



The Society recognizes that sexual abuse by members has devastating consequences for survivors and their families and the Church community. We have become increasingly aware of the effects of this tragic behavior and have developed a steadfast commitment to helping those affected.

This guide is intended to provide basic information about (1) how the Society defines sexual abuse (2) what its procedures are for responding to complaints of sexually inappropriate behavior and sexual abuse, and (3) to whom those subjected to sexual abuse can turn for help. Sexual abuse of a minor is sexual contact between a Consecrated Woman and a minor.

Sexual exploitation or sexual abuse can include actions such as:

- Sexual touch or other physical contact that makes the person being touched to feel uncomfortable;
- 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, or conflicts; and
- Sexual propositions.

*This is not an exhaustive list.

To be clear, the Society's stance is this: Sexual abuse of a minor by its Members, employees, and volunteers 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 she works and/or serves.

The Society responds to all allegations and reports of sexual abuse with great care. To ensure that we handle each report promptly, thoroughly, and compassionately, the Society has established an Office of Pastoral Care. The Pastoral Care Advocate is a lay professional who will listen to, understand, and offer help, including appropriate psychological counseling for those affected by sexual abuse by a Member.



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CONSECRATED WOMEN

INFORMATION TO PROVIDE TO INDIVIDUALS WHO REPORT ABUSE

The Society, through the Pastoral Care Advocate and independent investigators, will respond swiftly to evaluate and investigate any accusation of sexual abuse by a member.

The Society, consistent with the directives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, has also established a Review Board. This interdisciplinary board of lay professionals advises the Society on all matters related to sexual misconduct.

Any member who has been found to have an established allegation of sexual abuse of a minor against her will be removed from ministry and placed under restrictions to ensure she does not have unsupervised access to minors.

In addition to establishing procedures for responding to sexual abuse, the Society 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 the provision of continuing education programs for members about issues of sexuality and personal conduct.

It is our firm belief that consecrated persons 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 and 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.

If you or someone you know believe that a member has violated the boundaries outlined in this pamphlet, we urge you to report such behavior immediately to the Territorial Director, and/or the Pastoral Care Advocate. Your case will be handled with the strictest sensitivity and confidentiality. This is the contact information for the Society.

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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.**