



**DOMINICAN FATHERS AND BROTHERS
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AFFIRMING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PROGRAM

PRAESIDIUM ACCREDITED

Our passion. Your protection.



GUIDE FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS

The Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Joseph are committed to the affirming and protecting children and young people. We are painfully aware of how the sexual abuse of a minor by a member of our religious institute is a violation of the trust placed in us. At our Provincial Chapter in 2006, we made the following public declaration:

DECLARATION

We, the Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Joseph, with St. Dominic as our model as consoler of the sick and those in distress:

- A. acknowledge the pain, suffering, and the betrayal of trust caused by the sexual abuse of children and young people by some of our brothers;
- B. affirm our special concern and responsibility to provide care, healing, and hope for all persons who are victims of sexual misconduct, and to the falsely accused, and to the perpetrators;
- C. affirm this great and urgent need of the Church to bring hope and healing to the suffering in our midst and to all persons who are victims of abuse;
- D. pledge that we will honor the sacred commitment to protect and defend the dignity of children and young people in our lives and ministries among all people entrusted to our care through the implementation of our Province's program *Affirming and Protecting Children and Young People*.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS

The Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Joseph have established the *Affirming and Protecting Children and Young People* Program, a comprehensive program designed to prevent the sexual abuse of minors and to respond to allegations. The program has been accredited by an

Praesidium Accreditation™ publicly demonstrates that the Dominican Friars, Province of St. Joseph, have achieved the highest industry standards in abuse prevention and response. The program has been fully accredited through August, 2013. More information about Praesidium Accreditation™ is available at www.Praesidium.com.

independent agency that is a leader in child protection throughout the USA, *Praesidium Religious Services, Inc.* In addition, our program is in full compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (2002), the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests and Deacons* (2006). All civil laws in the jurisdictions where the abuse was alleged to have occurred are followed.

We respond to all allegations of sexual abuse of minors by any or our brothers, living or deceased, pastorally, and with urgency. In order for those who come forward with allegations to understand the steps of our policies, we have outlined them in this document. The detailed policies of the Province's *Program* may be requested through the Province's Victim Assistance Coordinator.

Once an allegation is received, the following occur:

1. The allegation received is documented in writing.
2. The Province's Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC), a highly qualified clinician, is asked to speak directly to the caller. As appropriate, the VAC will schedule a face-to-face meeting with the victim in order to hear the victim's story, to more thoroughly explain the Province's *Program* and to identify what may be needed for healing to occur. Counseling and pastoral assistance are offered. All callers are strongly encouraged to report any allegation to civil authorities where the incident(s) occurred.
3. All allegations against minors are reported to the civil authorities.
4. There is a preliminary investigation of the allegation. The brother is contacted and informed about the allegation. If the brother is deceased, those who knew him may be contacted.
5. An independent interdisciplinary Review Board, consisting of lay professionals, reviews the results of the preliminary investigation for the Province. Their recommendations are sent to the Prior Provincial.
6. If the preliminary investigation concludes in establishing the allegation, the brother accused is placed on administrative leave (without any ecclesiastical ministry) and asked to complete a weeklong comprehensive assessment. Following the completion of the assessment, the brother accused must comply with an individually designed and supervised *Personal Continuing Care Plan* that is approved and evaluated on a yearly basis by the Province's Review Board and the Prior Provincial. This plan would include as appropriate all judgments in the civil jurisdiction where the alleged abuse occurred.
7. Concurrent with this process after the preliminary investigation, any allegation that has the semblance of truth is submitted to the Master of the Order to be forwarded to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith for the canonical process.

8. The VAC informs the caller about the process and the status of the allegation. The VAC also arranges a meeting between the caller and the Prior Provincial in order to review the allegation.

PREVENTION

In addition to implementing policies and procedures for responding to allegations, the Province has implemented strategies that contribute to the prevention of sexual abuse of children. These strategies include:

- A. Mandatory assessment and screening, including extensive background checks, of all applicants to the Province;
- B. Required participation in education programs for all friars that focus on behaviors of sexual offenders, responsibility for reporting allegations to civil authorities, child pornography, self-protection against false allegations, adherence to systems of support and accountability in the Dominican Community and guidelines for behaviors in ministries with children and young people.

IMMEDIATE HELP IS AVAILABLE

We want to hear from anyone who has suffered. To report an allegation of abuse, even anonymously, or if there is a need pastoral or clinical care in order to begin the process of healing from sexual abuse as a minor by a Dominican Friar, an employee or volunteer of the Province of St. Joseph, first report the allegation to local law enforcement authorities, then call or write to Theresa F. Rodrigues, ACSW-R, the Province's Victim Assistance Coordinator at 518-573-8264 or by e-mail to victim.assistance@opfriars.org or call the Prior Provincial at 1-212-737-5757.

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