

Religious of the Assumption

Congregational Safeguarding Policy 2024

“God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them.” (Gen 1:27a)

“Always maintain in homes [communities] and boarding schools, respect for everything, for each person in their place, this is the mark of the spirit of Jesus Christ. ” Saint Marie Eugenie (13 June 1884)

“Following Jesus, the Religious of the Assumption want to witness in a radical way to the new creation inaugurated by baptism.” (Rule of Life, No. 1)

INTRODUCTION

As disciples of Jesus Christ and members of the Congregation, we want to live the Gospel values for God’s Kingdom. Therefore, we want to denounce all forms of abuse in our communities, institutions, and places of mission.

This document intends to help each Province develop a Safeguarding Policy sensitive to local realities, diocesan policies, civil laws, and our Rule of Life. Our Congregation recognizes the serious nature of abuse in any form. Therefore, each Province will set up a competent TEAM who will take prompt and appropriate action, if allegations of abuse are made, to support the rights of the alleged victim and the accused member.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this document, **abuse** refers to any form of maltreatment or violence that can demean and denigrate the human dignity of the other, or it refers to any form of misuse of something that we possess, such as power or money. We want to focus on the following four kinds of abuses.

1. **Abuse of power** refers to the unfair use of power that does injustice to the other. In other words, it refers to the situations in which one transgresses the limit considered to be legitimate or goes beyond one’s permitted scope of practice.
2. **Spiritual abuse** refers to the manipulation or breach of trust by leading someone, who is placed under one’s care, astray in their search for faith and meaning in life.
3. **Sexual abuse** concerns the physical abuse of a person, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, rape, or any violent treatment of a person.
4. **Financial abuse** includes a lack of transparency and mismanagement of the money and property that are entrusted to one’s care.

CODE OF CONDUCT

We want to promote a culture of caring in our communities and to ensure safe and healthy environment for our mission. We are thus committed to implementing measures to safeguard the wellbeing of all concerned.

A. PREVENTION: Create Awareness through Education

1. **Abuse of power:** Enforce comprehensive norms that clearly define the limits of power and the consequences of the abuse of power. Ensure the formation of leaders and members on synodal leadership practices.
2. **Spiritual abuse:** Create and enforce a code of conduct for spiritual leaders that outlines acceptable behaviour and the proper use of authority. Create awareness of the importance of maintaining healthy boundaries in spiritual relationships. Foster an environment where open dialogue and questioning are encouraged and respected.
3. **Sexual abuse:** Prepare and implement comprehensive sexual education programs that teach about consent, respect, and healthy relationships. Establish and enforce strict anti-harassment and anti-abuse policies.

4. **Financial abuse:** Develop programs to raise awareness about financial abuse and promote ethical practices. Promote transparency through open meetings, public records, and accessible information. Foster a culture of integrity, honesty, and accountability.

B. INTERVENTION: Reporting, Investigating and Support Structures

1. **Abuse of power:** Establish clear, open communication channels for reporting concerns or abuses without fear of retribution.
2. **Spiritual abuse:** Develop and enforce clear policies and procedures for reporting and addressing allegations of spiritual abuse.
3. **Sexual abuse:** Create safe spaces in each province or country where victims can report abuse without fear of retribution or judgment. Conduct thorough, impartial investigations into allegations of sexual abuse and ensure timely and fair legal proceedings to hold perpetrators accountable.
4. **Financial abuse:** Implement systems to detect unusual financial activities or patterns that may indicate abuse, such as unexpected large withdrawals, changes in spending habits, or unusual account activity. Establish structures for individuals to report financial abuse without fear of retaliation.

C. REPARATION: Rehabilitation and Restoration

1. **Abuse of power:** Address the needs and rights of victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and ensure help to exercise power responsibly, transparently, and for the wellness of all.
2. **Spiritual abuse:** Acknowledge the harm caused, provide support and compensation to victims, and implement measures to avoid future abuse.
3. **Sexual abuse:** Offer comprehensive support and long-term psychological and therapeutic services to help victims recover from trauma. Facilitate restorative justice programs wherever appropriate.
4. **Financial abuse:** Make official statement about the harm caused by financial abuse and the steps taken to address it holistically.

COMMITMENT

We are committed to promoting a culture of **zero tolerance** for any form of abuse. We want to be a Congregation that gives life, promotes healthy human relationships, ensures justice, fosters communion, pays special attention to vulnerable people, and exercises authority as equal 'covenant partners' in God's mission.

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