

How the Midwest Province of Brothers of the Congregation of Holy Cross Responds to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Persons

Safe Environment

The Congregation of Holy Cross, Midwest Province of Brothers, is committed to the protection of children and young people and is contracted with *Praesidium, Inc.*, for the purpose of accreditation and training. We follow the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, sometimes referred to as the “Dallas Charter.”

The Midwest Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross responds to all allegations of sexual misconduct. To ensure that the Province reacts to each instance promptly, thoroughly and compassionately, the Provincial Superior has appointed the Provincial Vicar as the Victim Assistance Coordinator for the Province. The Victim Assistance Coordinator will respond promptly and pastorally to listen, understand and offer assistance (including appropriate psychological counseling) for those affected by a brother’s misconduct.

The Midwest Province, through the Victim Assistance Coordinator and independent investigators, will respond swiftly to evaluate and investigate any accusation of misconduct by a brother. If the conduct involves a minor or vulnerable adult, the Midwest Province will follow the protocols for *Responding to Allegations of Sexual Abuse*, including reporting it to local authorities.

The Midwest Province, consistent with the directives of the Catholic Bishops’ *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, has established a Midwest Province Review Board, an interdisciplinary board of lay professionals, to advise the Provincial Superior on all matters related to the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable persons.

Any brother who has engaged in the sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable person will be removed from public ministry. He will be provided appropriate psychological treatment and risk assessment specific for sexual offenders and a rigorous relapse prevention plan. Following risk assessment, the Provincial Superior, the Victim Assistance Coordinator, the Review Board, legal counsel and others as appropriate, will determine which future actions need to be taken with the brother ranging from internal ministry and supervision for the rest of his life to the seeking of the dispensation of canonical vows.

Preventing Sexual Misconduct

In addition to establishing procedures for responding to sexual misconduct, the Midwest Province has undertaken a series of measures to prevent incidents of abuse which include extensive mandatory psychological evaluation of candidates before they enter

formation and the provision of continuing educational programs for brothers about issues of sexuality and personal conduct. The Midwest Province educates its members regarding the prevalence, identification and prevention of the abuse of minors and vulnerable persons, giving special attention to topics relevant to religious.

Information for Those Who Make Allegations

We have committed ourselves to treat all persons with safety and respect, and will take seriously any reports of inappropriate behavior on the part of our members. On behalf of all our members, we are truly sorry for your suffering at this time, and glad you have come forward, so we can help heal this situation. As we begin this process, we would like to suggest – and are willing to pay for – any counseling or therapy that you feel would be helpful during this period.

As this may be a confusing time for you, we wanted you to know the other things we will do as a result of your report. In some of the following actions we are bound by civil law. Other things we do are as a result of our own Province policy. In any of these actions, we will respect your confidentiality as much as possible. If you have a question about any of these actions, please ask us!

- The community member will be notified immediately that a report has been made alleging maltreatment. While he will be told the nature of the allegation, your privacy will be respected.
- Civil authorities will be notified of the report within 48 hours, unless you, as an adult, specifically request that no notification be made. To make these reports, we will need a lot of specific information from you regarding the incident.
- If civil authorities decide to conduct an investigation of their own, the Province will comply fully with their investigation. They will also need information from you regarding the incident.
- The members of the Province leadership team, the Province Response / Safety Team, and the Director of the ministry in which the accused Province Member works, will be notified immediately that a report has been made, and the community member will be removed from the ministry, and moved to a location where others will be safe, until a full investigation can be made.
- The Province will choose an Investigator and begin an investigation into the specifics of this report.

- An independent, confidential Review Board, who will not know any identifying information about you, will always review all the actions taken on your behalf, and give advice to Province leadership about what to do.
- You will be informed by the Provincial about the full results of any investigations into the incident, and the resulting permanent decisions which are made regarding the community member. In cases where an allegation is substantiated, the accused Brother will not return to public ministry.

Conclusion

Brothers of Holy Cross must maintain appropriate boundaries in order to preserve the integrity of the ministerial relationship; moreover, we call upon those with knowledge of a brother's inappropriate behavior, whether past or present, to come forward with the information so innocent victims may be spared further harm.

Where to Turn for Help

Any victimization of a minor or vulnerable person should be reported to law enforcement immediately. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by a member of Holy Cross, please contact the Midwest Province's Victim Assistance Coordinator, Br. Chester Freel, CSC, at (574) 226-9027 or cfreel@brothersofholycross.com.

Prayer for Healing

*God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.*

*Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind and spirit*

by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

*Hear our cries as we agonize
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.*

*Breathe wisdom into our prayers,
soothe restless hearts with hope,
steady shaken spirits with faith:
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.*

*Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform our brokenness.
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice
and find peace in you.*

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen
(Source: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops)