

USA Central and Southern Province of the Society of Jesus Guide for Individuals Who Report Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct

The USA Central and Southern Province of the Society of Jesus (Province) recognizes that sexual abuse of a person under the age of 18 or sexual misconduct with a person over the age of 18 by a member of a religious community is a profound violation of trust in human relationships. Sexual abuse and sexual misconduct can cause devastating pain for the victims and their families, the local parish and school communities of those involved, and the larger Catholic Church.

The Province is fully accredited by Praesidium, Inc., an organization that provides consultation, policy development and training materials for use in the prevention of and response to sexual abuse.

How the Province Responds to Allegations of Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct

The Province responds to all allegations of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct with great care and sensitivity. To ensure that the Province handles such allegations promptly, thoroughly, and compassionately, the Province has appointed a **Coordinator of Pastoral Support and Outreach**, Ms. Carol Zarinelli Brescia, MSW, LCSW, who will speak with you about the specifics of your allegation and attempt to answer any questions you might have. The Coordinator may offer, out of charitable concern, pastoral care and pastoral assistance to those affected by sexual abuse or sexual misconduct; this may include an offer of psychological counseling, if appropriate. She will help you find a qualified therapist if you need assistance in identifying a therapist. The Coordinator will be your main contact with the Province throughout the process, though others may also contact you when necessary.

Allegations of sexual abuse of a person who is currently a minor are required by law to be reported, and the Province will immediately make a report to the appropriate state or local law enforcement agency. The Province will also report an allegation of past sexual abuse of a minor even if the alleged victim is now an adult, unless the person accused of abuse is known to be deceased. Similar action will be taken if an allegation is received that a vulnerable adult was sexually abused.

The Province has also appointed a **Director of Safe Environment and Professional Conduct**, Deacon Phil Hengen, MSW, LCSW, to assist in reviewing all reports of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by a member or former member of the Province. The Director will also assist in conducting an internal investigation. In all cases, the Province strives to provide a prompt response to evaluate any allegation of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by a member.

The Province has established a **Review Board** to review allegations of sexual abuse of minors. The Review Board is comprised of a majority of lay men and women from various disciplines. The Review Board reviews the information provided by you and others, as well as the results of any investigation conducted, and then makes recommendations to the Provincial concerning the appropriate action that should be taken.

After the Review Board's recommendations have been presented to the Provincial, he will make final decisions about how the Province will respond to your situation and will also determine whether restrictions are appropriate for the accused.

Throughout the process, the Province will strive to work with you in a compassionate and sensitive manner and will strive to limit sharing information to those in the Province who have a need to know, and/or with the appropriate state or local law enforcement agency.

Finally, the Province reminds you that, at any time, you are encouraged to contact law enforcement.

Contact Information

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