

SECTION 13

BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE



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SECTION 13 – BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE**GUIDE TO MASONIC BENEVOLENCE****13.1 INTRODUCTION**

This pamphlet has been prepared as a guide for those charged with the responsibility of carrying out the work of Masonic Benevolence and with the hope that it will provide a greater understanding of the Committee's process.

Benevolence and Charity are basic principles of Freemasonry. Every Mason is expected to maintain an attitude of benevolence toward all mankind and to perform acts of charity for those in need. This distinguishing characteristic of its members is a foundation stone of the fraternity.

"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow-being, let me do it now; let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

13.2 BENEVOLENT PROCESS

- a) If a member of your Lodge or an outside source determines a need, and it is believed that it can be met through Masonic assistance; this need is reported to your Lodge Benevolence Committee.
- b) A member of your Committee visits the brother or dependent. This visit provides an opportunity to evaluate the need and to offer counsel. If financial problems exist, ensure that applications have been made for all available social benefits. Should the need be of a short term nature and not too large, your lodge Benevolence Fund should be utilized.
- c) If increased financial help is required, your Committee should ask the Lodge for assistance at the next regular meeting. The welfare of each member is the prime responsibility of your Lodge.
- d) If financial assistance beyond the ability of the Lodge is required, an application for Benevolence (available from your District Chairman or the Grand Secretary) should be made to Grand Lodge. The application should be properly completed with all questions accurately answered by the applicant, with a member of your Committee present and ready to assist in its completion, and to stress the confidentiality of its contents with the Lodge and its members.
- e) Following completion of the form, it is then presented to the Lodge for approval and authorization. Under no circumstances should the applicant's name be mentioned in the lodge motion.
- f) The form should then be forwarded to the District Chairman of Benevolence accompanied by a supplementary letter, explaining the background of this request in as much detail as possible for his analysis, comments and direction of any help that he may have to offer.
- g) The application is forwarded by the District Chairman to the Grand Secretary who refers it to the Chairman of the Grand Lodge Committee on Benevolence for action. Be assured that if immediate action is required, it will be addressed by the Committee.
- h) The amount of a grant is determined on the information contained in the application and supportive documentation. This grant is forwarded to the Lodge for disbursement.
- i) Your Lodge Committee should maintain regular visitation with the person requiring help to ensure that the needs are being addressed, and to keep current about the recipient's progress.

13.3 GRANTS OF BENEVOLENCE

The following are excerpts from the Book Of Constitution. Always refer to the current Book of Constitution to ensure of correct wording.

Section 428.

Grants of benevolence by Grand Lodge to a brother, or to dependent relatives of a living or deceased brother, are to be considered as supplementary assistance to that given by the lodge recommending the application.

Section 429.

No grant of benevolence may be made to an unaffiliated Mason, nor to dependent relatives of a deceased brother who, at the time of his death, was an unaffiliated Mason.

Section 430.

It shall be the duty of the Committee on Benevolence to make recommendations to the Board of General Purposes for enactment of regulations which appear to be desirable in governing benevolence.

13.4 REGULATIONS GOVERNING GRANTS OF BENEVOLENCE

Adopted by the Board of General Purposes on July 13, 1992

- a) All applications for benevolence must be made through a lodge.
- b) The lodge recommending an application for benevolence must pass a resolution to that effect in open lodge and record it in the minutes of the meeting.
- c) The District Chairman of Benevolence will assist the District to process all requests for Grand Lodge benevolence.
- d) The Secretary of the lodge shall report the receipt of a grant of benevolence to the lodge in open meeting and record it in the minutes of the meeting.
- e) Grants of benevolence are held in trust for Grand Lodge by the lodge. Whenever a grant or any portion thereof is no longer required by the beneficiary, the lodge shall return the unused grant or portion thereof to the Grand Secretary.
- f) In any application for benevolence wherever the need for assistance may be of an interim nature and circumstances indicate that there may be some disposal of property or other assets, the Committee may grant benevolence in the form of an interest free loan. In such cases, the Committee will require documentation, which may include collateral security, to provide evidence of the intention that the proceeds of the benevolence support are to be ultimately repaid to Grand Lodge.
- g) The Chairman of the Committee of Benevolence shall prepare and present to the Board of General Purposes meeting held immediately prior to the annual meeting of Grand Lodge, for the purpose of being printed for the information of Grand Lodge, a report in such form as directed by the Board of General Purposes, respecting all applications for benevolence and the disposition thereof.
- h) The income from the Memorial Fund, invested and on deposit, shall be available to the Committee on Benevolence for grants of benevolence. Such income shall be augmented by such amounts as Grand Lodge may from time to time approve for transfer from the general funds of Grand Lodge.
- i) The income from the Memorial Fund and such additional funds authorized for transfer by Grand Lodge shall be credited to the revenue account of the Benevolence Fund.

- j) All applications for grants of benevolence must be made upon the printed form which will be furnished on request to the Grand Secretary.
- k) The application form must be completed in full and signed by the Worshipful Master and Secretary with the seal of the lodge affixed thereto.
- l) The comments of the Lodge Chairman of Benevolence and the District Chairman of Benevolence are essential in assisting the Committee. *Additional supportive information and documentation is always appreciated.*
- m) The annual application for benevolence must be delivered to the Grand Secretary before the first day of April prior to the annual meeting of Grand Lodge.
- n) The Committee on Benevolence shall meet as soon as possible after the first day of April to determine the disposition of all applications for benevolence.
- o) Grants of benevolence shall be made by cheque payable to the lodge or in such manner and at such times as the Committee may determine. In special cases this may vary at the joint discretion of the Chairman of the Committee of Benevolence and the Chairman of Audit and Finance.
- p) In cases of pressing need arising between the meetings of the Committee of Benevolence, interim grants for the purposes of temporary assistance may be authorized by the Chairman of the Committee on Benevolence with the approval of the Chairman of Audit and Finance, and the President of the Board of General Purposes.
- q) The District Chairman of Benevolence shall review all applications for Grand Lodge benevolence and ensure that the same are delivered to the Grand Secretary before the first day of April.
- r) The District Chairman will then monitor the grants in co-operation with the lodge through visitation. Prior to the first day of April next, it shall be the duty of the District Chairman of Benevolence to review with the respective lodge the circumstances of the recipient of a grant of benevolence and determine if an application on the prescribed form shall be resubmitted.

13.5 RE-VISITING AN APPLICANT FOR GRAND LODGE BENEVOLENCE

The following information will be of great assistance to those who are called upon to visit Brethren and/or their dependents, and to help in the completion of the “Application for Benevolence” form.

- a) Determine possible need on information from:
 - another brother
 - a community source
 - a change in lifestyle or appearance
 - continued absence from lodge
 - a family member
- b) Bring information to the attention of the Worshipful Master and Lodge Benevolent Committee.
- c) Lodge Benevolent Committee determines how it can address the need and assigns a “caring” brother to be the contact or liaison with the identified needy brother or dependant.
- d) The assigned lodge liaison plans his visit to deliver whatever the lodge has initially decided upon.
- e) When the circumstances require financial assistance, and additional funds are going to be requested from the Grand Lodge Benevolence Committee, take along the Application Form for Grand Lodge Benevolence. (Available from Grand Lodge, or your District Benevolent Chairman.)
- f) When entering the home, never focus immediately on the need at hand, rather make dialogue on anything but. The weather, season, daily news, community affairs or what’s happening at lodge are usually good “ice breakers.” – When did he join the lodge, who were his sponsors, why did he join, what activities has he participated in, are good lodge openers.
- g) When talking about the lodge, one might ask what were some of his memories of the first degree, eventually getting to the lecture at the N.E. Angle.
- h) This could lead to reviewing the individual’s needs and his ability to address them.
- i) “Thus the lodge felt it wanted to assist and asked you to make this visit and to leave some assistance.” Allowing the recipient some time, should generate some response from the brother or his family member.
- j) This may be the time to probe some more by asking more about the need and what plan for support the family has to assist them.

- k) Good Counsel and conjoint problem resolution may be all that is required to resolve the need.
- l) However, if during this assessment period it is felt that additional financial assistance will be required, it is NOW timely to introduce, cautiously yet forthrightly, sources of additional funds. The lodge may have access to many funds. The Grand Lodge Memorial Fund has a larger fund than the lodge and stands ready to assist needy cases identified by a lodge.
- m) The brother (or his dependant) should be informed that “In order to access this fund, Grand Lodge Committee on Benevolence requires specific information to assist in determining the amount assigned to each application. A standard form is used and, when completed in FULL, is forwarded to the Committee. The information is confidential and known only to those involved in the processing. His (her) name will not be know in lodge, only identified as a brother or dependant (s) in need of additional financial assistance from the Grand Lodge Committee on Benevolence.”
- n) Completing this comprehensive form is not an easy task. A careful study of all the questions prior to the visit will give a good understanding of all the sections that must be completed. If in doubt, don't hesitate to call the Grand Lodge Office at (905) 528-8644 for clarification.
- o) Asking the questions and completing the form is a very sensitive and private matter and will require some time. NEVER have the applicant complete the form. Inform the applicant about the need to have complete answers for the Committee. Go slowly. Speak in a soft empathetic tone. If not sure of the answer, statement like “Can you tell me again,” or “Can you tell me more, “ will help clarify responses. Graciously accept any support documents to verify information and note such accordingly. e.g. Income Tax Return, Pay Slip, Statements of Accounts Owing.
- p) When completed, review the answers with the applicant to assure all are of one accord.
- q) Close on some lighter note. Assure the applicant that you are the lodge's contact person and you will be keeping in touch. You will be processing this form through the lodge at the next meeting.
- r) Phone calls on a regular schedule strengthen your caring to the family.
- s) When the lodge receives the cheque from Grand Lodge, deliver the funds in person and make note of the general welfare of the situation.

Some elements of a successful interview:

- Preparation
- Kindness
- Understanding
- Support
- Empathy
- Timing
- Listen to what the Applicant is saying
- Never overwhelm the Applicant

It should be noted that one good lodge visitor is suggested; no more than two if need be. *Never should the applicant be overwhelmed with a Committee of three brethren marching into his (her) home.*

13.6 COMPLETING THE FORM

Please read the comments on the face of the form:

- a) Rules Respecting Grants of Benevolence
- b) Important” -this note requesting the attachment of a supplementary letter is extremely important. The application form itself does not present the whole story and it is important that you address the possible cause of the need and, if possible, some of the history leading up to this need. Try to determine if this would be a one time request or if it appears that this may be an ongoing requirement.
- c) If you are completing a renewal application, please note that it is very important that the application be received in the Grand Secretary’s Office by April 1st each year. Please ensure enough time is given to enable the District
- d) Chairman to review the application and forward same to the Grand Secretary’s Office by April 1st .

Please read the form carefully and type or print legibly.

Please note in item (14) that we are looking for income and expenses for the full year. Do not show monthly costs in the “EXPENSES’ column. Also, in the “EXPENSES” column, items aa) EXTRAORDINARY EXPENSES and cc) “OTHER” please explain what the dollars represent.

To the LODGE and DISTRICT Chairmen of Benevolence. Please fill in the section “Remarks” on the back page of the form. Do not just sign the form but add some meaningful comments which will possibly assist the committee. Also, ensure that the “Amount of Funds given by our Lodge etc” is filled in.

Remember “NEVER” have the applicant complete the form.

13.7 ADMINISTRATION

The benevolent work of Grand Lodge is conducted under the direction of the Grand Lodge Committee on Benevolence. The Chairman of this committee is selected by the Board of General Purposes to whom the Committee reports. The role of the Committee is to recommend policy for Grand Lodge benevolence and to determine grants for applicants of Grand Lodge assistance. The administration of the funds is under the direction of the Grand Secretary in the Grand Lodge Office in Hamilton.

The Committee is assisted in each district by a District Chairman of Benevolence, who is an important aid to the committee by assisting the lodges with the proper preparation of Benevolence Applications. The appointment of a District Chairman is the responsibility of the District Deputy Grand Master and requires careful consideration.

The District Chairman of Benevolence receives special instructions from the Chairman of Benevolence and the Grand Secretary and is available to any Lodge or member in his District who requires advice concerning benevolence. Each Chairman spends considerable time absorbing information concerning benevolence and it is logical that he should serve for more than one year. We urge each new District Deputy Grand Master, when appointing a Chairman of Benevolence, to carefully consider the advisability of re-appointing the previous Chairman, thus obtaining the benefit of his experience. The importance of this re-appointment cannot be overemphasized. Experienced District Chairmen of Benevolence are necessary to properly implement and carry out the policies of the Committee.

The District Chairman is your lodge's source of information concerning benevolence. His duty is to advise and assist you in the preparation and completion of application forms, to encourage participation at the Lodge and member level and to act as a representative of the Committee in your district. This will allow examination of the application for completeness and correctness. Remember, all applications for benevolence shall be submitted through him to the Grand Secretary's office. The work of the Committee will be considerably enhanced if this procedure is followed.

Benevolence Grants are approved at the annual Communication of Grand Lodge. Should the need arise for Grand Lodge assistance during the year the Chairman of the Committee is authorized under the rules of benevolence to act on behalf of the Committee and make an immediate grant. You are urged to act quickly and be assured that the Chairman and the Committee will act as quickly as you do.

13.8 LODGE BENEVOLENCE

Just as the basis of Freemasonry is the Lodge, the basis for Masonic Benevolence is with the Brethren who are at hand and who know the nature of the need and bring it to the lodge's attention. That is why the Benevolence Committee of Grand Lodge can only act after an application for assistance has been processed through a Lodge.

What would be "Masonic" about an impersonal contribution from Grand Lodge when the local Brethren and the Lodge have not cared enough to do something themselves.

We would suggest that each Lodge make every effort to ensure that the welfare of its members, and, in the case of deceased brethren, their dependent surviving relatives, is addressed. This can be done through the Lodge Committee on Benevolence which should have at its disposal a benevolent fund to address the immediate needs as they arise.

We would suggest that the Chairman of the Lodge Benevolence Committee be a more experienced Mason who has an understanding of Masonic Benevolence and who can lend a sympathetic ear and heart to those in need.

Appointing one or more junior members to this committee may help to acquaint them with the benevolence process.

Particular areas of concern for your Committee's focus should be the widows and relatives of deceased brethren and members in advanced years who are confined to home or otherwise incapacitated.

Regular visits will ensure that should the need arise, you are there to assist and they will understand through your attention, that you are genuinely interested in their well-being.

Today, more than ever, watch for those who are in unfortunate circumstances such as unemployed, separated or divorced etc.

This Committee's responsibility should include interviews and preparation of application forms for those who require additional financial assistance from Grand Lodge and the maintenance of a constant liaison between your Lodge Committee and the District Chairman of Benevolence.

Masonic charity or benevolence is often misunderstood as only being the giving of financial assistance. Often, a person in a very stressful situation, may not require financial assistance, but sound advice and support. This type of help should be the fundamental task of your Committee. The members of the Committee should be aware of lodge members who are able to give needed expert advice or direct the Committee to someone who can assist. *The importance of an active working Lodge Committee on Benevolence cannot be overemphasized.*

13.9 SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMMES

In Canada there are many Social Service and Health Plans etc. available. There is virtually no need for anyone to be in circumstance of severe difficulty. Past experience would indicate that a great many people do not take full advantage of the Social Service Benefits available to them. Sometimes, this is a result that comes from a feeling of pride by refusing to accept charity. This, should not be the case. Each programme is funded from the taxes of citizens and thus all citizens are entitled to and should participate in their benefits. Too often, people are not aware of the services that are available or for which they qualify and it is important that you provide every applicant/member with full details about them. Information is available from all levels of government -Municipal, Provincial and Federal and each should be contacted to ensure that all help available is accessed.

13.10 GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

- a) Canada Pension Plan Benefits (C.P.P.)
 - Retirement Pension
 - Disability Benefits
 - Survivors Benefits
 - Child Tax Benefit Program
 - Death Benefits
 - Spouse's Pension
 - Credit Splitting upon Divorce or Separation
- b) Old Age Security Benefits Guaranteed Income Supplement
- c) Veteran's Affairs Services and Benefits
- d) Revenue Canada Income Tax Guidance
- e) Tax Information Phone Service (T.I.P.S.)

T.I.P.S. is a computerized, voice-response service. By using this service, callers can get information about selected tax topics, find out the status of their income tax refund, find out their RRSP contribution limit, or determine whether or not they are eligible for the GST credit.

Callers can use T.I.P.S. from any push-button phone that has tone (not pulse) signalling and the Touch-Tone™ service. If callers don't have access to a Touch-Tone™ phone, they can get information from the nearest Revenue Canada income tax office. The numbers are in the Government of Canada listings in the phone book, or in the tax guide package.

13.11 GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO

- a) Ministry of Community and Social Services.
 - Guaranteed Annual Income System for the Aged (G.A.I.N.S.)
 - Ontario Senior Citizens Benefits
 - Family Benefits
 - Grants for Pensioners
 - Property Tax Grants

- b) Workers Compensation

- c) Local Municipal Social Services Dept.

13.12 PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

Masonry is a personal science. We come to Masonry as an individual. In Masonry we are surrounded with the love and affection of our brethren. This fraternal feeling is one of the greatest strengths and mysteries of Masonry and is the bedrock of Masonic Benevolence. Certainly when we think of benevolence we may think of financial assistance, we think of applications processed and approved by the Committee on Benevolence. We think of the District Chairmen, we think of the Lodge Committees and we think that all are looked after. However, like all aspects of Masonry, unless we are involved as individuals nothing happens. Your principal purpose in Masonic Benevolence is to maintain a personal interest in the welfare of your brethren and their dependents. Masonry and Benevolence, to paraphrase our ritual are synonymous terms. To a Mason the act of charity, the extension of a helping hand, the comfort of the distressed in the expression of sympathy are as natural and as normal as breathing is to life itself.

However, just as we sometimes, through unexpected exertion, find ourselves short of breath and then appreciate its normal comforts, so through a lack of time, through a moment of carelessness or through simple forgetfulness, we fail to seize the opportunity of practising benevolence and charity. It is well to remember that nothing hurts more than that friendly letter one never got around to writing -the hospital call one did not make or the visit to a friend one overlooked. The happiness of benevolence is in action, but its test is in what one is willing to do for others.

Therefore every Mason through his private efforts, his lodge and other avenues of Masonic Charity ought to consider what he should, can and will do to assist others.

In the final analysis Masonic Benevolence is You !