

The Congregation of the Mission (the “Vincentians”), consistent with the directives of the Catholic Bishops’ *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, are subject to a multi-state, independent review board. This interdisciplinary board of lay professionals advises the Vincentians on all matters related to sexual abuse and other sexual misconduct.

The Vincentians recognize that sexual abuse and other sexual misconduct by Vincentians can have devastating consequences for victims and their families. We are aware of the effects of this tragic behavior and are steadfastly committed to helping those affected.

This Guide provides information regarding:

1. Some of the forms of sexual abuse or other sexual misconduct that can occur within ministerial relationships.
2. What our procedures are for responding to complaints of such behavior.
3. Who victims can turn to for help.

SEXUAL ABUSE OR OTHER SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN A MINISTERIAL RELATIONSHIP

A ministerial relationship is one in which a person receives pastoral care from priests, brothers, sisters, spiritual directors, and pastoral counselors, among other church personnel.

Sexual abuse generally includes sexual contact: between an adult and a minor,

sexual contact with a vulnerable individual or someone incapable of giving consent because of mental or physical incapacity, or sexual contact involving physical compulsion or violence.

Sexual abuse or other sexual misconduct can take place in a ministerial relationship in many different ways, including actions such as:

- Touching or other physical contact or conduct that is non-consensual or makes the person being touched or interacted with feel uncomfortable
- Sexual intercourse, anal, or oral sex
- A prolonged hug when a brief hug is customary behavior
- Kissing on the lips when a kiss on the cheek would be appropriate
- Showing sexually suggestive objects or pornography
- Giving an inappropriate gift

Such conduct can also involve verbal behavior including:

- Innuendo or sexual talk
- Suggestive comments
- Descriptions of sexual experiences or fantasies
- Sexual propositions

Any form of sexual abuse or other sexual misconduct by a Vincentian or other employee, or volunteer is contrary to Catholic morals, doctrine, and canon law.

It is entirely the responsibility of the Vincentian to maintain appropriate emotional and sexual boundaries with those whom he works and serves.

HOW VINCENTIANS RESPOND TO COMPLAINTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND MISCONDUCT

Vincentians respond to all allegations of sexual abuse and other sexual misconduct with great care. To ensure that we handle each instance promptly, thoroughly, and compassionately, the Vincentians have appointed a lay professional to serve as the Victim Assistance Coordinator. The Coordinator will listen to and offer help, including appropriate psychological counseling for those affected by any such misconduct.

The Vincentians, through the Victim Assistance Coordinator or independent investigators, will respond swiftly to evaluate and investigate any accusation of sexual abuse or other sexual misconduct by a Vincentian.

The Vincentians report allegations of criminal misconduct, including sexual abuse of minors, to criminal authorities and cooperate with the investigation of such allegations.

A Vincentian who has engaged in the sexual abuse of a minor will be permanently removed from public ministry and will be subject to a Safety Plan. This plan will include appropriate psychological treatment designed by professionals, specifically for offenders, and entails ongoing monitoring and supervision for the rest of his life in the community.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

In addition to establishing procedures for responding to complaints of sexual abuse and other sexual misconduct, the Vincentians have undertaken a series of measures to prevent future incidents. These include background checks, extensive, mandatory psychological evaluation of seminarians and novices before they enter the community, safe environment training, and continuing education programs for Vincentians about issues of sexuality and personal conduct.

WHERE TO TURN FOR HELP

If you, or someone you know, believe that a Vincentian has violated the boundaries outlined in this brochure, we urge you to report such behavior immediately to the Provincial, and/or the Victim Assistance Coordinator. Your case will be handled with the strictest sensitivity and privacy.

TOGETHER TO PROTECT

Vincentians must maintain appropriate boundaries with laypersons in order to preserve the integrity of the ministerial relationship. We call upon those with knowledge of a Vincentian's inappropriate behavior – whether past or present – to come forward with this information so that innocent victims may be spared from further harm. In short, we ask everyone to join with us to protect the safety of children, women, and men, and with firm determination, to promote healing where there is pain.

TO REPORT ABUSE, CALL THE VICTIM ASSISTANCE

COORDINATOR:

Tel: (443) 370-6357

MAILING ADDRESS:

**Provincial Office
500 E. Chelten Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19144**

Every victim/survivor has the right to inform the appropriate authorities and should do so.



www.praesidiuminc.com

Praesidium's mission is to create and maintain Safe Environments for children, the elderly and vulnerable adults. Praesidium accreditation assures that the Vincentians of the Eastern Province regularly engage in training and evaluation in order to maintain Safe Environments for those they serve.

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A Guide for Victims / Survivors of Sexual Abuse



Congregation of the Mission Eastern Province

www.VincentiansUSA.org