

## **Guidelines and Definition of Terms for Reporting Abuse**

The U.S Province of the Society of Mary (The Marists) recognizes that sexual misconduct by Members has devastating consequences for victims and their families, for religious communities, and for the perpetrators. We have become increasingly aware of the effects of this tragic behavior and have developed a steadfast commitment to helping those affected.

This brochure is intended to provide basic information and (1) how the Institute defines sexual misconduct within ministerial relationships, (2) what its procedures are for responding to complaints of sexually inappropriate behavior, and (3) to whom those subjected to sexual misconduct can turn for help.

### **Sexual Misconduct In A Ministerial Relationship**

**A ministerial relationship** is one which a person receives pastoral care from a religious, including:

- Clergy
- Members of religious communities

- Spiritual directors and pastoral counselors

**Sexual misconduct** is a general term that encompasses sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, and sexual abuse.

**Sexual harassment** is defined as unwanted sexualized conduct or language between co-workers in the church setting. It may include, but is not limited to:

- Unsolicited sexual advances and propositions
- The use of sexually degrading words to describe an individual or his/her body
- The telling of inappropriate or sexually-charged jokes
- Retaliation against a co-worker who refuses sexual advances
- Offers of preferential treatment such as promotions, positive performance evaluations, or favorably assigned duties or shifts in exchange for sexual favors

**Sexual exploitation** consists of sexual contact between a religious and person receiving pastoral care from him.

**Sexual abuse** is sexual contact between a religious and minor or vulnerable adult.

Sexual exploitation or sexual abuse can include physical contact or actions such as:

- Sexual touch or other physical contact that makes the person being touched 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

Sexual exploitation or sexual abuse can also include verbal behavior such as:

- Innuendo or sexual talk
- Suggestive comments
- Descriptions of sexual experiences, fantasies, or conflicts
- Sexual propositions

To be clear, the Institute's stance is this: **Sexual misconduct**-whether harassment, exploitation, or abuse-by Members,

employees, and volunteers is contrary to Catholic morals, doctrine, and canon law. It is **never acceptable in a pastoral relationship** with a parishioner, employee, spiritual directee, counseling client, or anyone who has sought the church's ministry.

It is not uncommon for those who seek the church's ministry to feel attracted to a religious or to be flattered by his attention. A layperson's attraction to a Member or enjoyment in being the object of his sexual interest does not excuse any form of sexual misconduct on his part, however. **It is entirely the responsibility of the religious to maintain appropriate emotional and sexual boundaries with those with whom he works and/or serves.**

### **How The Institute Responds To Complaints Of Sexual Misconduct**

The Institute responds to all allegations of sexual misconduct with great care. To ensure that we handle each instance promptly, thoroughly, and compassionately, the Institute has named an experienced director of pastoral outreach who will listen to, understand, and offer help, including resources for appropriate psychological counseling for those affected by Member misconduct.

The Society of Mary, through this director of pastoral outreach and independent investigators will respond swiftly to evaluate

and investigate any accusation of sexual misconduct by a Member. Any Members who have engaged in the sexual abuse of a minor will join the Institute's Aftercare Program. This rigorous relapse prevention program provides appropriate psychological treatment specific for offenders, and entails ongoing monitoring and supervision for the rest of their lives in the Institute.

The Institute, consistent with the directives of the Catholic Bishop's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, has also been part of the CMSM Region 3 Review Board. This interdisciplinary board of lay professionals advises the Institute on all matters related to sexual misconduct.

### **Preventing Sexual Misconduct**

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

### **Conclusion**

It is our firm belief that religious must maintain appropriate boundaries with laypersons in order to preserve the integrity of the ministerial relationship. Moreover, we call upon those with knowledge of a Member's inappropriate behavior—whether past or present—to come forward with this information so that innocent victims may be spared from 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 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 Major Superior, and/or the Pastoral Outreach Coordinator [or equivalent title]. Your case will be handled with the strictest sensitivity and confidentiality. This is the contact information for the Institute.**

**Office of the Major Superior/Provincial**

**815 Varnum St, NE**

**Washington, DC, 20017**

**202-529-2821**

**Very Rev. Paul Frechette, SM, Provincial**

Society of Mary—US Province of the Marists

**Rev. Ted Keating, SM Child Protection  
Coordinator**