a decent supply of gloves, but probably not enough to go the duration.

## **Masks**

Masks are in far shorter supply at the moment. We've gotten some from the City of Oakland, and requested them through several channels, but very few are headed our way. A mask of some sort is required for anyone handling food, and needs to be given to anyone exhibiting symptoms such as a persistent cough. We'd like to have sufficient masks to offer to any volunteer or staff member who chooses to wear one, but they're still in very short supply. Two volunteers are beginning to make hand-sewn masks for us, and it's helping our supply (as well as adding some character and personality to the environment we're all working in). We hope to recruit more talented volunteers to make masks for us from their homes.

## **Cleaning and disinfecting**

We've augmented our cleaning protocols and added a shelter-funded janitorial position, to allow for more sanitizing of doorknobs, telephones, tables and desks, and other surfaces, particularly in guest areas, but in our own offices as well. Each of us takes an active role in keeping our space as germ-free as possible.

## **Social distancing**

We have set up all of our workspaces to allow for six feet between people at almost all times. Volunteer workstations are now more spread out than some of our fellowship-seeking volunteers might like, but all have been understanding. We try to pass each other at some distance in hallways, and space ourselves far apart during whatever in-person meetings we may hold. Many of our meetings, even among people on the same campus, are being conducted by conference call or videoconferencing. Our shelter has arranged its cots in such a way that we have six feet of space from one guest's *head* to the next guest's head. This is accomplished by alternating rows of cots, one row with heads facing north (and thus at least a cot-length from the next person in your row), and the next row with heads facing south, so that the distance from one person's head to the head of someone in the next row is offset both vertically and horizontally. Feet and arms may still be closer to each other, but short of turning more people away from our shelter, this was the greatest distance we could achieve.

## **Best practices**

We're working closely with the City of Oakland and with other homeless service providers to ensure best practices on infectious disease transmission prevention. Oakland officials are helping us procure and pay for certain anti-contagion supplies like masks, gloves, and sanitizers. I've consulted with an infectious disease epidemiologist, and we're also reaching out to county and state health care authorities for guidance.

## **Client isolation and quarantine**

We've set up isolation areas in our men's and women's shelter, where we can quarantine guests who are symptomatic and may be infected. We have a contingency plan to set up a more secure and isolated area in the Women's Center for sick residents if it's needed later. However, it may not be needed, as we are now able to refer symptomatic guests to Operation Comfort, which can help them get a room in the Comfort Inn near the Oakland airport, which has been leased by the state and offered to the City of Oakland to use for unhoused residents who are symptomatic. This just began a couple days ago. Things move very quickly.

## **Employees who are sick**

We're working out how we can offer some assistance to employees if they are diagnosed with COVID-19, so that they won't ever feel a need to come to work while sick, for financial reasons.

## **Shelter protocols**

Alameda County has issued shelter protocols for infection prevention in facilities like shelters, which we're closely following. Some of the guidelines are listed later in this document.

# For Vincentians

## In your conferences

Many of our Vincentians are struggling with the same challenges we face as a District Council and at our West Oakland campus: how to serve those in need, particularly addressing new hardships they face due to the pandemic and its public safety precautions, while wanting to assure the health and safety of our own fellow volunteers.

### Advice to conferences from National President Ralph Middlecamp

Dear Vincentian Friends,

What now and what next?

Even if I glue myself to cable news, it seems impossible to answer that question. What I know is that my Vincentian vocation is still guiding how I live out my calling to follow Christ. As a young man, Frederic Ozanam wrote this to a friend: "Let us go in simplicity where merciful Providence leads us, content to see the stone on which we should next step without wanting to discover all at once and completely the windings of the road."

Vincentians have long had strong confidence and trust in God's providence. That comes easily when good things come our way just when they are needed. But, our trust in God's providence is tested when we suffer misfortunes and experience tragedies. Even in such times in my own life, however, I have always found small signs of God's presence and care.

Several weeks ago, when I could still travel, I was with our Vincentians at Sacred Heart Parish in Punta Gorda, Florida. Their pastor, Fr. Jerry Kaywell, has a keen eye for the providence of God working among us in the little signs or glimpses of grace that he calls "God whispers." He attends the Conference meetings and sometimes invites the Vincentians to share their own God whispers. These are often described as coming at difficult moments. I was moved by some of the God whisper stories I heard shared by our Vincentians.

Our Rule frames our Vincentian vocation as a journey we take together. As I noted in last week's column, our journey is now taking an unexpected detour. Even while detoured, however, we can still embrace our essential elements of spirituality, friendship and service. We will just do so differently than we might have. Let us help each other then, to listen for those God whispers. They will assure us that we can still trust in God's watchful care.

So, what next? Many of the people we may soon be called to assist will be experiencing "situational poverty." That is in contrast to those we frequently aided and mentored in the past, who were more likely to be in "generational poverty." Evolving realities will require us to acquire an understanding of new resources being developed by the federal government, state and local agencies, and a variety of other organizations. We will also need to become aware of new laws and regulations protecting those coping with poverty stemming from the crisis we are in. This knowledge will help us provide good advice to those we serve and will also help inform our decisions on the use of our own financial resources.



The other predictable "what next" is that our financial capacity to serve is going to be challenged. So right now, you may want to consider new strategies for fundraising, or create a plan for adjusting your current efforts. The Society has always been reluctant to blow its own horn, but we need to tell our story. It is compelling. We also may need to invest some of our money to begin that process.

On an ongoing basis, our National Council website ([www.svdpusa.org](http://www.svdpusa.org)) will offer updated information to help you with the "what now and what next." The website will provide linked information on new legislation intended to benefit the people we serve, and related webinars may be developed. Another area of linked information will be provided to inform the efforts of those with special works, stores and employees, as well as to provide ideas for new fundraising opportunities. A third area of online focus will provide linkage to a continually updated set of recommended resources for training and spirituality. Watch for more about these web offerings in this and future editions of the E-Gazette.

We know that poverty and available financial resources are not evenly matched among our communities or our Conferences. If you are not already doing so, I would urge your Council to establish a "Needy Conference Fund." This can be funded by the Council or by twinning between a Conference with the ability to help and another that needs it. Even though our Rule prohibits hoarding, we know that there are many Conferences with significant "rainy day" funds they have not been willing to share. Although funds may come from within a particular parish, an arbitrary boundary should not define who gets help. I am not sure what a "rainy day" would look like if that is not today's storm. Creating a Needy Conference Fund can allow for collaborative community fundraising that can be directed by the Council to assist Conferences with the greatest need and the greatest ability to deliver help.

After a couple of unsuccessful tries, my Conference met by phone last week. We prayed, and we made plans to call a few of the families we had recently visited to see how they are doing. There was also some business that needed to be discussed, but mostly, it was just good to hear what others were up to. I hope your Conferences are doing likewise.

Keep listening for those "God whispers" and find ways to share them.

Serviens in Spe,



Ralph Middlecamp

National Council President

### **EBMUD and PGE policies**

Governor Gavin Newsom issued an executive order on March 16 that authorizes local governments to halt evictions for renters, slows foreclosures, and protects against utility

shutoffs for Californians affected by COVID-19. PG&E had already announced that it would be suspending shutoffs during the emergency.

According to Dawn Benson, Executive Assistant at East Bay MUD, “Since water is so critical to the COVID-19 prevention – we have done the following:

- We stopped shutting off customers as of March 12<sup>th</sup>
- We are restoring service to customers that were shut off - so far we have about 60+ remaining out of 500
- We stopped sending out 15-day and 48-hr notices to customers”

## **Emergency Moratorium on Residential Rent Increases and Evictions**

On March 27, 2020, the Oakland City Council adopted an ordinance imposing a moratorium on residential evictions and rent increases, and prohibiting late fees during the Local Emergency. The Ordinance also prohibits evictions based on nonpayment of rent that became due during the Local Emergency when the tenant suffered a substantial reduction of income or substantial increase of expenses due to COVID-19. The moratorium is set to end May 31, 2020, unless City Council extends it.

Most evictions are banned during the Local Emergency. Evictions where the tenant poses an imminent threat to the health or safety of other occupants and Ellis Act evictions are exceptions.

A property owner cannot evict a tenant for failure to pay rent during the Local Emergency if the rent was unpaid due to a substantial loss of income or an increase in expenses resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

- the tenant suffered a loss of employment or a reduction in hours;
- the tenant was unable to work because their children were out of school;
- the tenant was unable to work because they were sick with COVID-19 or caring for a household or family member who was sick with COVID19; or
- the tenant incurred substantial out of pocket medical expenses.

The tenant is still obligated to pay rent owed during the Local Emergency. The emergency moratorium on evictions does not relieve the tenant of liability for unpaid rent.

## **DC support for our Conferences**

### **Food deliveries and pickups**

We continue to operate our Food Locker during the pandemic. We have donors, largely food retailers, who continue to want to give us food they won't be selling, and count on us to pick it up or accept its delivery. And we want to provide as much healthy and varied food as possible for our dining room, our shelter, and our conferences.

We are trying to minimize the face-to-face contact that our drivers make while out in the field. We may ask your conference to make special arrangements if we're bringing food to you, so that as little face-to-face contact with our Food Locker staff is needed.

So far, the requests for food from conferences have slowed somewhat.

### **DC Zoom meeting**

We're scheduling a Zoom conference meeting for our District Council at 9am on Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. You can either download Zoom software for your computer or your smart phone, or you can call in via telephone.

Our Spirituality, Formation, and Growth Committee is working on an agenda for this meeting, and we'll facilitate the technology from our downtown office. We want to make it as easy as possible for Vincentians to participate (even more of you than attend the normal in-person meetings), either through the videoconferencing software that's easy to install and use, or by phoning in for audio only.

We'll let all Vincentians know more details about this meeting as the date approaches, and everyone will receive login instructions. We hope to see you all there that day!

### **Thrift stores**

Our thrift stores in Fremont and Livermore closed on the day of the first Alameda County shelter-in-place order. Our staff received pay through the end of March, even though they weren't able to work.

Fremont manager Rene and interim Livermore assistant manager Victor were kept on the payroll so that they could accept some donations for us to sell in bulk, work on cleaning, organizing, and merchandizing, and visit the stores often to discourage vandalism and dumping.

I called the other store employees to discuss a personal plan for each of them. Each was offered a month of health benefits and help to apply for unemployment if they chose to be furloughed. Alternatively, they were offered an interview for a temporary position in our shelter.

We hope to be able to bring all of our store employees back to work in the stores once we are allowed to open them after the shelter in place order ends.

## **Our current programs**

### **Shelter in place and our staff**

It's difficult to find the best balance between reducing exposure and disease transmission for public health and for our employees' and volunteers' safety, and our mission to provide essential services to the most vulnerable population in our community. The shelter is particularly tricky, because it operates only from 6pm till 8am, and guests are still able (required, actually) to leave the confined space each morning and return to congregate again each evening. We aren't equipped to run a 24/7 shelter or to provide for our guests' mental health, substance abuse recovery, and medical

needs day after day. I still strongly believe that our shelter is doing a great deal of good, to help keep an extremely vulnerable population safe and healthy. It's clear each night that I work in the shelter, whether interviewing guests or taking their temperatures, that our guests know that they can't keep themselves safe under their circumstances, and they depend on - and appreciate - us for helping them.

This means that we're asking a lot of staff, while everyone is trying to keep their own families as safe as possible. We're extremely fortunate that we have the type of dedicated, mission-driven people that we do. There's a wonderful energy here, both day and night, where we know what we're being called to do, we know it's hard, a little dangerous, but for the most part, we wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

I'm extremely proud of our staff, the character and values they share and have shown me during this difficult time. Mayor Schaaf agrees, and she made a special thank you video for the front-line staff at SVdP and other homeless service providers, on behalf of "all the grateful residents of Oakland". Her video can be found on our Facebook page, at [www.facebook.com/svdpalameda](http://www.facebook.com/svdpalameda).

## **Dining room**

We are serving take-away lunches to our guests outside the building instead of in the congregate setting of our dining room, to avoid the large gathering of people including those at high risk or who may be undiagnosed with COVID-19. This requires a little more volunteer help earlier in the day, and fewer volunteers during serving hours.

Armando Corpus, our kitchen manager and chef, has done a wonderful job elevating sack lunches to an art form. They're not sack lunches at all, really, even though they may come in a brown paper bag. Thanks to donations from retailers of to-go containers, we've been able to serve things like chili, chicken noodle soup, hamburgers, chili dogs, pizza, chicken burritos, and salads. You can see some of these meals (and share them with your friends, please!) on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/svdpalameda](http://www.facebook.com/svdpalameda). You'll also see our team of staff and volunteers who are here each day to make sure that everyone gets fed.

## **Other direct service programs**

Nonessential services like the drop-in respite space with refreshments have been suspended temporarily. We've moved our shower services to the early mornings for shelter guests only, but at this point our clothing closet, community center, women's center, men's center, and podiatry clinic are all temporarily closed. If we had funding, willing staff, and volunteers, I'd be interested in offering clothing to shelter guests, as well as the possibility of allowing shelter guests to stay safe in our buildings 24/7 instead of having to leave each day to go out into the community where there's no place for them maintain social distancing, and then to return here every night.

Although our community center is closed, we've begun offering showers to our shelter guests five mornings per week. We hope to add evening showers soon, based on staff recruitment. Kristine Loftin and Jerry Young, our community center staff, are arriving at 5am daily to help our shelter guests to keep up their most basic hygiene. We're able to offer showers to about 30 men and women per day.

# St. Vincent de Paul Emergency Shelter

## Protocols

The shelter safety protocols which we follow, largely ones developed by Alameda County Health Care, include but are not limited to, the following:

- Plan and be aware of guidance and resources
- Provide education for staff and residents
- Provide hygiene and prevention materials
- Screen residents and clients for symptoms
- Contact health providers for testing or treatment of symptomatic persons
- Practice social distancing in shelter environments
- Isolate and care for symptomatic persons as much as possible
- Provide shelter and program sanitation services

## Stories

I've been interviewing guests in our shelter to ask them how their daily lives have changed during the pandemic. The interviews are all under about 5 minutes, and can all be found on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/svdpalameda](http://www.facebook.com/svdpalameda). They're interesting to watch, and we hope that hearing directly from someone who sleeps in our shelter will inspire caring community members to offer their financial assistance or to volunteer.

In doing these interviews, and as I spend more time in our shelter each night, I get a strong sense of how much our guests count on us to help keep them safe. They very gladly comply with our safety protocols, and have such gratitude for the fact that our staff and volunteers are there for them. I've been touched by many comments our guests have made to us as they try to stay healthy and to stay alive despite their difficult circumstances.

## Staff

Even before the pandemic, it was difficult to recruit and retain good staff members in our shelter, with what we are able to pay. We have been and continue to be worried about how to maintain adequate staffing levels as the environment becomes still more frightening and as more guests become ill. We expect a few staff members to leave their job in hopes of receiving unemployment benefits, and others may start to become ill themselves. We're very focused on continuing active recruitment, we've hired a security firm to supply some staff members with security training, and we're doing everything we can to make sure our staff know how much our management and our guests appreciate their being here.

## Food

We serve breakfast and dinner in the shelter, along with a snack when our guests first arrive. So far all of these meals have been being served across a serving line, with volunteers wearing masks and gloves filling trays for our guests. We've stopped all self-service of coffee and snacks, and we now need a little more volunteer help to take care

of this type of service the labor-intensive but safer way. The meals are nutritious and very tasty, and we're thankful to be able to offer this service.

### **Showers**

Since our community center closed at the time of the first shelter-in-place order, showers have become the biggest necessity for our guests that we weren't able to offer them in our new footprint. But beginning on April 1<sup>st</sup>, we've brought two staff members back who had been at home since their program ended, in order to offer showers each morning to our shelter guests only (not to the general public). We offer showers for women from 6-9am Monday through Thursday in the Women's Center, and we offer showers for men from 6-9am Monday through Friday in the Men's Center. We hope to soon be able to add some evening showers to this service, so that our guests will have more time to shower, and a more peaceful experience of trying to stay clean.

### **Population we serve**

The SVdP emergency shelter serves 100 men and women, most of whom have had chronic issues of homelessness along with issues of mental health and substance use. As described earlier, they are a particularly vulnerable population during this pandemic. Our goal is still to get as many of them as possible into more permanent housing, and we now have two case managers on staff to help facilitate that. So far, as of April 7<sup>th</sup>, we haven't seen anyone in our shelter who is either diagnosed with the virus, appears to have serious symptoms, or has a fever much higher than normal. We know that that will soon change. Our guests depend on our protocols, and on our staff and volunteers, to keep them safe.

### **Network of providers**

The crisis has brought more groups together to meet regularly (using Zoom teleconferencing) to share best practices and resources, and to make joint requests to local officials:

- I meet weekly with officials from Alameda County Health System and AC Healthcare for the Homeless, along with various providers of health care and shelter to the homeless.
- I meet weekly with executive directors of homeless shelters and transitional housing.
- I and other homeless provider ED's met with Mayor Schaaf last week, and we meet on a weekly basis with other City and County officials.
- I was on a panel of community leaders discussing how nonprofits are navigating this crisis, which was attended by over 120 business owners through the California Association of Nonprofits and the Oakland Chamber of Commerce.
- I've been asked to chair the Community Impact Committee of the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce.
- Our senior leadership team (John Sterns – Director of Community Engagement, Marcell Lloyd – Director of Programs, and Julia Hancock – Director of Administration) and I meet *every morning, six days per week*, to discuss our constantly changing situation at St. Vincent de Paul. They're a wonderfully collaborative, clever, and supportive team.

- I'm now meeting weekly with Executive Directors from St. Vincent de Paul Councils around the country.
- Our managers and supervisors meet monthly as a group to discuss implementing our initiatives during the crisis, in a meeting facilitated by Raymond Williams, our HR manager.

## SVdP Staff

### Basic categories of staff

At the time of the shelter-in-place order, we had about 60 employees. Their status now falls into one of several categories:

- Still working in person on our direct service campus, either days or nights, in one of our essential service areas.
- Working from home (telecommuting) doing their normal job.
- Temporarily working in a different job, including coming to work the shelter when your store closed, or helping offer showers to shelter guests since our community center is closed.
- Furloughed, and offered an extension of health insurance and help applying for new higher unemployment benefits. Furloughed employees were paid through March 31<sup>st</sup> and had access to receive unemployment benefits by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

### Pay through March

Although we closed our stores and drop-in centers on March 16<sup>th</sup>, we assured all staff, including those we sent home who could not perform their jobs from home, that they'd be paid their full wages through March 31<sup>st</sup>.

### Compassion pay

For all employees who physically come to work at our West Oakland campus, we are adding \$25 per shift to their pay, as "compassion pay" to thank them for working on the front lines of the pandemic and with a vulnerable population. This doesn't apply to anyone working from home but it does apply to those who come to our campus even if their job doesn't put them face to face with our shelter and dining room guests.

### Emergency fill-in pay

We now offer time-and-a-half to our shelter staff who come in on short notice (within two hours of a shift beginning) when someone on the schedule calls in sick or is a no-show. This has made it easier to stay fully staffed. An employee can get this benefit over and above the current \$25 per shift compassion pay.

### Furloughs

Several store employees and a few others from our downtown campus worked in jobs which ended with shelter-in-place closures (such as our stores and community center) and aren't able to work a job that could be done remotely. I called these employees to discuss a personal plan for each of them. Each was offered a month of health benefits and help to apply for unemployment if they chose to be furloughed. Alternatively, they

were offered an interview for a temporary position in our shelter. Three of our staff will be transferring to the shelter team, and several others who are working from home were offered new duties to keep them contributing fully to the organization.

We hope to be able to bring all of our furloughed employees back to work in the stores and drop-in-centers once we are allowed to open them after the shelter in place order ends.

### **Health benefits**

We're providing a month of health benefits to those employees who were furloughed on April 1st. We may be in a position to extend this gesture to two months, but have not yet committed to this extra cost.

### **Family leave eligibility**

Employees who care for a school aged child who is out of school qualify for up to 80 hours of paid time off at 2/3 their normal wage in order to care for or arrange for care of their child. Employees are eligible for up to 80 hours paid time off at their full wages if they are caring for someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or if their own family's caregiver has been diagnosed.

### **Unemployment insurance benefits**

We are offering all furloughed employees assistance in applying and receiving unemployment benefits. The new CARES Act provides an additional \$600 per week to each recipient of unemployment compensation for four months, and extends benefits for those whose benefits were scheduled to expire. It also defers student loan payments on federally backed student loans and stops interest accrual for 6 months.

### **Staff shortages, recruiting**

Although many Bay Area workers have lost jobs and are looking for employment, it's not easy to fill our specific openings, which are primarily in the emergency shelter, working nights, with a very vulnerable and challenging population.

While we get a lot of applicants, the number of people who will actually complete a Skype interview and a pre-employment drug screen, and show up for their first day of work, is *much* smaller.

We still need your help in referring motivated, compassionate candidates to us, both for paid positions and as volunteers. We must continue aggressive recruiting for both, especially to prepare for the coming weeks when our own dedicated workforce starts to have more absences from sickness in our own ranks.

### **Our amazing first responders**

It's our staff and our wonderful volunteers who are on the front lines of this crisis, and who so willingly come in to work in a high-risk first-responder setting, even while everyone's being asked to stay home and safe. To see the incredible team here, feeding and sheltering those who are even more vulnerable, each day and night, brings me real joy, and shows who we are as compassionate neighbors, and as an organization.



# For Volunteers

## Call to volunteer to help from home

We appreciate everything that our dedicated volunteers do for us each day. We certainly couldn't begin to do this work without a great deal of help from volunteers. Since many of our regular volunteers are in their 60's, 70's, and 80's, we've encouraged them to stay safe at home for the next few months. While you're at home, however, you can still be a help to St. Vincent de Paul's work. We need volunteers to help us make and/or collect masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE). We need volunteers to make and take phone calls, and to help us spread the word of the good work we're still here doing, via their own networks. This may mean simply checking in with friends by phone, making sure they're safe and well, but also finding a moment to invite them to visit our Facebook page, or to learn more from you about what we're still doing. This is a moment when there are a large number of people stuck at home wondering how they can help during this crisis, and to the extent we can reach them, they can make a huge difference in our long-term sustainability.

## Volunteer needs on campus

To fill in for some of our regular volunteers who are staying sheltered-in-place, we are looking for healthy volunteers to replace them. We still do need volunteers to help serve take-away meals from 8:30 to 12:45 Tuesday through Saturday, and need help in the shelter seven days per week, from about 5:00pm to 8:00pm. Thank you for helping spread the word!

# Why we need your help

## Revenue streams

The funds we need to staff and operate our programs safely are temporarily but severely impacted. Donations, thrift store sales, and rental income are the three broad revenue streams which St. Vincent de Paul counts on each month to fund our programs.

Each program depends on funding from generous individuals *and* from thrift store sales and rental income. With the stores closed, our sales revenue this quarter will be zero. Over three months our thrift stores normally provide almost \$400,000 gross revenue for our dining room, our shelter, and other programs. Right now they're providing nothing.

Our tenants are already struggling to pay their rent when their own businesses have been shuttered temporarily due to the shelter-in-place orders.

## Added costs

This crisis has brought us new costs that we couldn't have budgeted for:

- We've given employees two weeks' pay, even though they weren't able to work at all due to their workplace being shut down.

- We're offering one and possibly additional months of medical benefits to those who have now been furloughed.
- We offer compassion pay to those working in person on our direct service campus, and emergency fill-in pay to those who come to work on short notice to fill in for another employee who calls out sick or doesn't show up.
- We have incurred extra janitorial costs, both for personnel and supplies. Some of this is now being covered through the City of Oakland, but it won't be enough.
- We've incurred extra security costs, including a security service willing to provide temps to fill in even on our graveyard shift, in case our staffing levels are further impacted by staff sickness.
- We need to purchase more food that's suitable for the tasty take-away lunches we've been providing.
- There are a number of other areas where we've had to incur additional expenses due to this crisis, which are not offset by new revenue.

## **What we're doing to raise funds**

We've applied for and received some grants, either specifically for pandemic-related expenses, or unrestricted but given now due to the special needs.

We've received \$18,000 through the City of Oakland for additional janitorial expenses for our shelter: an added janitor; rental of porta-potties and handwashing stations for those waiting outside our building for our shelter or dining room; and cleaning and disinfecting supplies.

We received \$25,000 from Allergan for unrestricted operating expenses during this crisis.

We received \$16,000 from Launch Darkly, a software firm in Oakland, which was an unsolicited gift and is also unrestricted.

We've applied to the Health Care for the Homeless National Council seeking \$40,000, in unrestricted funding.

We've applied to the United Way Bay Area seeking \$53,000 for salaries and operations.

We've reached out for two different grants from the San Francisco Foundation. We won't receive them both, but each would fund us up to \$25,000, all unrestricted, and it's special funding related to the pandemic.

We've asked a strong recent supporter of our programs, Sunlight Giving, for an additional \$40,000 in unrestricted funds to weather this crisis.

And we've applied for a grant from Verizon's small business recovery fund, which would be used for payroll and food costs.

We're also applying for disaster loan assistance through the Small Business Administration, which was set up and funded by the CARES Act passed by Congress last week.

We're applying for small business loans, also funded by SBA, but applied through a banking relationship (we're working with Bridge Bank), which, thanks to the CARES Act,

can be forgiven to the extent that we use the loan to keep employees on the payroll throughout the pandemic.

We will apply for funding from Wells Fargo, the Y & H Soda Foundation and the Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation. These will range from \$25,000 - \$100,000 and all will be unrestricted.

We're sending more appeals emails and paper mail, and the campaigns so far are doing well. We're posting lots of content about the work we still do every day on our Facebook and Instagram pages, and I've been interviewing shelter guests and volunteers about how the crisis is affecting them.

We'll be sending a special appeal letter out via email and on paper, in the form of a short and very appeal-driven newsletter. All the elements of the special 4-page newsletter are designed to show what we're still doing, why it's so hard to keep funding this work with no thrift store sales, and a prominent request for help.

We're ready to take advantage of all new local, state and federal government assistance available to small businesses to help keep staff on payroll, to cover business losses, and to cover extra expenses related to providing essential services. A good prospect for us is the Small Business Administration program,

Since we're in the process of negotiating a lease renewal with Alameda County who leases the Casa Maria property from us, we'll soon be responsible for new paint and flooring in much of the three-story building. While we had hoped to pay some of these expenses from our cash reserves (and pay them back from the increased rental income), we no longer believe we'll have enough reserves on hand to do this. Thus we're seeking a \$75,000 loan, as well as a \$250,000 line of credit, from both of the banks we currently do business with, Bank of the West, and Bridge Bank.

## **Appeal letter**

*Below is the text of an appeal we are making to the community for financial support. We've sent this out to certain groups, and will soon be mailing it as well as emailing it to our database of donors and volunteers. Please feel free to use parts of this document in your own messaging to your circles to ask those you know to help us. We're asking each person who reads this to reach out to several friends and acquaintances, whether through an email, phone calls, or social media, to let them know that we need their help to carry on this essential mission. Thank you.*

The deadly virus in our midst has changed everything we do at St. Vincent de Paul. We've suspended some less-essential services like our thrift stores, but are feeding anyone who's hungry, and sheltering anyone who has no place to rest.

We serve over 500 take-away lunches daily in our charity dining room, and we see more and more coming to our door who are not accustomed to having to ask for a meal.

We provide 100 beds for men and women who are more vulnerable than most of us can imagine right now - the unhoused. I wish you could meet the men and women we feed, house, and care for. Their faces, as we take their temperatures to try to keep them healthy, as we move their beds into every inch of available space to keep them from infecting each other, without turning anyone away, these are the faces that both inspire

and scare me each night. These are people who now realize that they are more at risk as a group than anyone else among us, more likely to become infected, and most likely to die. Men and women who are so very appreciative of every effort we make to offer them help and solace. I've never received so many anxious but heartfelt thank-you's from our guests as I leave work each evening. They need us. They have no one else to turn to.

But it's more difficult than ever to keep doing this work. Many of our volunteers are elderly and need to stay safe at home right now. New volunteers are starting to relieve them, but it's the staff and supplies that I'm most concerned about. We're taking on so many added responsibilities, working in what can feel like a combat zone, and the funds we need to do this safely are temporarily but severely impacted. All the work we do depends on funding from generous individuals *and* from thrift store sales. With the stores closed, our sales revenue next quarter will be zero. Over three months our thrift stores should provide almost \$400,000 gross revenue for our dining room, our shelter, and other programs. Right now they're providing nothing.

We count on you, the supporters of St. Vincent de Paul. We count on your time, your prayers, your ideas, and most importantly your generous financial support. Today we need you more than ever. Please visit [www.svdp-alameda.org/donate](http://www.svdp-alameda.org/donate), and make a gift to allow us to continue this lifesaving humanitarian work. Please ask your friends to do the same. You can also mail a check to us at 2272 San Pablo Ave, Oakland, CA 94612.

We have a dedicated staff doing work that's harder, more draining, and more dangerous than ever. They know that they're right where they need to be when they come to work each night. They're committed to doing this work as long as they can stay healthy. Please help them keep doing what they're called to do. Without us, our guests' futures are bleak, and so many of the faces I see today, with their quiet, fearful, grateful words of thanks, might no longer be with us.

In Service,

Blase Bova

Executive Director

# Appendix 1: Alameda County Physical Distancing Protocols Met

Business name: St Vincent de Paul of Alameda Free Dining Room

Facility Address: 675 23<sup>rd</sup> St, Oakland, CA 94612

Approximate gross square footage of space open to the public: 0

Businesses must implement all applicable measures listed below, and be prepared to explain why any measure that is not implemented is inapplicable to the business.

Signage:

Signage at each public entrance of the facility to inform all employees and customers that they should: avoid entering the facility if they have a cough or fever; maintain a minimum six-foot distance from one another; sneeze and cough into a cloth or tissue or, if not available, into one's elbow; and not shake hands or engage in any unnecessary physical contact.

Signage posting a copy of the Social Distancing Protocol at each public entrance to the facility.

Measures To Protect Employee Health (check all that apply to the facility):

Everyone who can carry out their work duties from home has been directed to do so.

All employees have been told not to come to work if sick.

Symptom checks are being conducted before employees may enter the work space.

All desks or individual work stations are separated by at least six feet.

Break rooms, bathrooms, and other common areas are being disinfected frequently, on the following schedule:

Break rooms: minimum hourly

Bathrooms: twice hourly

Disinfectant and related supplies are available to all employees at the following location(s): Laundry Room

Hand sanitizer effective against COVID-19 is available to all employees at the following location(s):

Soap and water are available to all employees at the following location(s):

Copies of this Protocol have been distributed to all employees.

Measures To Prevent Crowds From Gathering (check all that apply to the facility):

Limit the number of customers in the store at any one time to [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)[insert maximum number here], which allows for customers and employees to easily maintain at least six-foot distance from one another at all practicable times.

Post an employee at the door to ensure that the maximum number of customers in the facility set forth above is not exceeded.

Placing per-person limits on goods that are selling out quickly to reduce crowds and lines. Explain: Meals are limited to one per person until the end of the serving period.

Measures To Keep People At Least Six Feet Apart (check all that apply to the facility)

Placing signs outside the store reminding people to be at least six feet apart, including when in line.

Placing tape or other markings at least six feet apart in customer line areas inside the store and on sidewalks at public entrances with signs directing customers to use the markings to maintain distance.

Separate order areas from delivery areas to prevent customers from gathering.

All employees have been instructed to maintain at least six feet distance from customers and from each other, except employees may momentarily come closer when necessary to accept payment, deliver goods or services, or as otherwise necessary.

Optional—Describe other measures: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Measures To Prevent Unnecessary Contact (check all that apply to the facility):

Preventing people from self-serving any items that are food-related.

Lids for cups and food-bar type items are provided by staff; not to customers to grab.

Bulk-item food bins are not available for customer self-service use.

Not permitting customers to bring their own bags, mugs, or other reusable items from home.

Providing for contactless payment systems or, if not feasible, sanitizing payment systems regularly. Describe:

Optional—Describe other measures (e.g. providing senior-only hours): [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Measures To Increase Sanitization (check all that apply to the facility):

Disinfecting wipes that are effective against COVID-19 are available near shopping carts and shopping baskets.

Employee(s) assigned to disinfect carts and baskets regularly.

Hand sanitizer, soap and water, or effective disinfectant is available to the public at or near the entrance of the facility, at checkout counters, and anywhere else inside the store or immediately outside where people have direct interactions.

Disinfecting all payment portals, pens, and styluses after each use.

Disinfecting all high-contact surfaces frequently.

Optional—Describe other measures:

\* Any additional measures not included here should be listed on separate pages, which the business should attach to this document.

You may contact the following person with any questions or comments about this protocol: Name: John Ratti

Phone number: 510-812-9421

# Appendix 2: SVdP-USA Disaster Services SITREP 2020-04-06

**Disaster Services, SVDP-USA**  
**Situation Report**

Elizabeth Disco-Shearer  
**CEO & NVOAD Board Member**  
 214.717.1802 mobile  
[ldisco@svdpdisaster.org](mailto:ldisco@svdpdisaster.org) email

## SITREP No.18: National Disaster Declaration-COVID-19

**Date of issue: April 6, 2020**

**Time period covered by the SITREP: January 20, 2020- April 6, 2020.**

*(Updates in red and yellow and new items added daily).*

***We have added a Resource Page for Councils attached to this document.***

### 1.0 Situation to date (what has happened):

- **With today's SITREP the format on cases will be changed to show current and recovered cases, in addition to deaths, as of the date of the report.**

USA	Total Cases	New Cases	Deaths	New Deaths	Active Cases	Total Recovered	Serious, Critical
	366,978	+16,965	<b>10,871</b>	+544	<b>2336451</b>	19,656	8879

- FEMA and HHS continue to work requirements to allocate and deliver key resources • Working with industry partners on producing, allocating and distributing PPE and ventilators, including expediting critical supplies from overseas to various US locations • Coordinating with USACE on the build-out of alternate care sites (ACS), with significant expansion capacity.
- Regional Administrators are in contact with governors, tribal leaders, state emergency managers, and state public health officials to execute a whole of government response to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.
- State / Local Response: (COVID-19 SLB, 5:00 p.m. ET, April 5) • All State / Territory EOCs activated • 50 states, DC, 5 territories and 21 tribal nations working on nationwide Emergency Declarations • 40 states, D.C., 4 territories and 23 tribes issued shelter-in-place orders.
- National Guard Bureau of Title 32 Status approved: 25 of Title 32 Status requested: 23.



- FEMA / Federal Response: (COVID-19 SLB, 5:00 p.m. ET, April 5) • NRCC: Level I in unified effort with HHS SOC; all RRCCs activated • IMAT-A teams deployed to 26 states; 37 LNOs deployed to state, territories, and tribes •
- USNS Comfort 30/247 beds filled: (Tonight President Trump approved use of the USNS for COVID-19 patients for NY). 1/80 ICU beds filled; 6 patients seen • USNS Mercy 12/275 beds filled; 2/80 ICU beds filled; 19 patients seen • U.S. Coast Guard facilitated the arrival of 2 cruise ships in Florida; processing 1,200 passengers expected to take 2-3 days.
- 50 (+5) Major Disaster Declarations approved and 1 Major Disaster Declaration in process-MN. (approved over the weekend are DE, SD, MS, NM, & OK). Eight task forces, jointly led by HHS and FEMA, continue work on assigned focus areas • Countermeasures shipments expected to arrive at all 70 sites April 6-7 (HHS Update, April 4)
- **CDC issued a new recommendation on the use of face masks.**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>
- The Department of Homeland Security announced that the deadline for the Real ID will be extended until October 1, 2021. (*Correction: note that there was typo in the March Public Safety.*)
- For information on school closure dates by state please go to:  
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/map-coronavirus-and-school-closures.html>
- **FEMA is working to control rumors, as there have been cybersecurity issues with false texts and tweets going out to the American public. There are scam calls and emails concerning stimulus package checks. Check this website daily. <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus-rumor-control>.**
- For information on the various Medicare and Chip waivers per state for COVID-19 please go to: <https://www.nga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.23.20-Health-Waivers-in-Disasters-Final.pdf>. (This is an important resource for helping economically disadvantaged individuals with access to medical treatment for COVID-19).

## 2.0 Actions to date (what has been done):

- FEMA has gone to calls three times a week with NVOAD Members. Most State VOADs are having daily coordination calls.
- FEMA issued a document to allow voluntary organizations that are providing essential services under COVID-19, and that are providing other services through federal programs, to travel in their community. DSC recommends that Vincentians also inform their local COADs, VOADS, and local authorities of their activities. Also, NVOAD highly recommends that all Voluntary Organizations display their organization's logo on their car window, and that volunteers wear their organization's shirts, vests, jackets etc.

- DSC activated its Level1 Response Plan and is monitoring and responding to requests on a 24/7 hr basis.COOP Reports and SIT Reps are reviewed twice daily.
- The Regional Disaster Reps and Co-Reps are participating on various State VOAD calls and reporting information back to DSC. DSC's Operations Committee has been reporting back daily on state COVID-19 responses.
- DSC's Disaster Operations Committee Members and Council Disaster Reps are participating in State VOAD calls and reporting back on resources and unmet needs across the country. **Please let your Regional Disaster Rep know if you would like to receive state-related resources. This is a high-level overview at the national level.**
- FEMA issued a set of guidance on interim changes on current federal programs and extension or waivers of certain deadlines.
- DSC is providing daily Continuity of Operations Reports to FEMA, NVOAD, and Volunteer Florida on our Disaster Case Management Programs.
- DSC's COVID-19 Resource Page is updated daily at [www.svdpcdisaster.org](http://www.svdpcdisaster.org)

The DSC COVID-19 Hotline # is **800-604-5759**. This hotline is a collaborative project of DSC SVDP-USA and SVDP Young Adults.

### **3.0 Actions to be completed (what will be done)**

- **Council Resource Page attached** and is updated daily.
- This is a very fluid situation and resources and information will change daily.
- SIT Reps will be updated daily.