



THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN



A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse

The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SSCC) – United States Province recognizes that sexual abuse by any SSCC Member has devastating consequences for victims, their families, and the lay and religious communities. We are increasingly aware of the effects of this tragic behavior and are steadfast in our committed to helping those affected.

This *Survivor's Guide* is intended to provide information on:

- ❖ What is sexual abuse?
- ❖ What are the procedures for responding to complaints of sexually inappropriate behavior and sexual abuse?
- ❖ To whom should survivors of sexual abuse turn for help?

WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE?

SEXUAL ABUSE IS SEXUAL CONTACT BETWEEN A MEMBER AND A MINOR OR A VULNERABLE ADULT.

Sexual exploitation or sexual abuse can include actions such as (but not limited to):

- Giving a sexually charged gift (such as lingerie)
- A prolonged hug when a brief hug is customary behavior
- Kissing on the lips when a kiss on the cheek would be appropriate
- Showing sexually suggestive objects or pornography
- Sexual intercourse, anal, or oral sex
- Innuendo or sexual talk
- Suggestive comments
- Descriptions of sexual experiences, fantasies
- Sexual propositions

**SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, WHETHER HARASSMENT, EXPLOITATION,
OR ABUSE BY A MEMBER, EMPLOYEE, OR VOLUNTEER IS
CONTRARY TO CATHOLIC MORALS, DOCTRINE AND CANON LAW.**

IT IS NEVER ACCEPTABLE.

**IT IS ENTIRELY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEMBER TO
MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE EMOTIONAL AND SEXUAL BOUNDARIES
WITH THOSE WITH WHOM HE WORKS AND/OR SERVES.**

**WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS OF
SEXUALLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND SEXUAL ABUSE?**

The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SSCC) responds to all allegations of sexual misconduct by a Member with great care. Each instance will be handled promptly, thoroughly, and compassionately by the *Survivor Assistance Coordinator*. He will listen to, understand, and offer help, including appropriate psychological counseling for those affected by sexual abuse by a Member. Through independent investigators, we will respond swiftly to evaluate and scrutinize any accusation of sexual misconduct by a Member.

Consistent with the directives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts has also established a Review Board. This interdisciplinary board of lay and religious advises us on all matters related to sexual misconduct.

Any Member who has been found to have a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor against him will be removed from ministry and placed under restrictions to ensure he does not have unsupervised access to minors.

In addition to establishing procedures for responding to sexual abuse, the Congregation has undertaken a series of measures to prevent future incidents of abuse. These include extensive mandatory psychological evaluation of candidates before they enter formation and providing continuing education programs for all Members about issues of sexuality and personal conduct.

It is our firm belief that we must maintain appropriate boundaries with minors. We call upon those with knowledge of a Member's inappropriate behavior—whether past or present—to come forward with this information to prevent further harm. In short, we ask everyone to join with us to protect the safety of children, women, and men, and with firm determination, to promote healing where there is pain.

**WHERE TO TURN FOR HELP
IF YOU HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO SEXUAL ABUSE**

If you or someone you know believe that a Member of the SSCC community has violated the boundaries outlined in this brochure, we urge you to report such behavior immediately to the Provincial Superior and/or the Survivor Assistance Coordinator. Your case will be handled with the strictest sensitivity and confidentiality.

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If you suspect that a minor is being abused, report it directly to the civil authorities. You can find state related reporting information at www.childwelfare.gov.

The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary

United States Province

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