

Protecting God's Children

A GUIDE FOR VICTIMS



Compiled by the
Order of Carmelites
Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary



The Carmelite Fathers and Brothers of the Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary recognize that sexual misconduct by any of its members has devastating consequences for victims and their families. Along with the entire Catholic Church, we are very aware of effects of such tragic behavior and are wholeheartedly committed to helping and healing those affected.

This *Victim's Guide* provides information on:

1. what is sexual misconduct within ministerial relationships
2. established procedures for responding to complaints of sexually inappropriate behavior
3. to whom victims of sexual misconduct can turn for help.

Sexual Misconduct is a general term that includes sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and even inappropriate actions with sexual overtones.

Sexual Harassment is unwanted sexualized conduct or language, aimed at inducing others to agree to comply with the plan of another seeking some control over the harassed.

Sexual Abuse is unwanted and/or illegal sexual contact, especially when committed by an adult on a minor or vulnerable adult. Such actions include but are not limited to rape, illicit intercourse, sodomy, sexual fondling, oral sex, incest, sexual exploitation, and the exposure of minors and vulnerable adults to pornography.

Sexual inappropriate interventions are interactions not appropriate for a priest or brother to engage in which do not reach the level of a serious offense like abuse. Examples might include wearing suggestive clothing, verbally over-focusing even in a positive way on the anatomy of an adult or a minor, embracing at a level which is more appropriate for an engaged or married couple.

Sexual Misconduct

Whether harassment, abuse, or inappropriate actions by a member of the Carmelite Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary is contrary to Catholic morals and the policies and ethics of the Province. Each member of the Province has made a commitment to be totally ethical in each and every interaction they engage in.

How the Carmelite Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary Responds to Sexual Misconduct

The Carmelites respond to all allegations of sexual misconduct with great commitment to surfacing the truth and making sure any victim receives whatever is needed for healing. To ensure that we handle each instance of misconduct promptly, thoroughly, and compassionately, the Province has appointed a Carmelite versed in such endeavors to serve as our Director of Accountability and Ethical Ministry. Besides being the principal Carmelite for hearing initial complaints of sexual misconduct, he is responsible for engaging a professional Victim Assistance Coordinator. The Carmelite Director of Accountability and Ethical Ministry is also responsible for making sure appropriate civil authorities have been notified where laws have been broken.

Complaints may be made to the Carmelite Director of Accountability and Ethical Ministry by anyone and even anonymously. They may be made about present members of the Province, living or deceased. They may also be made about members who have left the Province. Besides contacting the Carmelite Director of Accountability and Ethical Ministry, complainants are encouraged to report allegations that involve crimes to the police.

In most serious cases, e.g. where sexual abuse of a minor has been reported, an independent investigator will try to gain an objective understanding of all the facts. If the report is found to be substantiated, the person who is the alleged abuser, if still a member of the Province, will be placed on a Safety Plan. This rigorous relapse prevention program provides appropriate psychological treatment designed by professionals specifically for offenders and entails monitoring and supervision for the rest of the member's life. If the member who is accused has left the Carmelites, the Province will take appropriate allowable steps to ensure the safety of the community where the person may be living or working.

In cases involving substantiated inappropriate interventions, there still will be a plan put in place to help member commit again to fully ethical behavior.

The Carmelite Commitment

We Carmelites are very concerned for anyone who may have experienced any form of sexual misconduct by a member of the Carmelite Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary. We pledge to offer pastoral, spiritual and concrete support to anyone and their families who have experienced such. As appropriate, we will take other steps such as initiating internal corrective actions. Our goal is to bring healing and hope to anyone who has experienced sexual misconduct.

We Carmelites have made a commitment to preventing sexual misconduct, especially the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. By establishing boundaries for healthy ministry with minors and by maintaining a constructive fraternal vigilance, we have hoped to minimize, even obviate the possibility especially of sexual abuse. Such prevention begins with education and training, both during initial as well as the on-going formation for our members.

We Carmelites pledge our active cooperation and compliance with the appropriate civil authorities. All allegations of child sex abuse are to be reported immediately to the appropriate civil authorities by any member of the Carmelites witnessing such or receiving an allegation of such. Persons making such allegations will also be encouraged to make their concerns known to the police.

Role of the Victim Assistance Coordinator

To help with the healing of someone who has been the victim of sexual abuse, the Carmelite Director of Accountability and Ethical Ministry will engage a professional Victim Assistance Coordinator. The Victim Assistance Coordinator facilitates all communications between any alleged victim and the Province. Other responsibilities include offering support and professional resources to any alleged victim, his or her family, and other affected persons in the victim's network, assisting with referrals to therapists and other support groups. To make sure every alleged victim knows her/his rights, the Victim Assistance Coordinator listens empathetically to the concerns of each person who feels victimized.

How the Carmelite Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary Works to Prevent Sexual Abuse

In addition to establishing procedures for sexual misconduct, the Carmelites have undertaken a series of other measure to prevent such from happening. These include extensive mandatory psychological evaluation of seminarians and novices before they enter the community and continuing education programs for all members about issues of sexuality and personal conduct. By also establishing policies for healthy ministry with minors and by maintaining a constructive fraternal vigilance, we have hoped to minimize, even obviate the possibility especially of sexual abuse. Members are also encouraged to help people they work with in ministry to be able and ready to address abuse and sexual misconduct wherever it occurs.

Where To Turn For Help

If you or someone you know believes that a Carmelite of the PCM Province has violated the ethical standards suggested in this Guide, we urge you or that person to contact the Carmelite Director of Accountability and Ethical Ministry. Your call and follow-up case, if needed, will be handled with the strictest sensitivity and confidentiality.

Contact information

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