



SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME

CONGREGATIONAL POLICY ON THE

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Sisters of Notre Dame are missioned to incarnate the love of our good and provident God. They live Gospel values and promote these in their ministries. Healthy and safe relationships that uphold the dignity of the individual are central to Notre Dame ministries. It is with the intention that relationships in ministry be experienced at all times as charitable and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur, that the following Code of Ethics has been adopted by the Congregation and is to be followed by all sisters and personnel.

PRINCIPLES:

Sisters of Notre Dame and their collaborators will:

- Promote Gospel values
- Protect the dignity of the individual created in the image of God
- Maintain a safe environment
- require accountability
- Foster a culture of openness and transparency
- Empower individuals through free choice
- Protect reputations
- foster an atmosphere of compassion and empathy
- provide appropriate privacy to all

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Personnel understand that Notre Dame Ministries maintain a zero tolerance for abuse and agree to comply in spirit and action with this position.
- Personnel will exhibit the highest Christian ethical standards, Gospel values and personal integrity.
- Personnel will conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the guidelines and teachings of the Sisters of Notre Dame.
- Personnel will do their utmost to prevent abuse and neglect of children, youth and vulnerable adults involved in Notre Dame Ministry activities and services.
- Personnel will not physically, sexually, emotionally abuse or neglect a child, youth or vulnerable adult.
- Personnel will share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with their supervisor.
- Personnel will obey civil and ecclesiastical laws and report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child, youth or vulnerable adult whether on or off Notre Dame property to the designated authorities.
- Personnel will accept personal responsibility to protect children, youth and vulnerable adults from all forms of abuse.
- Personnel will do their utmost to use all opportunities to be a source of help to families in which abuse of a child, youth or vulnerable adult has become an issue.

DEFINITIONS:

Personnel:

Clergy, Sisters, Lay Persons (includes employees or volunteers)

Minor:

Any person under the age of eighteen, or who is considered by law to be the equivalent of a minor.

Vulnerable Adult:

Any person who would be considered uniquely vulnerable to abuse because of medical conditions, physical fragility, physical or mental disabilities or power differential.

Abuse:

Physical:

Any non-accidental injury which is intentionally inflicted upon a child, youth, vulnerable adult or any other person. These actions include but are not limited to: spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction.

Sexual:

Any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a child, youth or vulnerable adult and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult. This includes but is not limited to: kisses on the mouth, lengthy full body embraces, showing suggestive pictures or pornography, sexting.

Emotional:

Any mental or emotional injury to a child, youth or vulnerable adult that results in an observable and material impairment to their ability to thrive and function. This includes but is not limited to: name calling, bullying, isolating as a means of punishment.

Neglect:

Any failure to provide for a child's, youth's or vulnerable adult's basic needs or the failure to protect them from harm. This includes but is not limited to withholding food or water, lack of proper clothing, not giving medical care when needed, leaving the person in an unsafe environment.

Economic Exploitation:

any use of the money, labor or belongings of a child, youth or vulnerable adult for one's own benefit.

PROCEDURES:

Due Diligence in Hiring/Training:

All personnel are to have a background check prior to employment and are to be trained in Notre Dame principles and policies. Regular monitoring and supervision is to be done by those in authority. Any inappropriate behavior is to be documented and disciplinary action taken.

Investigation of Allegations:

When allegations have been made against an individual, the person is to be relieved of her/his duties until there has been an investigation by trained experts. If the allegations are proven false, the individual may resume her/his duties. However, if the reported behavior does not meet the

expectations of the Sisters of Notre Dame a warning may be given to the individual. Several warnings will result in a termination of the employment.

Documentation:

Thorough documentation is to be done regarding all reporting, meetings, interviews, phone conversations, etc.

Proven Abuse:

If abuse is proven true, the individual is terminated and reporting is to be done according to the laws of the respective country and diocese.

Abuse by Clergy:

In compliance with the Motu Proprio promulgated by Pope Francis on May 7, 2019, any abuse by a member of the clergy is to be reported to diocesan authorities by the major superior. Superiors are to make themselves aware of how this is to be done in their diocese and to follow this mandate faithfully. If the action is criminal, it is to be reported to the civil authorities as well according to local civil law.

Victims of Abuse:

Victims of abuse are to be listened to and treated with compassion. They will be provided assistance – physical, psychological, etc. The Congregation’s financial responsibility for providing assistance will be determined case by case as mandated by civil and ecclesial authorities.

Province / Delegation Policies:

Each province / delegation in the Congregation is to have its own policies for the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults based on this Congregational Policy. Unit policies are to incorporate civil and ecclesiastical regulations and the laws of the respective country. These unit policies are to be submitted to the general government for approval before implementation.