



The Value and Challenges of Home Visits

- **Home visits** are considered essential for understanding, building trust, and providing individualized support to those in need, but members express concerns about **safety, volunteer burden**, and evolving preferences for less personal modes of contact.
- There's a significant **desire for face-to-face encounters**, but, since the pandemic and due to safety issues, many suggest **alternative meeting locations** or virtual visits as substitutes.
- Volunteers note that home visits often reveal needs missed in intake or phone calls, but worry about their own safety in certain neighborhoods or housing situations.
- Some conferences only do phone or office visits, leading to inconsistency; there are calls for a **more uniform home visit process**.

Enabling vs. Empowering

- A common tension emerges around **providing short-term aid** (“band-aids”) versus **long-term solutions** like education, job assistance, and financial literacy coaching.
- Members worry about **enabling dependency** through repeated assistance, advocating for setting guidelines on frequency and amount of aid, and **asking recipients to contribute** (“skin in the game”) where possible.
- Many suggest a focus on **teaching budgeting, life, and financial skills**, with tailored materials, apps, or workshops.
- There is concern about **"repeat customers"** and a need for guidelines or conditions to encourage forward progress and self-sufficiency.

Collaboration and Community Partnerships

- Members recommend **increased collaboration** with other churches, non-profits, government agencies, legal and medical services, and community businesses to **pool resources** and expand impact.
- Suggestions include joint training, shared databases, centralized resource directories, and resource-sharing events with local organizations.
- There is a recognized need for closer coordination to **avoid duplication**, ensure referrals are effective, and address the complexity and volume of current cases.
- Calls for regular meetings, events, or “resource fairs” to improve information flow and build connections across agencies are frequent.



Systemic Change and Advocacy

- Many urge SVDP to **move beyond immediate assistance** to address **systemic causes of poverty** (e.g., lack of affordable housing, job access, mental health services, and generational cycles).
- **Advocacy for policy change, landlord engagement, and coalition-building** is seen as vital, focusing on long-term goals of employment, education, and stable housing.
- Repeated mentions of the need for SVDP to help with **mental health referrals, addiction recovery resources**, and supporting efforts for **homelessness prevention**.
- Members desire more tools and training to address **root causes**, not just emergencies, and suggest SVDP could pilot innovative programs (e.g., microloans, skill-building, and job mentorship).

Recurring Needs, Barriers, and Suggestions

Volunteer Recruitment, Training, and Support

- Volunteers are aging and stretched; there is an urgent need for **recruitment of younger, diverse, and bilingual members** and for developing flexible scheduling to accommodate working people.
- Regular **training, mentoring, and shadowing** (especially for home visits, mental health/crisis, and using technology) are requested, as well as more comprehensive orientation for new volunteers.
- Members want a **clear, updated resource guide**, shared best practices, standardized forms, and templates for improved casework and reporting.
- Calls for increased emotional and peer support for volunteers due to the stress of difficult cases and decision-making responsibilities.

Technology and Process Improvements

- Common requests include **better use of technology** for case tracking (e.g., ServWare, apps, cloud-storage), virtual visits, translation support, and central data on repeat clients and available resources.
- Barriers include limited computer skills and some reluctance, especially among older volunteers and clients, to move to online systems.
- Many conferences struggle with the **administrative time** and paperwork required, calling for streamlined processes to allow more focus on direct service.



Resource Gaps

- Members emphasize the **shortage of financial resources** (especially for rent/housing assistance), volunteers, and access to specialized services (mental health, legal, employment support), as well as the need for more **training in systemic advocacy**.
- There are frequent mentions of **food insecurity**, high rental costs, lack of affordable housing, insufficient transportation, and challenges in serving immigrants and non-English speakers.

Special Populations and Diversity

- Suggestions include **tailoring services to specific groups** such as seniors, immigrants, single parents, those without internet, non-English speakers, and those experiencing homelessness.
- Members highlight the **importance of dignity, listening, and approaching all with compassion and without judgment**, as well as being sensitive to cultural differences and privacy concerns.

Communication and Follow-Up

- Widespread **desire for better follow-up**: post-visit calls, periodic check-ins, and consistency in maintaining relationships to assess long-term impact and continued needs.
- Members seek **feedback mechanisms** from those served and want clearer protocols for recording, sharing, and closing cases within their conferences.

In summary, SVDP members deeply value person-to-person service but face growing challenges in safety, volunteer capacity, growing/complex needs, and resource gaps. There is a strong appetite for innovation—especially in follow-up, collaboration, technology, training, and shifting focus toward systemic as well as emergency solutions.