

CREATION OF SAFER ENVIRONMENTS

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION IN CASES OF ABUSE

POLICIES
AND
PROCEDURES





Handmaids
of the Sacred Heart
of Jesus

Approved *ad experimentum* for two years, by the Superior General

Curia General

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Preliminary Matters

1. The Call of the Church and the Commitment of the Congregation

“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did to one of these least brothers of mine, you did to me.” “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”¹

The Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus feel constantly called to contemplate the Mercy of the Heart of Jesus, which is tenderness in the presence of the fragile, compassion in the presence of suffering, and forgiveness in the presence of sin, the way of encounter and of reconciliation. We ask ourselves, What faces and situation most move the Heart of Jesus to mercy today? How can we respond as Jesus would? The cry of suffering humanity must become in us a force that breaks through indifference, that takes us of our self love, will and interest, in order to embark on the path of a greater commitment in the following of Jesus, by means of the care of all and especially the protection of children, adolescents and vulnerable adults, as sisters in the service of justice.²

We know that the global abuse crisis in the heart of the Church continues to manifest itself today as a wound for the ecclesial community and a tragedy for the victims of these crimes. In spite of the insistent calls of the three recent Popes – which we document in the footnotes on this page³ --for the collaboration of all, still there is much to do in the reporting of criminal acts, the commitment to the search for the truth and the fulfillment of justice, the care to, as far as possible, repair the damage to the victims, and in the creation of safe and secure environments for an effective protection of minors and vulnerable adults. We want to get involved, following the guidance that the church offers us, without “lowering our arms” and without losing the goal of “never again!”

1 Mt. 25: 40; Mt. 19: 14.

2 Cf. Call of GENERAL CONGREGATION XX, pp. 44-45.

3 JOHN PAUL II: Discourse to the Roman Rota, February 17, 1979, n. 3; Letter in the form of a *motu proprio* “*Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*,” April 30, 2001; Letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church and to other ordinaries and hierarchies on the most grave offenses reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 18, 2001; Address at the inter-dicasteral meeting with the cardinals of the United States, April 23, 2002.

BENEDICT XVI: Discourse to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Ireland at the “*Ad Limina Visit*”, October 28, 2006; Homily at the Eucharist with the Australian Bishops in Sydney, on the occasion of the XXIII World Youth Day on July 19, 2008; the Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland, March 19, 2010; Homily at the conclusion of the Year for Priests, June 11, 2010; CDF, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church and the other Ordinaries and Hierarchies concerned on the Modifications introduced in the Apostolic Letter *Motu proprio* SST, May 21, 2010.

FRANCIS: Homily at the Holy Mass in the chapel of Casa Santa Marta with some victims of clerical sexual abuse, July 7, 2014; Chirograph for the institution of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, March 22, 2014; Letter to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences and to the Superiors of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life about the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, February 2, 2015; Discourse during his meeting with victims of sexual abuse, September 27, 2015; Apostolic Letter in the form of a *motu proprio* (in Italian) “*Come una madre amorevole*”, June 4, 2016; Letter to the Bishops on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28, 2016; Discourse to the members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, September 21, 2017; Carta al Pueblo de Dios que peregrina en Chile, May 31, 2018; Letter to the People of God, August 20, 2018; Discourse at the end of the Eucharistic celebration in the Meeting “The Protection of Minors in the Church” February 24, 2019; Apostolic letter in the form of a *motu proprio*, “You are the light of the world,” May 7, 2019; Rescript which offers some modifications to the “Norms of the most serious offenses,” December 17, 2019; Rescript which promulgates the Instruction about confidentiality in cases, December 17, 2019.

This task of protection and care of the weakest and most defenseless is the mission of the entire Church, but must be carried out especially by the shepherds. Therefore, the ordinaries in the Church, that is, the bishops of dioceses and eparchies (all the bishops of the 22 Eastern Catholic Churches), their vicars, and the major superiors of religious institutes and the clerical societies of apostolic life of pontifical right, “must employ a special diligence in the protection of the weakest among the persons entrusted to them.”⁴

Pope Francis follows the line marked out by his predecessors⁵ condemning all abusive behavior, indicating new legal measures to combat all forms of abuse of minors and vulnerable persons in the Church. Specifically, if Church Law already provided for the possibility of removal from ecclesiastical office for a grave reason, Pope Francis wanted to indicate that negligence in the management of accusations of abuse of minors and vulnerable persons constitutes a clear premise of grounds for removal from office.⁶

In 2016, in his apostolic letter in the form of a *motu proprio* *Like a Loving Mother*,⁷ Pope Francis stated:

“The Church loves all her children like a loving mother, but cares for all and protects with a special affection those who are smallest and defenseless. This is the duty that Christ himself entrusted to the entire Christian community as a whole. Aware of this, the Church is especially vigilant in protecting children and vulnerable adults.”

And in 2018, in a letter addressed *To the People of God*⁸ he let us see his understanding of the pain inflicted upon the victims of abuse and he asked for the cooperation of all in order to eradicate this evil:

“Even though it can be said that most of these cases belong to the past, nonetheless as time goes on we have come to know the pain of many of the victims. We have realized that these wounds never disappear and that they require us forcefully to condemn these atrocities and join forces in uprooting this culture of death; these wounds never go away. [...] The extent and the gravity of all that has happened requires coming to grips with this reality in a comprehensive and communal way.”

In 2019 he again addressed all the faithful in the letter *You are the Light of the World*⁹ indicating very clearly that crimes of sexual abuse:

- Offend the Lord
- Cause physical, psychological and spiritual harm to the victims
- Harm the community of the faithful.

“In order that these phenomena, in all their forms, never happen again, a continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and effective actions that

4 FRANCIS, Apostolic letter in the form of a *motu proprio* (in Italian) “*Come una madre amorevole*,” June, 2016.

5 JOHN PAUL II, *motu proprio* *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, April 30, 2001. Revised by BENEDICT XVI, *Normae de delictis Congregationi pro Doctrina Fidei reservatis seu Normae de delictis contra fidem nec non de gravioribus delictis*, May 21, 2010.

6 FRANCIS, “*Come una madre amorevole*,” op. cit.

7 FRANCIS, *ibid.*

8 FRANCIS, *Letter to the People of God*, August 20, 2018.

9 FRANCIS, Apostolic letter in the form of a *motu proprio* *Vos estis lux mundi*, May 7, 2019.

involve everyone in the Church, so that personal sanctity and moral commitment can contribute to promoting the full credibility of the Gospel message and the effectiveness of the Church's mission. [...] This responsibility falls, above all, on the successors of the Apostles, chosen by God to be pastoral leaders of his People" [...] And Francis adds, "What more closely concerns the successors of the Apostles concerns all those who, in various ways, assume ministries in the Church, or profess the evangelical counsels, or are called to serve the Christian People. Therefore, it is good that procedures be universally adopted to prevent and combat these crimes that betray the trust of the faithful. [...] I desire that this commitment be implemented in a fully ecclesial manner."¹⁰

Along the lines of the directives given by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors,¹¹ the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, involving all of its collaborators, declares its commitment to:

- The care of all the persons whom we serve in different ministries, especially the education and protection of minors and vulnerable adults, holding as a supreme value their dignity and best interests, as an integral part of the mission which the Church entrusts to us
- The creation of a culture of care, by means of the establishment of communities with an environment that is welcoming and safe, that is loving and respectful, with the end of promoting the well-being and physical, emotional, social and spiritual development of minors and vulnerable adults, and of avoiding all kinds of malpractice contrary to the Gospel and to the care of those who are weakest.

The Congregation will do this by means of:

- The careful selection and formation of the workers in their human and/or spiritual ministries, whether they be Handmaids or laypersons, employees or regular volunteers, in a logic/mentality of responsibility, professionalism, and growth of all,
- The training of its workers by means of programs of ongoing formation that include specific modules on sexual abuse, its effects on the lives of the victims, on their families and communities, and the creation of healthy and safe environments,
- Attention and timely and adequate response to the suspicions and accusations that arise, whether they refer to acts within or outside our communities and apostolic works,
- A clear option for the victims, to whom, following the guidelines of Pope Francis, will be offered listening, psychological and spiritual accompaniment, and the necessary support, availing ourselves of experts in these matters,¹²
- The accompaniment of the Sisters accused of any bad practice, offering them assistance and pastoral support, in the conscientious and transparent compliance with civil and canonical legislation, in each place,
- Public notification to the relevant entities of the accusations and the result of the investigations,
- Continued improvement of good practices in the work with minors and vulnerable adults, involving the participation of the same and the collaboration with associated institutions.

¹⁰ FRANCIS, *ibid.*

¹¹ Cf. Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, *Guidelines Template*, September, 2016.

¹² FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter in the form of a *motu proprio*, *Vos estis lux mundi*, Article 5, Care for Persons, Discourse at the end of the Eucharistic Concelebration in the Meeting "*The protection of minors in the Church*", point 5, Vatican, February 24, 2019.

As Pope Francis tells us:

“The ‘never again’ to the culture of abuse and the system of cover up that allows it to be perpetuated demands working among everyone in order to generate a culture of care which permeates our ways of relating, praying, thinking, of living authority; our customs and languages and our relationship with power and money. We know today that the best thing we can say in face of the pain caused is a commitment to personal, communal, and social conversion that learns to listen to and care for especially the most vulnerable. [...] We have to promote this as a Church and to seek with humility all the actors that make up the social reality and promote ways of dialogue and constructive confrontation to move toward a culture of care and protection.”¹³

The Congregation wants to create the necessary structures for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults entrusted to its care and responsibility, committing to a work of prevention that will avoid abuse. Rooted in the conviction of the worth and dignity of each person created in the image and likeness of God, it commits itself, with this document, to struggle against all forms of sexual abuse, physical mistreatment, psychological violence, abuse of power or of conscience, or any other type of threat, particularly to minors or vulnerable adults in its communities or apostolic works.

2. Declaration of Principles¹⁴

The Institute, in accord with the values that guide it, declares that the principles that have to guide its action in any of its circumscriptions in cases of abuse on the part of Sisters, priests, or staff, whether employed or volunteer, are the following:

1. To make the abused person the focus of our intervention, with special commitment to giving “priority to the victims of abuse in every sense.”¹⁵ “Priority must not be given to any other kind of concern, whatever its nature, such as the desire to avoid scandal, since there is absolutely no place in ministry for those who abuse minors.”¹⁶
2. To commit ourselves to a culture of transparency, of respect and of responsibility.
3. To cooperate with society and the civil authorities, following the legislation of each country, in order to comply with the law and justice.

¹³ FRANCIS, *letter to the Pilgrim People of God in Chile*, May 31, 2018.

¹⁴ Cf. CONFERRE, *Normas y Procedimientos en caso de acusaciones de cualquier naturaleza en materia eclesiástica contra religiosos y religiosas*, 2015; UISG – *Metodología para el vademécum del Instituto sobre casos de abuso sexual*.

¹⁵ FRANCIS, Address at the end of the Eucharistic celebration of the Meeting for “*The protection of minors in the Church*”, point 1, Vatican, February 24, 2019.

¹⁶ FRANCIS, Letter to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences and Superiors of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life concerning the *Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors*, February, 2015.

3. The Document

This document consists of four parts:

- **First Part** – Policy for Prevention of abuse of minors and vulnerable adults

It includes the following topics: elements of prevention, the importance of offering formation and adequate training on this topic to the Sisters, to our employees and volunteers, to the persons at risk – minors and vulnerable adults, -- and the creation of healthy and safe environments, spatial as well as relational.

- This policy is binding on all the sisters, employees and volunteers.

- **Second Part** – Method of proceeding in regard to minors and vulnerable adults.

It deals with a Code of Conduct that aims to avoid improper conduct open to adaptations and specifications in different geographical and cultural contexts.

- What is established in this Way of Proceeding is equally binding on the sisters and employed staff or volunteers.

- **Third Part** – Policy for Intervention in case of an accusation.

This policy develops the procedures to follow from the reception of an accusation of abuse on the part of a sister until the conclusion of the process.

- This policy is only for Sisters.

- **Fourth Part** – Appendices

In this section there are supporting documents as a resource of (in)formation about sexual abuse and the abusive system, its dynamic, typical characteristics of abusers and of victims, consequences of sexual abuse for the victims and the role of “Bystanders” in the prevention of abuse. Possible practical resources to use in activities with children, adolescents and vulnerable adults and in modules of formation for Sisters and staff; samples of press releases; formats for interviews (accusation/report); lists of contents for modules of formation, examples of pedagogical experience in prevention; examples of abusive behavior toward minors and vulnerable adults.

This document will be published and promulgated in Spanish and English.

It is approved *ad experimentum* since it will be applied for the first time in the Congregation. Its implementation will be evaluated within two years and at successive intervals. In doing so we will aim to correct, adapt or improve what practice shows to be necessary and to incorporate any changes that the Church may recommend in this area.

4. Recipients and Scope of the Application of the Policies

Each apostolic work of the Congregation is to have its own policy of action in the case of abuse, which affects its employed and volunteer staff. Said policy will keep in mind the prescriptions of the civil legislation of each country.

In this document, the application of the Policy for prevention and the Code of conduct has as its recipients:

- All the sisters members of the Institute (professed of perpetual and temporary vows), in any place where we live and carry out our mission.
- The young women in the different stages of formation: candidates, aspirants/pre-postulants, postulants, novices, who are not yet full members of the Institute.
- All the laity who collaborate with us whether they be employed or volunteers, in the different works.

Regarding the application of the Policy for action, this is addressed to the professed sisters of perpetual and temporary vows in the entire Institute.

- If it is a matter of abuse by a lay worker or volunteer, the disciplinary procedure (for example, with a dismissal, or serious work-related sanction), according to the civil legislation of each country; and depending on the gravity of the act – if it is sexual abuse, or abuse of conscience or of power, or merely lack of compliance with the norms established in the Code of Conduct – with minors or vulnerable adults, one must ascertain whether there is a mandate to inform the civil authorities.¹⁷
And if it is a matter of young women in stages of formation prior to first vows, as they are still not members of the institute or considered religious, besides evaluating whether or not to report them to the civil authorities, we will break the bond that exists with them.

N.B. The priests who collaborate with us in pastoral activities, celebration and administration of the sacraments, must know the policy and respect it, but they will be bound by the diocesan policies or the policies of the congregation to which they belong.

5. Doctrinal Framework. Charism¹⁸

Our Congregation places in the center of its life and mission the Love that it receives from the pierced Heart of Jesus. Each of us desires to respond to that Love, manifested in the mystery of the Eucharist, by surrendering to him our entire life, so that, like Him, we can *become bread that is broken and shared, bread that gives itself in order to give Life*.

The Eucharist, the root of the Institute, lived, celebrated and adored, moves us to profound reconciliation with ourselves, with others, with creation and with God.

In the presence of our broken world, the multiple forms of violence and suffering, gratuitously provoked in alienating and superficial relationships; in the presence of the tremendous loneliness, sadness and disillusion of those who think that they are worth nothing because that is what they have been led to believe... we must collaborate with Him, through Him and in Him in his project of universal Reparation.

¹⁷ For example in the case of adults or of adults who were abused when they were minors, (but who are no longer minors) only they can file an accusation.

¹⁸ Adapted from CONSTITUTIONS, nn. 2 and 3. 1983, and from GC XX, Document *In the Heart of Him whom they have pierced we contemplate Mercy*, pp. 44-48.

As we contemplate the open Heart of Jesus, his Mercy reaches out to us, and we perceive *his tenderness in the presence of fragility, his compassion in the presence of suffering, his forgiveness in the presence of sin, how he wants to lead us by a way of true encounter and profound reconciliation.*

Knowing that we are called to show forth mercy, we want to live with a new way of relating:

- **From below:** as sisters, with humility, without imposing ourselves, without authority becoming a factor that places us “above or a power that limits or belittles. We place ourselves on a lower level, in order to relate from there, keeping always in mind the perspective of the victims.
- **From within:** sensitive, vulnerable, allowing ourselves to be affected, placing ourselves in the situation of the other person.
- **From up close:** being by their side, accompanying with simplicity, without overwhelming, allowing the space necessary so that the encounters may take place with respect and freedom.
- **From a spirituality of connection:** connection with ourselves, with other persons, with creation, with God, which leads us to recognize that everything is connected, and that we have to take care of relationships and restore that which are broken, for each one has a repercussion on the Body as a whole
- **From our identity as educators.** The first Handmaids left us a characteristic manner of educating: the Pedagogy of the Heart. Wherever we may be, we want it to be our way of life. It moves us to take care of persons in all their dimensions, in processes that are humanizing for all.

6. Definition of Terms

In order to facilitate an understanding of the terms used in this document, we set forth the following definitions of the same:

- **Minor:** in ecclesiastical legislation, it is a person under the age of eighteen, or who is considered by law to be the equivalent of a minor.¹⁹
- **Vulnerable adult:** any person in a state of illness, physical or psychological deficiency, old age or deprivation of personal freedom that, in fact, limits even occasionally his capacity to understand or to want, or in any case, to resist the offense.²⁰
- **Child pornography:** any representation of a minor, independently of the means used, involved in explicit sexual activities, real or simulated, and any representation of sexual organs of minors with predominately sexual ends.²¹

¹⁹ FRANCIS, *Vos estis lux mundi*, Article 1, n. 2

²⁰ Cfr. FRANCIS, *Ibid.*

²¹ FRANCIS, *Ibid.* (Source, CDN, in *Conceptual Clarity Definitions*, 2010 pg. 5.)

- **Child-youth Abuse:** is understood as all acts of physical, sexual or psychological violence, whether in the family group or in the social surroundings, committed against children or adolescents either regularly or occasionally.²²
- **Sexual violence:** is that which is produced when the victim is forced to perform or tolerate a sexual act.
- **Physical violence:** is the use of physical power directly aimed at breaking the will or overcoming the resistance of the subject toward the one who exercises it.
- **Psychological violence:** is verbal harassment sustained by means of insults, disparagement, ridicule, as well as indifference, implicit or explicit rejection of the minor, or the threat of future harm, exercised by a subject who abuses his/her authority in order to obtain what he/she wants.
- **Abuse of the inferior condition of the victim:** is an asymmetrical situation in which a subject, abusing the condition of inferiority of the victim, induces him/her to do what the subject wants, using him/her for the subject's own ends.
- **Sexual harassment:** Any unwanted sexual approach, request for sexual favors, conduct or action, verbal or physical, of a sexual nature, or any other behavior of a sexual nature which can reasonably be expected to cause offense or humiliation to the other person.²³
- **Seduction:** is the first phase of sexual abuse (it has other phases). In the phase of seduction, the abuser approaches the child gradually and progressively, not necessarily on the sexual level, but meeting with him, doing activities together (scholastic, entertaining, recreational, transporting, etc.) and progressively facilitating the contact, eroticizing the relationship, which initially is not genital; it can be touching, caresses, kisses. The aggressor seeks out situations, spaces and times in which he will not be encountered by other adults, manipulates the trust and dependence of the minor, and encourages the sexual activity as something normal, affectionate and enjoyable.²⁴
- **Sexting:** are messages or images with erotic content that are sent by means of mobile devices.²⁵
- **Grooming:** is the process by which an adult approaches and seduces a minor or a vulnerable adult, via the internet, in order to win his/her friendship and trust, with the end of abusing him/her sexually, involving him/her in the production of pornographic material or in prostitution.
- **Upskirting:** is a new term to describe the act of taking intrusive photographs, from underneath the skirt of a girl, adolescent or woman, without her permission and without her being aware of it. Usually it is done in public spaces or crowded places, so that the act may pass unperceived. In various countries this is already legally considered a sexual offense.

²² Cfr. UNICEF for Latin America and the Caribbean, *La violencia en la primera infancia*, 2017, pg. 5; *Maltrato Infantil en Chile*, Comparative study, May, 2015, pg. 8.

²³ ACNUR: *Glosario sobre Protección de la Infancia, Violencia Sexual y de Género y Terminología Relacionado*, pg. 13.

²⁴ SISTEMA NACIONAL PARA EL DESARROLLO INTEGRAL DE LA FAMILIA, *Protocolo para la Prevención de Abusos Sexuales en Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes*, Ciudad de México, October, 2017, pg. 78.

²⁵ Idem. Cit. Elena Laguarda, Regina Novelo, Ma. Fernanda Laguarda, *A un clic de distancia, Estrategias para abordar el tema de la pornografía con niños y adolescentes*. Ed. Urana, 2015.

- **Sexual abuse:** According to the most common understanding is *any approach of a sexual nature, between an adult and a child, adolescent or vulnerable adult, whether or not there is physical contact, with or without the use of force or intimidation.*²⁶

[See Appendix 1 – Child sexual abuse and its dynamic]

- **Abuse of power or authority:** This happens in a situation of asymmetry and taking advantage of one's position of dominance over the victim, with the purpose of fulfilling one's own interests. The abuse of authority is intimately related with the abuse of power. When there is abuse of authority, the person usually has a hierarchy of power recognized by all. The abuse of power can even manifest itself in acts of sexual abuse. All sexual abuse is an abuse of power.
- **Abuse of Conscience:** the processes of abuse not only take place on the psychic and physical level, but also on the most intimate level of the person, the conscience. Abusers can be experts in manipulating the freedom of thought, of action, the personal experience of his/her own self, the moral and profound dignity of the human being. This manipulation can happen on all levels, group or individual. This abuse of conscience is something that the abusers carry out as a predetermined experience, that is to say, calculated beforehand, not as something episodic, but systematic and repetitive. It consists of conquering, controlling and dominating the conscience of the victim. A conscience is considered manipulated when, while believing that it is functioning well or morally, it is, nevertheless, acting according to the interests and guidance of the manipulator. Abuse of conscience involves a loss of freedom, confusion and alienation from oneself and from experience with others: the power is given to another so that he/she decides instead of the victim.
- **Clericalism:** is a manifestation of the abuse of power that is at the root of the crisis of sexual abuse in the Church. It is characterized by a virtual identification of the sanctity and the grace of the Church with the clerical state, an erroneous belief that clerics form a special elite and, because of their power as sacramental ministers, they are superior to the laity, an authoritarian style of ministerial leadership in which the cleric holds a rigidly hierarchical view, concerning himself about protecting the private interests and privileges of the clergy in general.²⁷

²⁶ Sexual abuse acts are those such as: touching of the victim's genitals by the aggressor; touching of the abuser by the victim; touching of other parts of the body with sexual implications; exposition to the child of acts with sexual implications, such as: exhibiting genitals, carrying out the sexual act, masturbating, sexualizing language, showing pornography, using the child, adolescent or vulnerable adult in the development of pornographic material; violations such as the act of penetration: genital, anal or oral, with or without use of force or intimidation, etc.

²⁷ S. Nuala Kenny, O.C., M.D.: in UISG Conference *Safeguarding and a Theology of Childhood*, June 8, 2020, cit: Doyle TP. 2007: *Clericalism and Catholic Clergy Sexual Abuse*. In: Frawley-O'Dea MG & Goldner V, editors. *Predatory Priests, Silenced Victims: the Sexual Abuse Crisis and the Catholic Church*.

I. Policy for the Prevention of Abuse

7. Petition of Pope Francis

In August 2018, Pope Francis, addressing the People of God, said: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Cor 12:26). These words of Saint Paul forcefully echo in my heart as I acknowledge once more the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons. (...) Abuse is a crime that inflicts deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also in their family members and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike. Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults”.²⁸

8. Early Options for Prevention

Prevention, in the context of this document, is the possibility of fostering something positive – attitudes, healthy lifestyles, etc. – thus avoiding abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.

Three levels of Prevention can be identified:

- **Primary Prevention:** Is all intervention with the general population (parents, children, adolescents and vulnerable adults, professionals, etc.) that has as its purpose to cultivate positive relationships, of *Good Treatment*²⁹, in addition to increasing their knowledge and providing them training in self-defense. It is done before abuse happens, avoiding its occurrence and fostering detection of risk. It is the most effective work of prevention since – if successful – it would reduce the incidence of cases of abuse.³⁰
- **Secondary Prevention:** This deals with avoiding the occurrence of new cases of abuse, through the early and timely detection, attending to these aspects:
 - Orientation and accompaniment of children, adolescents and vulnerable adults.
 - Processes of risk assessment
 - Early disclosure of the incident
 - Immediate attention in the face of suspicion and accusation
 - Referral for psychological attention for the victim, the family and the abuser.³¹

²⁸ FRANCIS, *Letter to the People of God*, August 20, 2018, Introduction, pg. 1.

²⁹ The original expression in Spanish *Buen Trato*, has developed into a concept very much used as a tool in texts and presentations (seminars, workshops, etc.) about Prevention of Abuse. It could be translated as *Good or Respectful Treatment*, meaning a way of relating to others marked by a genuine consideration for the other person.

³⁰ Save the Children, *Manual de Formación para Profesionales*, Spain, 2001, p. 94.

³¹ In this field one works, especially, with what are called “at-risk populations,” persons who, because of their characteristics or circumstances, are exposed to greater risk of suffering abuse. Every child is at risk of suffering abuse, but in the case of minors belonging to specific groups, the risk increases: institutionalized children, those with physical or psychiatric disabilities, children of young women, in situations of poverty, those who live in broken families, those who live in families where there have been previous incidents of abuse. Studies show that these populations have more probability of suffering sexual abuse, which does not necessarily mean that this is going to happen. Cf. Save the Children, *Manual de Formación para Profesionales*, Spain, 2001, p. 94.

- **Tertiary Prevention:** This is considered as that which stops the recurrence of abuse and deals with the consequences.³² After the abuse has already taken place, one works with the victim – so that he does not suffer it again, offering him tips for self-defense, in addition to the opportunity for treatment and effective rehabilitation – as well as with the aggressor, in order to avoid a recurrence, and also with the community affected by what has happened.

Our communities and works must become aware of the necessity of increasing the resources directed to programs for prevention at each level.

- **Minimum institutional framework:** In order to implement the practices of prevention, it will be necessary for the Major Superior to appoint someone in charge of prevention at the circumscription level. In those places where we work with minors and/or vulnerable adults, a Sister or a layperson can be appointed as the one in charge at the local level in that place, in communication with and depending on the one in charge at the circumscription level.
- **The tasks of the one in charge of in the circumscription:**
 - Prepare, implement, supervise and evaluate the compliance with the programs³³ and proposed objectives at the circumscription and local levels, in the places where we work with minors and vulnerable adults;
 - Record the documentation concerning her task of prevention;
 - Disseminate and communicate, internally and externally, the programs for prevention;
 - Maintain contact with other similar organizations in civil society and in the Church, with whom she can network, or sign policies of collaboration.

[See Appendix 2 – Primary Prevention Program with minors and vulnerable adults]

9. Elements of Prevention

We present four major areas in which we focus on the prevention of abuse:

- Incorporation - Safe Recruitment
- Formation and training
- Promoting of Healthy and Safe Environments, in the physical spaces as well as in relationships
- Working on raising awareness and on involvement so that all of us may be “active Bystanders”.

9.1. Incorporation - Safe Recruitment

Pope St. John Paul II stated “there is no place in the priesthood and religious life for those who would harm the young.”³⁴ Bishops and Religious Superiors have “a specific responsibility for assuring a proper discernment of vocations.”(CDF Circular Letter 2011)

³² Ibid, pp. 94-95.

³³ The National System for the Integral Development of the Family in its *Protocolo para la Prevención del Abuso Sexual en Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes*, Mexico City, 2017, pp 54-68, proposes a very comprehensive program of Primary and Secondary Prevention that could serve as a guide. Moreover, we provide in an appendix a possible list of contents for a program of Primary Prevention.

³⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the Cardinals of the United States*, April 23, 2002.

The prevention of abuse demands a clear responsibility to have sufficient knowledge of the person who seeks to enter the Congregation or to work for it, as employed staff or as a volunteer, and to ensure such procedures as verification of identity, investigation of prior criminal records by checking with the police or other equivalent agency, interviews and evaluations, and contact with persons who can give references or make recommendations.

9.2 Formation and training

Repeatedly Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have brought to our attention the importance of taking care of the formation of the candidates to the priesthood and the consecrated life, of priests and professed religious.

“This formation encompasses the whole person, called to grow in virtue, in respect for justice, in courteous treatment, in keeping one’s word, in fraternal service and in the capacity to work with others. (...) Thanks to human formation it is possible to build the personality. It is a process that follows a broad arc of life in which the person recognizes herself as such and, by means of education, acquires certain virtues and the capacity that will permit her to live out essential relationships: with herself, with others, with nature and with God. The model to follow is Jesus, his life, his virtues, his meekness, his way of relating.”³⁵

At various times the Church has insisted upon the need for formation:

- In 2012, at the request of Pope Benedict XVI the first International Symposium on Sexual Abuse was organized, where there was an insistence on the need for a good basic human formation for seminarians, and by extension, for religious in formation.³⁶
- In 2015, Pope Francis, addressing Formators of Consecrated Life, stated: *the quantitative reduction necessitates even more the task of formation*.³⁷
- In 2019 in the Meeting on “The protection of minors in the Church” which brought together the major leaders of the Church, he again reinforced the necessity of screening and of strengthening the formation of candidates to the priesthood.³⁸ (This can be applied also to non-ordained religious.)

Therefore, it is the obligation of the major superiors of each circumscription to provide: systematic instruction and programs of ongoing formation to the religious and to all the employees and volunteers, which includes formation about sexual abuse, inculcating respectful ways of relating with others, making them aware of inappropriate behaviors, and explaining how to deal with abusive persons and situations.

³⁵ Angela Rinaldi, *Abuso sexual de menores y corrupción estructural*, in Tolerancia Cero, p. 25.

³⁶ Stephen Rossetti, in *Aprender de nuestros errores: Cómo abordar de manera eficaz el problema del abuso sexual a menores*, in the International Symposium, “Hacia la curación y la reparación,” Rome, 2012, pp. 12-13.

³⁷ FRANCIS, Address to the participants in the Meeting for Formators of Consecrated Men and Women, Rome, 2015.

³⁸ FRANCIS, Discourse nn. 3 and 4, Meeting “The Protection of Minors in the Church,” Rome, 2019.

9.2.1 Initial and Ongoing Formation in the Institute

*Since the beginning of the Congregation our Foundresses sought the best way to form the young women who entered the Institute. Today we continue to be motivated by the challenge of the formation of future Handmaids, with criteria that guarantee the unity of the whole Body and supported by instruments that give agility and depth to formation*³⁹.

The new document “Formation for the Mission” aims to respond to the needs of the world and of young women today. We form from the Eucharist, which “is the life of the Institute just as the root is the life of the tree,”⁴⁰ and we form for the mission, that is, in order to collaborate with the Spirit in his reparative action in the world.

Our formation is integral and integrating; it encompasses the whole person, taking, touching and attending to all her dimensions. It integrates into the charism, “the human, spiritual, doctrinal and apostolic aspects of our life, giving it the unity essential to the vocation of Handmaid of the Heart of Jesus.” (cf. Const. 80). Aware that the person is a mystery, formation must respond to the profound vitality that enlivens and gives meaning to life, combining spirituality and commitment, human relationships and encounter with God.

Although it is true that our plan of formation permits us, in the process that it creates, to strengthen those aspects that are essential for the prevention of abuse, we see the advisability of introducing in the different stages, modules of formation about the specific topic of abuse and its prevention.

Given the diversity of the circumstances, times and places of mission, this formation must be planned and imparted in each circumscription, work or community.

[See Appendix 3 – Modules of formation about the specific topic of abuse and its prevention]

9.2.2 Formation for Lay Collaborators

From the first days of our Institute, the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have considered education an essential part of our mission.⁴¹ (...) We educate in diverse contexts and in various ways, persons and groups of different ages and social conditions. We work in formal and informal educational centers, in our own institutions as well as in those of others. Moreover, our presence in other fields, such as spirituality, health care, social service and parish ministry, has an educational character.⁴²

The mission shared with the laity is developed within this framework of Education in the Faith, with a characteristic mode of being in mission, which gives us the Pedagogy of the Heart, a pedagogy which permeates **the guidelines and principles of our educational style.**⁴³

Moreover, we consider it necessary to offer to all our lay collaborators modules of formation and training for the prevention of different abusive situations. These modules will deal with the following topics:

³⁹ Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Document *Formation for the Mission*, Rome, 2020, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *Constitutions*, 4.

⁴¹ Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *Our Educational Style*, Rome 2017, p. 2.

⁴² Ibid, p. 6.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 4-29.

- *Prevention of abuse of power in its different forms: manipulation of conscience, abuse of authority, sexual abuse, economic abuse and others.*
- *Definition of sexual abuse of children, adolescents and vulnerable adults and its forms.*
- *The process of sexual abuse and its stages and phases.*
- *How to be an “active bystander” and learn to detect signs of danger.*
- *Characteristics of sexually abused children, adolescents and vulnerable adults.*
- *Characteristics of the sexual abuser and his/her behavior.*
- *Selection of victims and the strategies employed.*
- *Indicators of sexual abuse in children, adolescents and vulnerable adults.*
- *Short, medium and long-term consequences of sexual abuse on victims.*
- *Sexual abuse of children, adolescents and vulnerable adults by means of the internet and other information and communication technologies.*
- *Other forms of violence: physical, psychological and sexual assault of children, adolescents and vulnerable adults.*⁴⁴

N.B. This list does not exhaust the topic and it leaves to the person in charge of this formation in each place, who can add other topics that are considered appropriate about this matter, with the purpose of developing and maintaining the attitudes and habits that are necessary to act effectively in the protection of the beneficiaries of our mission, especially those who are most vulnerable.

9.2.3 Formation for at-risk groups: Children, adolescents and vulnerable adults, in the framework of our educational mission.⁴⁵

Experience in prevention of abuse emphasizes formation for at-risk groups, with the objective of making them aware of the danger and preparing them to react. This is becoming increasingly more necessary, obviously, adapting the contents to the ages, cultures and social and educational environments.

Based on the concept of “empowerment” and on the principles of assertiveness, the majority of these programs aim to fortify the child so that he may avoid abusive situations or increase resistance toward a potential abuser. Therefore, they give them basic knowledge about sexual abuse and teach them to protect themselves and to be careful; this should include in their programs the following topics:

- Basic concepts: my body is mine, private (or intimate) areas, good and bad touches, secrets, it is not your fault.
- Strategies of confrontation:
 - Stop the abuse; say NO, shout, escape
 - Disclose the abuse: seek help and tell a trusted adult, and if that person does not listen, look for another.

Given the diversity of the circumstances, times and places of mission, this formation must be planned and imparted in each circumscription, work or community.

⁴⁴ Cf. Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, *Protocolo para la Prevención del Abuso Sexual a Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes*, Ciudad de México, October, 2017, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁵ Cf. Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *Our Educational Style*. Rome, 2017.

[See Appendix 4 – Resources (videos and books) which explore the content mentioned, to work with Minors and Vulnerable adults in the prevention of abuse.]

[See Appendix 5 – Educational experiences for working with children and adolescents]

9.3 The Importance of Healthy and Safe Environments

In regard to the promotion of healthy and safe environments as an important factor for the decrease of violence and the prevention of abuse, we have to consider two aspects: the physical environment and the relationships, each different, but causally linked one with the other.

9.3.1 Physical spaces

We know from experience how much the space in which we live, study, or work can influence our emotions and relationships (with oneself, with others, with Nature and with God). There are surroundings that, by themselves, make us feel anxiety, fear, insecurity, irritation, aggressiveness... and others that, on the other hand, lead us to experience peace, joy, inner relaxation, security, appreciation for beauty, warmth, order, etc.

The measures that contribute to creating a safe environment are:

- To evaluate the physical spaces looking for “critical areas” that can favor violence (isolated, dark corners, closets... where someone could hide in order to do harm)
- To build and adapt educational facilities that allow for the needs of the children, of persons with disabilities or gender differences;
- To create environments that are safe (recreation rooms, patios, gardens, rooms, auditoriums, dressing rooms and bathrooms...), non-violent, inclusive and effective for all.

We must always take care and continue to improve, according to the possibilities of each place, the spaces for the children, adolescents and vulnerable adults, who have been entrusted to us so that they may feel safe.

9.3.2. Environments related to respectful treatment, cultivation of healthy and positive styles of interpersonal relationships.

When we begin any type of work of prevention in this area, it is necessary to maintain a positive focus. It is not possible to reduce the incidence of child abuse nor to alleviate its effects on the child if we do not promote patterns of appropriate *Good Treatment*. [...] Therefore, the approach to the work of prevention has evolved from the prevention of child abuse to the promotion of *Good Treatment* to all people, with the objective of providing some positive patterns/guides for relationship, generalizable to other areas of personal, professional and social life.

We present in an appendix examples of emotional abuse and of signs, symptoms and indicators of emotional abuse, with the objective of “educating the perception” so that these can be detected when they occur⁴⁶ and to understand better the importance and the necessity of *Good Treatment*.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Cf. PORTUGUESE PROVINCE OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS, Manual SPC: *Sistema de protección y cuidado de menores y adultos vulnerables*. June 10, 2018

⁴⁷ Cf. FUNDACIÓN SAVE THE CHILDREN, *Abuso sexual infantil: Manual de formación para profesionales*. 1st ed. Spain, November, 2001, pg. 83.

[See Appendix 6 – Mechanisms, definition, examples and emotional consequences of child abuse]

Good treatment is more than simple amiability or good manners. It is a style of relationship characterized by the profound consideration of the other person. It tries to provide some positive patterns of relationship in all areas of personal and social life.⁴⁸

- **The “pillars of *Good Treatment*” are:**

- ✓ Empathy
- ✓ Effective and friendly communication
- ✓ Affective bonding and interaction
- ✓ Recognition of each minor and vulnerable adult as a person and of his/her rights, expressed in actions, words and style of relating.
- ✓ Respect for the evolving development of each minor and vulnerable adult, expressed continually in the manner of treating him/her.
- ✓ Positive, non-violent resolution of conflicts. Reconciliation understood as processes that respect rhythms and limits of the minor and vulnerable adult.

The theory of *Good Treatment* indicates that a primary factor in the prevention of child sexual abuse is the creation of affective bonds between the adult and the child. This presupposes that adults (parents, teachers...) not only interact with the child, sharing time and providing learning experiences, but that they become affective role models, unique and irreplaceable, in such a way that what they do or do not do will in the future influence the development of the minor. They become a mirror, in which the child looks at himself and gradually forms his own image, his own identity.⁴⁹ Every adult person who relates with a child or vulnerable adult in the light of the paradigm of *Good Treatment* assumes the responsibility of his care, since he places the symmetry of the relationship at the service of the protection of the other, not of his own interests (as in the paradigm of abuse).

- **A program of promotion of *Good Treatment* includes:**

- ✓ Non-violence in personal, social and institutional relationships
- ✓ Respect for gender equality
- ✓ Respect for one's own body and that of others
- ✓ Strengthening of affective bonds
- ✓ Promotion of tolerance
- ✓ Priority of concern for the child
- ✓ The recognition and acceptance of the feelings that emerge in the relationship with others
- ✓ Participation in the community
- ✓ The recognition and promotion of the good that exists and happens in the others
- ✓ The strengthening of the community as a network of psychosocial support, as a training in personal relationships.

⁴⁸ Cf. Ibid, p. 83.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 84.

▪ **Along this line the Congregation:**

- ✓ Has concern for and desires to generate environments where modes of relationships that are approachable and respectful of the dignity of each person predominate.
- ✓ Promotes respect and recognition of the other, adopting measures when there is a transgression of the limits that the pastoral or work relationship entails.
- ✓ Endeavors to identify behavioral signs that reveal the existence of abuse of power and manipulation of conscience, taking measures when someone falls victim to such practices.
- ✓ Supervises so that every person, who lends his/her services in any of our houses, complies with the criteria of suitability in order to contribute to places that generate *Good Treatment* and avoid abuses of any kind.⁵⁰

9.4 The role of “Bystanders” in Prevention

When child sexual abuse occurs, those involved are not only the abuser and the victim, but also the “bystanders.” These are all those that know or are in a position to know about the sexual abuse that occurs in their surroundings. Nevertheless, often the “bystander” does not know, does not realize, does not want to see, does not give it importance, or is afraid. Therefore, it is important in the prevention of sexual abuse, to give formation to the “bystander” so that he/she can become a protector of the minor or vulnerable adult.⁵¹

Different ways of being “bystanders”:

1. There are bystanders that “don’t see”: they deny their own blindness, they do not know or do not realize, or unconsciously do not accept the “inconvenience” of being witnesses of the abuse and, therefore, they do nothing.
2. There are bystanders that “do not want to see” or listen; they deny the importance of the signs that could tell them what is happening. They avoid the horror without facing it.
3. There are bystanders that “see but do not act.” They acknowledge the horror, they realize what is happening but, due to fear, do not speak out. Often they too are victims of threats, of mistreatment or impossibility of acting.⁵²

All of these persons become part of the dynamic of abuse, through their ignorance, indifference or complicity.

The challenge will be to work so that all of us may be:

4. “Active bystanders,” that we may see and listen, that we may realize the signs, that we may understand what is happening and courageously speak out to denounce it, breaking the “law of silence,” interrupting the abuse and becoming protectors.⁵³

⁵⁰ Adapted from *Documento de Buenas Practicas para ambientes sanos y seguros en la Iglesia*, prepared by the CONSEJO NACIONAL DE PREVENCIÓN DE ABUSOS Y ACOMPAÑAMIENTO A VÍCTIMAS. Chile, 2018.

⁵¹ Cf. FUNDACIÓN PARA LA CONFIANZA, *Un mundo sin abuso*: paralaconfianza.org; *Los terceros*. Chile.

⁵² Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁵³ María Josefina Martínez, “Abuso sexual y dinámica relacional: el lugar de los “terceros,” *Abuso a menores: desafío ineludible*, in *Revista Testimonio*, n. 266, Chile, November, 2014, pp. 23 and 28.

II. Code of Conduct⁵⁴

⁵⁴ This section is an adaptation of the documents *Modo de Proceder en relación con los menores a afectos de evitar conductas impropias*, of the PROVINCIA DE ESPAÑA DE LA COMPAÑÍA DE JESÚS, May 16, 2013; and Manual SPC – sistema de *Proteccao e Cuidado de menores e adultos vulneráveis*, of the PROVINCIA DE PORTUGAL DA COMPAÑÍA DE JESÚS, June 10, 2018.

10. Way of Proceeding with Minors and Vulnerable Adults

10.1. Introduction

An instrument that can significantly contribute to the efficacy of everything that is done in the area of prevention of abuse of minors and vulnerable adults is commonly called a Code of Conduct. It indicates the way to proceed and consists of a set of norms or rules of behavior, clearly defined and concrete, which guarantee that the interactions with minors and vulnerable adults that take place in the educational, social and apostolic centers are safe and positive. Respect for the dignity of persons and their development demands the compliance that protects everyone and that the legal system guarantees.

The objective is not that of formalizing or eliminating all personal and affective dimensions in the relationship with minors and vulnerable adults. Affectionate acceptance and respectful dealings are essential for the healthy development of children and adolescents, and for the assessment and integration of any who are vulnerable and relegated to the sidelines. The following of Jesus teaches us how to do it and gives us a sense of mission that permits the joyful and committed dedication of the volunteers, professionals and Sisters, without stepping over the limits that could lead to questionable behavior and even harm.

These rules are to be observed in vertical relationships between minors/vulnerable adults and the professionals who work with them, as well as in these groups among the minors themselves with their diversity of ages, experiences and psychological development, or among vulnerable adults in their customary interactions. Furthermore, they can appropriately encompass actions that are not illegal according to civil law, and therefore significantly diminish the risks and opportunities for abuse to occur. For example, they can require that the staff avoid contact alone with the children or apply a higher age limit for sexual relationships than that established by civil law.

10.2. Those who are to keep these Norms in mind

These norms have to be observed by all persons who work with minors or vulnerable adults in works or activities of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: Sisters, priests, teachers, administrative personnel and service workers, volunteers and all those who have access to minors and vulnerable adults under the care of the Church.

10.3. General Guidelines

The majority of the norms and procedures that are indicated below are common sense and are already being observed. Nevertheless, it is important to be sure that each person in his/her work is aware of them, and to verify concretely that he/she complies with these norms and procedures in all situations in which he/she performs his/her work, and that the Superiors and directresses ensure their application:

- It is necessary to be aware that we play an important professional or institutional role, not merely a private one, and that the persons with whom we deal, in principle, trust in our good intentions and tend to obey our authority; therefore, we assume a great responsibility.

- Let us treat all people respectfully, without invading their privacy, either corporal or psychological.
- Let us be prudent. We should keep in mind that other persons could misinterpret our actions, in spite of how well-intentioned these may be. We cannot depend only on our good name as protection. It is necessary to avoid thinking that “this will not happen to me.” We have to be aware of the situations that can involve risks and to know how to avoid them. It demands caution in all situations of personal interaction.
- Let us foster trust and sincerity between minors and adults so that they can openly point out attitudes and behaviors that displease them.
- Let us always seek transparency, endeavoring that every action may be “out in the open” and verifiable by witnesses. We must avoid, as far as possible, awkward situations in which an adult can find him/herself alone with a minor or with a vulnerable adult.
- In general, we must communicate to those responsible the interventions with minors or vulnerable adults that could be susceptible to misinterpretation or which would generate risk.

10.4. Behavior to Adopt and Promote in the context of mission/work and in the relationship with minors and vulnerable adults (“model of conduct”):

- Promoting a meaningful life

We have to strive:

- to have and to give to others a realistic, positive and responsible view of life.
- to create healthy life-style habits which promote physical and mental well-being;

- Promoting relationships that are healthy, inclusive and that foster community development

We want:

- to adopt the principles of good upbringing (responsibility, reliability, respect for the opinions and goods of others, respect in social interactions, etc.);
- to comply with laws, norms and established rules, and to promote this compliance by means of positive reinforcement and fair disciplinary action, applied calmly and explained clearly;
- to promote collaboration and a healthy spirit of sportsmanship among all;
- to include and have everyone participate, welcoming and valuing differences;
- to create close relationships that are healthy, open and safe;
- to foster habits of open and transparent communication and peaceful conflict resolution.

- Promoting special attention to minors and vulnerable adults

We want:

- to respect each minor and vulnerable adult and his/her inviolable personal dignity, including respect for their opinions, interests, personal space, privacy, goods and personal information.
- to promote autonomy and training of minors and vulnerable adults, through behavior and acts of capacity-building (for example, not carrying out personal tasks that the minor or

vulnerable adult can do by him/herself, to promote training activities that reinforce the factors of personal protection).

- to promote habits of awareness-raising and self-protection of minors and vulnerable adults, and availability to attend and/or respond to their requests for advice and help;
- to take special care of minors and vulnerable adults with special needs (that is, in situations of disability or serious illness; limited understanding of reality, sexuality and violence; low level of confidence/fear that they will not be believed, difficulty/disability in communicating, etc.);
- to be aware that one is often viewed by minors and vulnerable adults as a “model of behavior” and, therefore, must act as such;
- to practice the culture, values and measures of protection and care recommended in this document, seeking help in case of doubt or need for advice, calling upon those in charge in case of suspicions and accusations, and collaborating with all in the work for its implementation and defense.

10.5. Behaviors and Attitudes to avoid with Minors and Vulnerable Adults, as they are, in principle, “inappropriate:”

- We should not transport minors or vulnerable adults alone by car, not even for short distances, except if it is unavoidable for reasons of safety. In that case, we have to make sure that a teacher or other employee or volunteer knows what we are going to do.
- We have to plan and organize any event that includes minors or vulnerable adults in such a way that risks are minimized: that more than one person is present, or at least there are other persons in the immediate vicinity.
- If it is possible, we will install transparent windows in the doors of the spaces where we have to be alone with another person, or keep the doors open. Any individual interview that is conducted with minors or vulnerable adults must be in a visible space and should be known by other adults. We must not spend time alone with minors or with vulnerable adults.
- Demonstrations of affection are important and necessary for the good development of formative processes. They are related to acceptance, approval, understanding, empathetic listening or appreciation for the other, but they do not necessarily involve physical contact. We have to avoid all inappropriate or unnecessary contact, physical or verbal, that could lend itself to misinterpretation. We should be sparing in our demonstrations of affection with minors and vulnerable adults, avoiding caresses, kisses or imprudent hugs that are unwarranted or which could be misinterpreted. It is important to find fitting gestures and words appropriate to the context, so that they do not give rise to any kind of ambiguity, involve erotic stimulation, or cause discomfort or an invasion of the other person’s privacy.
- We must be careful of our verbal and non-verbal language. One should not use vulgarity or ambiguous sexual expressions, even if in jest, and one must avoid always aggressive, humiliating, threatening, offensive and/or discriminatory words (for example, comments on physical appearance).
- We should not expose minors and vulnerable adults to inappropriate games, or internet sites, or anything that could be interpreted as pornography.
- We must never take photos or make videos of a private or intimate character. If photos are taken, they should preferably be of a group, for exclusive use of the activity of the center, and made by authorized personnel and never in compromising situations.

- We must avoid gestures and behaviors that can be interpreted as suggestive, aggressive, humiliating, threatening, offensive and/or discriminatory.
- We must never show individual favoritism to minors or vulnerable adults, whether by word or preferential gestures, gifts or presents that could be misinterpreted and seen as exclusive, dominating, or discriminatory toward the others (for example, to always ask the same person to help).
- We should never sleep in the same areas as the minors or vulnerable adults (except if it is approved by the person in charge of the work or apostolic activity.)
- We should avoid other situations with minors or vulnerable adults that could give rise to suspicions, gossip or false accusations (except in situations that have been approved by the person in charge of the activity).
- We must avoid meetings or activities that create ambiguity and doubt about whether the apostolic work is involved in it (for example, activities with minors or vulnerable adults outside the center, neither authorized nor recognized by the apostolic work, but that can seem to the minor or vulnerable adult or to their families or legal guardians that they are).
- We should not create inappropriate affective or professional ties with minors or vulnerable adults outside the institutional purview.

10.6. Behaviors that are prohibited with Minors and Vulnerable Adults, as they are “illegal” or “totally inappropriate”

We must never use, practice, promote or permit:

- The use of sexualized, aggressive, humiliating, threatening, offensive and/or discriminating language or conversations.
- Sexualized, aggressive, humiliating, threatening, offensive and/or discriminatory behaviors.
- Having preferential relationships or gestures that may be ambiguous, exclusive, dominating or discriminatory toward others.
- Conversations and viewing of inappropriate content (for example, sexualized, violent, offensive or discriminatory), whether in person or through technological means of communication.
- All kind of inappropriate physical contact (including all forms of sexual contact/relations).
- Consumption of toxic substances.
- Illegal behavior.
- Behaviors that are dangerous for themselves or for others.

The existence of a behavior considered “inappropriate” or “forbidden” on the part of an employee or volunteer, will bring about a process of internal inquiry without prejudice to the possibility of initiating, if the case justifies it, a disciplinary procedure.

10.7. More specific instructions for the Relationship with Minors and Vulnerable Adults that could be ambiguously interpreted

The following instructions are focused on ordinary situations in the professional dealings between adults and minors or vulnerable adults that run the risk of being misinterpreted by one or the

other, or by bystanders. With these instructions we try to eliminate such ambiguity, so that the service that we want to do for these persons in our institutions will not be called into question.

10.7.1. With minors from age 0 to 12 and vulnerable adults with a similar mental age or level of comprehension:

- When it is necessary to help them to change clothing or to dress, and when we do so, we are to do it with the door open and if possible with other adults in the immediate area.
- The parents must have access to the communications by mail that are sent to them from the institution.
- We will arrange to have separate bathrooms for adults and children. Those for the students, if possible, will also be separate according to age groups.
- If there are incidents to monitor in the lavatories or the dressing rooms, the adults who are responsible at the moment or for the activity will intervene.
- Non-urgent care in the infirmary will be given by the appointed staff member if there is one, and in any case always with the door open.
- When they sleep in the center, they will be taken care of by several caregivers.
- If they leave the institution on an activity that involves sleeping, there will be specific spaces for boys and girls, vulnerable men and women, and the adults, if possible, will sleep in a separate place, or at least separated from the children.

10.7.2. With minors from age 12 to 18 and vulnerable adults with a similar mental age or level of comprehension

- The adults bound to the institution by work contract cannot have affective-sexual relationships with minors or vulnerable adults of the center.
- They will not use verbal expressions with double meaning, of an erotic or sexual nature, or references to physical appearance that involve ironies, humiliation or invasion of their privacy.
- They will maintain confidentiality about the private life of the adults as well as of the minors, and they will cut off all conversation or commentary of a provocative or indecent character.
- They will avoid all actions and use of clothing which suggest sexual or erotic arousal.
- They can designate a minor or a vulnerable adult to be in charge of the dressing room to inform the staff of situations of risk among equals.
- The adults and educators in the center will not give their telephone numbers and personal email addresses to the minors or vulnerable adults, nor will they make appointments with them outside the center without express permission from the leadership staff.
- The Facebook accounts and other networks will be only institutional, of which the school or center may be informed, and they will not have only one administrator.
- They will take care that the communication by messages with minors or vulnerable adults may always be through the institutional channels, leaving a copy or also sending a hidden copy to the person in charge of the center, and they will avoid all writing that can give rise to equivocal interpretations.
- In outings from the center, such as excursions or camping, the activities will be observable by the group, planned and known by several of those in charge of the center.
- No chaperone can sleep or stay alone in a room with a minor or vulnerable adult.
- In case some minor or vulnerable adult needs specific care, it will be given in the presence of another adult.

10.8. Use of Images and ICT (Information and Communications Technology)

What follows is a set of principles for all to follow, which includes some legal requirements, and that promotes care and respect for the minors and vulnerable adults whom we strive to serve.

10.8.1. Use of images

a. Instructions for the apostolic works:

- The legal principle to keep in mind is that we must not take, file, use and disseminate images without the authorization of the persons who appear in them or of their legal representatives (if applicable).
- There is a question of images taken, at the service of the apostolic work, at public events and in institutional spaces. The approved practice is that the images may be taken from far away, from behind, or pixelated in such a way that the persons cannot be identified (since the right to the person's image and privacy prevails over the interests of others and of the center itself). It is suggested that the professional photographers who are contracted to cover the events be duly accredited and familiarized with these rules.

b. Instructions for collaborators, employees and volunteers, minors, vulnerable adults and others:

- Collaborators and volunteers must not take pictures of persons, spaces and activities of the work without due authorization. Once the authorization is obtained, they will follow the stipulations indicated by those responsible for the work or activity.
- In regard to the minors and vulnerable adults and others who use the work (for example, their family members/legal guardians), they must be helped to understand and adopt the same established principles and rules that are set out here. This is a question of growing importance, due to the current technological capacities of mobile phones and other recording devices.

c. Practices to promote

- They should endeavor that the images taken (always under the required legal conditions) offer a positive view, represent the plurality of the institution and do not reinforce stereotypes and prejudices.
- The images must not be taken in situations that may be potentially embarrassing or that show the habits of the users of the center (so as not to compromise their safety).

10.8.2. Use of ITC

a. Instructions for the centers

- The legal principle to follow is the confidentiality of all the personal data of employees, volunteers and beneficiaries (that includes not only biographical data, addresses and contact information, but also classifications obtained in the educational context, medical tests, performance reviews, etc.)

- The IT team must, insofar as possible, make access protected and identified with the name of the user and the password. Moreover, it is recommended to use software filters that block access to illegal websites or sites with inappropriate content (pornography, illegal downloads, etc.).

b. Instructions for the collaborators, employed and volunteer, minors and vulnerable adults and others

- It is forbidden to use the IT infrastructure of the institution (by means of its computers or wireless networks) for any kind of illegal use (access to illegal sites, copyright violations, etc.).
- The same “principle of prudence” that is used for face-to-face communication between employees/volunteers and minors and vulnerable adults, must be used for digital communications. Communication with minors or vulnerable adults must be done through their legal guardians and by means of the official channels of the institution (for example, institutional e-mail). A great part of this communication can be done in a general way – circular letters and not individualized. There can be circumstances in which it may be opportune to use direct communication and/or the exchange of personal contact information (mail or telephone). Nevertheless, one should use caution and do this only for justified reasons.
- Collaborators are also advised against “Friending” on social media because their relationship with minors and vulnerable adults is of a professional nature. In the case that this happens in the context of more informal or voluntary activities, one must not forget the responsibility to refrain from creating situations that could give rise to misinterpretation.

c. Practices to promote

- In the globalized digital world in which we live, where everything is checked and everything can remain on record forever, it is essential to use prudence and precaution. Therefore, it is advisable that everyone avoid giving too much information about him/herself (habits, places frequented, use of geolocation, posting intimate or provocative photos, etc.) and also protecting oneself from strangers (friend requests, restricted access).
- It is advisable to inform the minors about the various dangers on the internet: besides cyberbullying, it has expanded into sexting (sharing erotic/sexual content), grooming (an adult who wins the trust of the minor or vulnerable adult with sexual objectives), upskirting (taking photos from beneath the skirt of a minor or a vulnerable adult without permission and without her realizing it), the theft of personal information (which includes compromising images and financial data) and the subsequent extortion online. No caution is too much.
- Finally, all are advised to use digital media respectfully, avoiding inappropriate or illegal conduct (lack of respect for the rights of others, dissemination of false information, use of discriminatory or offensive language, copyright infractions, access to illegal websites or pages, etc.). From the employees and volunteers to the minors and vulnerable adults, all in some way represent the institution.

Non-compliance with the instructions about the use of images and ITC, on the part of employees and volunteers, can result in a process of “internal review”. Serious infractions can justify the opening of a disciplinary procedure.

N.B. It is advisable to create in each country an appendix to the Code of Conduct, including crimes and improper conduct classified in the Penal Code of that country.

III. Policy for Intervention in the case of an accusation⁵⁵

⁵⁵ This topic has been developed using the following documents as resources:

-THE PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS, *Model of Guidelines*, Rome, September 2016.

-CONFERRE *Normas y Procedimientos en case de acusaciones de cualquier naturaleza en material eclesiástica contra religiosos y religiosas*, Chile, July 2015.

-UISG, S. Tiziana Merletti, *Metodología para el Vademécum del Instituto sobre los casos de abuso sexual*, Rome, 2019.

11. Legislative Framework

➤ Of Universal Application

❖ Canonical Legislation

- Code of Canon Law, January 25, 1983: AAS 75 Pars II (1983) 1-301.
- Code of Canons of the Eastern Catholic Churches, October 18, 1990: AAS 82 (1990) 1045-1363.
- JOHN PAUL II Motu proprio *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, April 30, 2001, AAS 93 (2001) 737-739.
- BENEDICT XVI, Normae de delictis Congregationi pro Doctrina Fidei reservatis seu Normae de delictis contra fidem necnon de gravioribus delictis, May 21, 2010, AAS 102 (2010) 419-434.
- FRANCIS, *Letter to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences, to the Major Superiors of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, on the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors*, February 2, 2015.
- Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, *Template for Guidelines*, 2015.
- Pope Francis, Motu Proprio *Come una Madre amorevole* (As a loving mother), June 4, 2016. AAS 108 (2016) 715 (715-717).
- Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter in the form of a motu proprio *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, May 7, 2019.
- CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH, *VADEMECUM on certain points of procedure in treating cases of sexual abuse of minors committed by clerics*, July 16, 2020.

❖ Civil Legislation

- U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CDC), 1989.

➤ Of Local Application

❖ Canonical Legislation:

- Particular legislation that the diocesan bishops promulgate in their dioceses.

❖ Civil Legislation: Depends on each country. In general it includes:

- The Constitution of the country
- The Penal Code of the country
- Laws of Protection of at risk Children and Youth
- Educational law regarding protection, etc.

12. Procedures to follow when there is an accusation of abuse

12.1. Preliminary Matters

The Congregation makes the commitment that, from the beginning of the proceedings that will follow in order to respond to accusations and revelations of abuse by our sisters, it will do everything possible in order to establish the truth and to work for the healing of the victim and of the abuser. It declares, moreover, that it will comply with the regulations of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of each country where the crimes may occur.

In the treatment of the cases of abuse committed by members of the Church, there are two juridical frameworks: the canonical and the civil. Each one has its autonomy and specific nature.

Although the majority of the juridical processes relative to members of the Church follow the path of Canon Law, there are cases in which they must follow the path of Civil Law. Sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults is not only a grievous sin, it is also a crime that obliges us to denounce the perpetrator to the civil authorities. There is no obstacle to having both jurisdictions acting simultaneously upon the same situation, achieving collaboration and transparency between both, but in many cases the canonical process is suspended until the investigation by civil law is completed.

In the case of canonical procedure we will follow canon 695 of the CIC,⁵⁶ which refers to canons 1397 (homicide, abduction, mutilation, wounding), 1398 (procuring an abortion) and 1395 n. 2 or canon 696, according to the gravity of the crime; 697 that completes the processual directions. These are the canons aimed to regulate the way of proceeding against non-clerical religious who commit crimes against the Sixth Commandment or other serious behavior contrary to Consecrated Life.

In the case of a criminal process, attention must be paid to some fundamental factors:

- Each State has its own laws that it is necessary to know, especially in terms of process and statute of limitations of the crime.
- In the choice of a criminal lawyer, it must be kept in mind that crime of a sexual nature is a special discipline, which requires a certain specialization.

12.2. Reception of Accusations

Upon the reception of a notice of abuse, the *notitia criminis*,⁵⁷ although it may be anonymous, the process must be immediately initiated and the tasks of investigation begun with the support, if the gravity warrants it, of experienced civil or canonical jurists.

⁵⁶ CIC is the acronym for *Codicis Iuris Canonici* which in English means Code of Canon Law.

⁵⁷ Cf. Vademecum of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, July 16, 2020: *Notitia criminis* or *Notitia de delicto*, is what Canon Law calls any information from any source (including anonymous) about a possible delict. The information can be oral or written, directly from a person or received through some means of social communication or social networks.

With the objective of facilitating the reception of the information (the *notitia criminis* cited above) or of the accusation (which can arrive through either oral or written means, anonymous or signed) of crimes committed by one of our sisters, professed or in formation, priests or lay collaborators, employed or volunteer, it is advisable that the major superior⁵⁸ should appoint a Sister Delegate in her circumscription. Where she deems it necessary, it will be more than one Sister (for example, in circumscriptions that encompass several countries). Furthermore, she can create a simple structure with some Sisters and lay persons, who are specialists, who advise her about the reception of the denunciations and the steps to follow.

This structure will be made known publicly, as well as the names of the persons in charge of receiving the accusations, and the channels established for reporting them. All of this will be easily available through different means (website, e-mail and postal addresses, telephone numbers, printed materials, catalogues, etc.)⁵⁹

These persons, sisters or laity, must be trustworthy, as well as being qualified through formation and training in these matters.

In some works, such as the schools, some government regulations require relying on a person in charge of receiving this kind of accusation, someone who is not chosen by the major superior, but by the one in charge of the work (in the example cited it would be by the director of the school). In this case, it is advisable that this policy be part of his/her training so that he/she may know how to proceed if the accusation is against a sister.⁶⁰

His/her responsibility will be:

- To accept and direct accusations to the Competent Authority
- To send them in their entirety and as soon as possible to the corresponding major superior
- To adequately orientate the accuser regarding the procedure that is being initiated.

It is important to remember, nevertheless, that any Handmaid or layperson that participates in one of our works can be the recipient of the report of a person who has suffered or suffers any type of abuse. Together with receiving this person and engaging with his/her suffering, one must be aware of the responsibility of informing or reporting. If it is a matter of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult, civilly, depending on the legislation of each country, there could be an obligation to report. Canonically, we Handmaids are obliged, as religious, to report it to the local Ordinary⁶¹ when accusation is against a clergy or a member. Our commitment is to comply with canonical and civil legislation, which we assume as a moral and legal duty.

After the reception of the information about the crime, everything must be noted down in minutes so that there will be written evidence, as is indicated in canon 695 n.2. These will be comprised of:

⁵⁸ Cf. CIC can. 620.

⁵⁹ In communities where the number of members or other circumstances do not allow for the creation of this structure, they will rely on the one existing in the circumscription, always having, in the community, a sister in charge who will serve as a liaison with the provincial, vice provincial or regional structure. If possible, it would be advisable to be able to rely on the help of a layperson from the place who would help in the necessary steps.

⁶⁰ The application of the policy of the Institute cannot be understood, in any case, as motive or reason for not applying the policies specific to these works.

⁶¹ FRANCIS, *Vos estis lux mundi*. Art.1,1

- Collection of evidence about the facts and their imputability,
- Presentation of the accusations to the accused, and giving him/her the opportunity to defend him/herself, presenting all the evidence that he/she considers advisable.

They must endeavor that the shortest possible length of time transpires between the reception of a report and the first tasks, such as the meeting with a representative of the Congregation. These meetings must be carried out in an atmosphere in which the person feels free and confident.

All the Sisters of the Institute have the obligation to make known the information that they know, through any means, directly to the Major Superior of the Circumscription or to her Delegate and to the Ordinary of the place.⁶²

The victim, or whoever has brought the information, will be informed about her right and duty to make known the possible crimes to the competent civil authorities and the civil exercise of this right will be supported.⁶³ There can be no signing of confidentiality agreements, about facts or persons, by the parties involved in accusations of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults.

The Vademecum of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, of July 16, 2020, expressly points out (n. 30), that one cannot impose any obligation of silence upon the one who makes the accusation or upon the person who claims to have been harmed, or upon the witnesses. Moreover, in no way must they attempt to dissuade them from exercising their rights before the government authorities, rather, they should encourage them, leaving documented evidence of this (n. 48). On its part, the Congregation commits itself clearly to compliance with the legislation, and this can impose, in specific cases, the duty of reporting to the government authorities.

When information about a possible crime committed by a Religious or other person is received, the delegate must immediately inform the Major Superior and will hand over to her the written report of the conversations that she/he has had with the person who made the accusation or with the victim.

The person who makes the accusation can be a minor or his/her representative. If it is a minor, as soon as possible the parents or other member of the family must be involved, who will take charge of the minor and will deal with it. If this is the case, they will be encouraged to report the fact to the competent civil authorities.⁶⁴

If the accusation is against the Delegate, it should be sent directly to the Major Superior; if the accusation is against the Major Superior of the circumscription, it will be sent directly to the Superior General.

12.3. The interview and the way of proceeding in it

Encourage the person who reports the violence, to be accompanied by a person of his/her choice when he/she presents it. We should have a support person available for those who report abuses, should they desire it.

⁶² Cf. *Vos estis lux mundi*, art. 3, n. 1.

⁶³ This advice must be recorded in writing and must be signed by the accuser or by the victim. If the latter is a minor, the advice will be signed by his/her parents or legal guardians.

⁶⁴ Eventually, they might have to report it to the civil authorities, although the parents may not wish it. It is a legal obligation. In some countries, religious ministers (including women religious) are protected by the ministerial secret, always and whenever their knowledge of the facts has taken place in that specific context.

Listen to the report attentively, respectfully, without betraying the trust that the informer/accuser has shown.

Transcribe the report, without inquiring beyond what the person desires to report, only if it is necessary to clarify some point on which there is some doubt, and on which clarification is truly necessary in order to establish basic aspects of the accusation (person who is being accused, what occurred, place and date). Minutes of what has been reported will be written; these will be sent to the Major Superior of the Circumscription. It is advisable that the person making the accusation can read, correct and sign the written report.

From the first encounter with the person who presents the accusation, the approachability of the Church should be expressed by means of an attitude of acceptance, thanking him/her explicitly for his/her courage and the painful effort of reporting the facts. It is important from the beginning not to blame her/him or minimize or deny what happened.⁶⁵ That support must be present throughout the entire process, communicating to the person that it is possible to trust in other people and to continue experiencing the love of God.⁶⁶

Moreover, one must tell the person who has presented the accusation that, after his/her report a series of actions will occur:

- The Major Superior is informed and a statement is sent to her as soon as possible.
- The Major Superior, if she deems it advisable, initiates a Preliminary Investigation by means of a decree.
- The accuser is kept informed at all times.
- The Major Superior will take the necessary means in order to prevent others from becoming victims.

The proceedings of the investigation must be solid and transparent. Experience suggests that these should be carried out by, or at least include, laypersons with relevant experience and appropriate skills in order to ensure independence.

We/they must ensure spiritual assistance, necessary psychological and medical help to the victim and to the Sister, the presumed perpetrator of the abuse.⁶⁷

The image and private sphere of the persons involved, as well as the confidentiality of their personal information, must be protected.⁶⁸ The victims have the right that their names not be made known to the religious or ecclesial community, whether or not their accusation culminates in a criminal trial. This includes any reference made by the accused to his/her friends, colleagues or sisters. In the same way, the accused also enjoys the same rights to privacy and good reputation, which does not prevent the accusations from being made public, for this does not constitute a legitimate damage to the right to a good reputation.

The accused has to be aware that she/he must respect the rights of the victim, avoiding all communication with him/her, except by means of those who legitimately assist her within the canonical process. The persons involved in the process of investigation, in virtue of the accusations, must also be warned to abstain from speaking about the matter with any unauthorized person, in order to safeguard the rights of all parties involved.

⁶⁵ Líneas Guía - Episcopal Conference of Chile (LG-CECh), *Cuidado de la víctima de abuso sexual*, 70.

⁶⁶ Cf. LG-CECh, nn. 66-69.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, Article 5, n. 1; LG-CECh, 71.

⁶⁸ Cf. Op. cit., Article 5, n. 2.

In these cases, when the accusation has been anonymous or the accusing party refuses to have his/her identity made known to the accused person, the victim or the one who presents the accusation, must be advised that this is within his/her rights, but the course of the investigation will be, very probably, shorter. In any case, the accusations must be investigated.

It is very important that any promise of action or future contact made to an accuser be kept.

[See Appendix 7 – Record of the interview/accusation]

12.4. The Investigation and the Pastoral Precautionary Measures

12.4.1. Beginning, purpose and development of the Investigation

Whenever the Major Superior receives any information about the occurrence of a possible crime committed by a Sister of the Congregation, she must carry out an investigation in accordance with the law,⁶⁹ whenever that information is not impossible to obtain or even when it is evident.⁷⁰

▪ Study of the accusation

The Major Superior of the circumscription, having received the information (via oral or written form)⁷¹ promptly and diligently, will study the accusation in order to make a judgement about its possibility (rather than of its probability). If the fact is credible⁷² (that is to say, possible) she must initiate an investigation.

▪ First Discernment

Having studied the accusation about the sister, the Major Superior must make a first discernment and decide if at first glance the accusation is reliable, which in accordance with canon 1717, can fall between two extremes:

1. When the notification is clearly unfounded because it is materially impossible;
2. Or when the crime is so notorious that any investigation would be superfluous.

If neither of the two extremes exists, there are two parameters to define this reliable character:

1. The possibility of relying on a basis that makes possible a process of investigation in the external forum since, if the deed was a sexual abuse, an abuse of conscience or of power

⁶⁹ Cf. CIC can. 1717. Even when we do not find ourselves in the realm of a criminal, judicial or administrative process, its norms offer a sure orientation in order to proceed with assurance. If the fact appears founded but only involves an imprudent act or a morally reprehensible act, appropriate measures of sanction, of correction and of prevention with regard to the future will also be taken (Cf. cann. 1339-1340).

⁷⁰ The investigation will be superfluous if it is materially impossible or if it is so notorious that any confirmation would be redundant (can. 1717, n 1). In this last case, nevertheless, it is currently recommended to investigate it, since the crime might not be limited only to the accusation received (there could, for example, be other victims).

⁷¹ Although it is preferable that the accusation be made in writing, if it is not possible, it is sufficient in order to discern about the beginning of an Investigation that minutes are taken and signed by the accuser. LG-CECh 41.

⁷² Cfr. CIC, can 1717. // Verisimilitude is the credibility or congruence, that which is credible or is true, that makes something resemble the real, the credible. This word is derived from Latin “verus” real, true, from “similis” similar.

against minors or vulnerable adults, and it has been committed in the organizational sphere of the Congregation, there could exist the obligation of reporting it to the civil authorities. This would have to be carefully assessed with a civil lawyer, case by case.⁷³

2. That the deed denounced falls under ecclesial jurisdiction because it is considered a crime in Canon Law, or because the persons involved are subject to the laws of the Church as is contemplated in can. 11.

For this first discernment, the major superior can avail herself of the advice of someone who is knowledgeable about Canon Law.

■ **Beginning the investigation** (canons 695 n. 2 and 696)

If in accordance with the criteria indicated, the information that has reached the Major Superior is considered reliable, she will issue a decree establishing the beginning of an investigation.

Although Canon Law empowers the major superior herself to carry out the investigation, it is advisable that it be entrusted to an outside person: a layperson, religious or priest with knowledge of Canon Law and the necessary preparation, to act as a notary. This person, instructor delegate, will be a great help for the major superior, who will be able to reserve herself for overcoming barriers, acting on a more pastoral level, etc. Nevertheless, it should remain clear that everything is done with the authority of the major superior.

■ **Information**

The Major Superior will inform

1. The Ordinary of the place⁷⁴ about the situation of the accused, in accordance with the canonical prescriptions.
2. The local superiors about the existence of an investigation so that, if this becomes public, they can communicate the appropriate information to the sisters of the circumscription first-hand.

■ **Purpose of the Investigation**

It is to establish the credibility of the facts and their circumstances, as well as the eventual imputability⁷⁵ of the one being investigated. This investigation will be orientated, in the first place, to delineate the outlines of the deed and the imputability of the perpetrator; in the second place, it must include those elements that can support the subsequent decision of the major superior.

⁷³ For example, if the victim of sexual abuse is of legal age, only he/she can report it. It is necessary for us to evaluate the case in light of the state law in each country (age of consent, etc.)

⁷⁴ Cf. *Vos estis lux mundi*, art. 3, §1.

⁷⁵ In Criminal Law “imputability” is defined as the possibility of subjective or individual imputation of the deed to the perpetrator, which requires from the perpetrator of the crime psychological normality and maturity of his/her mental development, not having any cause for non-imputability such as psychological anomalies, psychic alterations or transitory mental disorder, alterations of perception, or childhood. This constitutes the first presumption of culpability. (Translated from the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy, *Diccionario Panhispánico del Español Jurídico*.)

▪ **Notification to the Sister being investigated:**

When the investigation begins, the religious accused must be informed of the allegations against her. She will be listened to and will be given an opportunity to respond to each one of the allegations. She will be given a copy of the decree of the opening of the investigation, and be reminded that according to principle she has the presumption of innocence. She will be advised also that she must not communicate with the accuser or accusers or with the victim or his/her family, and she will be assisted in seeking the advice of a Canon Law expert, if the Sister desires it.

The accused Sister's admission or denial of the reported deeds does not constitute an exemption from the authority's duty to investigate.

▪ **Development of the preliminary investigation**

Throughout this investigation care will be taken of the respect for and compliance with the rights of all those involved, especially regarding their reputation. They must avoid allowing the investigation to put the persons' reputations at risk, whether it be the one who has made the report of the crime or the one accused. This means that those who intervene in the investigation must respect the principle of confidentiality. Likewise, the Major Superior will ensure that the victim and the Sister being investigated may count on receiving the support and the help they may need.

▪ **Interviews**

The investigator will interview:

1. The person or persons that have presented accusations;
2. The victim (if the accusations have been made by other persons)
3. The accused Sister,
4. And any other person who can help to clarify the facts to which the accusations refer.

In each interview, the investigator as well as those being interviewed will sign a written report with all the relevant data (name of the declarer and of the person receiving the declaration, place, date, facts, important circumstances, etc.) It can be advisable to rely on a prudent and discreet person to carry out the function of notary.

▪ **Procedure**

The procedure is that of canon 695 n. 1 and 2, and 696 CIC which refers to the canons 1397, 1398 and 1395, depending upon the gravity of the crime.

In serious cases, when they are not included in the content of the above canons, one must refer to canon 696.

During the investigation, the following must be kept in mind:

1. In regard to the person who presents the accusation: keep him/her informed about who is in charge of the investigation, as well as of the eventual means adopted, facilitate his/her contact with the one who can explain to him/her the different stages of the ecclesiastical process and the stage at which it is, ask him/her for his/her collaboration in gaining access

to different pieces of evidence such as testimonies and documents, or in order to make a psychological evaluation.

2. In regard to the sister being investigated: inform her of the terms of the accusation, draw up a record of her response and/or receive her response at a later time, orientating her about the steps to be taken, keeping her informed of the different phases of the investigation and, if necessary, imposing upon her one of the envisaged pastoral or precautionary measures.
3. If a government process is being developed simultaneously, the Major Superior must ensure the cooperation of the Sister implicated and be available when required. Nevertheless, it is considered more advisable that, if a process is initiated at the government level, during that time the proceedings in the canonical venue be suspended.

12.4.2. Pastoral and Precautionary Measures

At a procedural level, without undermining the right to a good reputation or the principle of presumption of innocence, the Major Superior (and not her delegate) within the parameters established by the universal ecclesiastical law, will be able to impose pastoral measures during the process of the investigation. These measures aim to safeguard the good of the Church and that of the persons involved in the deeds, to facilitate the development of the investigation and the possible process, as well as to avoid scandal or putting at risk those who have presented the accusation.⁷⁶

12.4.3. Conclusion of the investigation

When the investigator has finished his work he must hand over to the Major Superior all the documentation of evidence, the material gathered, his opinion and conclusions on which he must state.⁷⁷

- If the accusations are credible, and the testimonies obtained are trustworthy,
- If the facts and circumstances that appear in the inquiries constitute a crime,
- If the crime seems imputable to the accused,
- Information about whether or not criminal proceedings are required.

The investigator must give the accused sister the opportunity to defend herself.

⁷⁶ Examples of pastoral or precautionary measures: * to protect her from her compulsive behavior or from the opportunity, in such a way that potential victims are protected from the risk of new abuses; * to provide her with a structure of life and tasks through which she can work fruitfully and, if it were the case, work also for her recovery and psychological and moral rehabilitation; *to carry out the therapy indicated by the psycho-diagnostic test administered; *a change in her work, appropriate to her current physical and mental condition, which facilitates the support that she needs or, if such is the case, her recovery and rehabilitation; *a change in her apostolic responsibilities, which can range from partial restriction to complete suspension. In both alternatives, it will always involve the complete restriction from tasks and contacts with any kind of minors or vulnerable persons.; * Complete restriction (prohibition) or partial (supervision or monitoring) of contact with specific areas or activities such as, for example, outings, trips, vacations, retreats, use of vehicles and use of communications media, internet, etc.

⁷⁷ Cf. 695 § 2.

12.5. After the investigator's report

The Major Superior, with all the documentation of the evidence of the Preliminary Investigation should discern, with the help of experts, if the accusation does or does not have sufficient merit. These experts should assist her in the evaluation of the accusations and, if they have not previously been imposed, determine the advisability of applying pastoral measures.⁷⁸ The Major Superior must also decide:

- **If it is necessary to expand the investigation**, because she considers it insufficient for reaching a decision, pointing out which elements or information it is necessary to clarify.
- **If the accusation is NOT credible.** In that case:
 - The Decree will declare the investigation concluded and will reject the accusations as unfounded.
 - She will communicate to the Superior General of the Congregation this evaluation together with all the photocopies of the minutes of the investigation notarized.
 - All of the documents must be archived.⁷⁹
 - All the necessary means will be taken to reestablish the good reputation of the Sister who has been unjustly accused. Therefore, all the pastoral measures will cease, and she will be fully reincorporated into the exercise of her apostolic ministry.
- **If the accusation IS credible:**
 - The major superior will complete the procedural instructions in accordance with canon 697.
 - She will present to the Sister, with a formal document, the accusation and the respective evidentiary proofs in a way that satisfies her right to know them and that she can manifest her opinion in regard to the matter.
 - The necessary measures will be sought in order to restore justice and repair the scandal.
 - The decree of closure of the investigation, as well as the conclusion of the process will be communicated to the accused and to the victim, if he/she is of legal age, in the case that he/she is not, to his/her parents or legal representatives, and to the Ordinary of the place.
 - The processes laid down in canon law will be followed, which can lead to the expulsion of the Sister who is considered guilty.
 - The superior general with her council will carry out the judgement-decision, based on the minutes prepared.
 - The greatest punishment that can be imposed upon a religious is expulsion from the institute, and this punishment can be imposed only by the superior general (and the Holy See).
 - It is very advisable to follow the procedure established in canons 697 to 704.

⁷⁸ Cf. CIC, can 1722.

⁷⁹ Cfr. CIC, can. 1719.

- Keep in mind that the final decision of the superior general is subject to appeal before the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.
- “A decree of dismissal does not have effect unless it has been confirmed by the Holy See, to which the decree and all the acts must be submitted.”⁸⁰

13. When a Sister is the victim of abuse committed by another Sister

The canonical process as well as the civil process in this situation are similar to those explained above, even though here it is a matter of Sisters who are of legal age. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that, for example, being a formee in the presence of a formator can place them in an asymmetrical situation.

When a sister accuses, declaring herself victim of another sister, the Major Superior will open a process of investigation, in which the steps of the policy of intervention and action set down above must be followed, guaranteeing the anonymity of the abused Sister, if she desires it.

They will take care about the following aspects:

1. Throughout this entire process, which surely will be long and complex, we must always act in fidelity to God, to the charism and to the principles set forth at the beginning of this policy.
2. At all times they must respect the freedom of the Sister who made the accusation to have recourse to civil or canonical authorities, as well as not to do so.
3. In the interviews with the Sister who has reported that she has been a victim, give her the opportunity to be accompanied by a person that she trusts.
4. According to the new norms from the Vatican established by Pope Francis in the *Motu Proprio You are the Light of the World*; it is advisable to get in contact with a commission of experts, at the level of ecclesiastical regions, or eventually of the UISG, In order to have an informed and objective opinion and an adequate support, especially for the Sister who is a victim.
5. The Major Superior has the responsibility to offer the Sister who is accusing and the one who is accused all the necessary spiritual, psychological, economic and legal support.
6. The involvement and participation of the family of origin should be agreed upon with the victim. The decisions will be left to the Major Superior and, ultimately, to the Superior General.
7. The impact in the communications media can be very serious; therefore, it is advisable to be prepared with the help of experts.

⁸⁰ CIC, can. 700.

14. Relations with the Communications Media

The Major Superior of the circumscription will appoint a person as the only spokesperson for the circumscription. When and where an accusation is received, this person will take care of informing the different levels of leadership in the community as quickly as possible.

It will be advisable, when warranted by the situation, to let ourselves be guided by journalists and experts in communication, who will advise us about which information is to be given to the media.

In any public statement that may be made, the spokesperson will always demonstrate the willingness to cooperate with the competent authorities in order to clarify the facts.

[See Appendix 8 – Examples of press releases]

IV. Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Child Sexual Abuse and its Dynamic⁸¹

Child sexual abuse is the term most commonly used when speaking of sexual crimes committed against minors. Nevertheless, this concept has many definitions; it includes many forms that legally differ from one another, and it includes different elements that contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon. Thus:

- One can consider child sexual abuse the involvement of a child or of an adolescent in sexual activities carried out by adults and which seek primarily the satisfaction of the latter, persons under the age of 18 being immature and dependent, therefore, incapable of understanding the drastic significance of these activities nor of giving their real consent. These activities are inappropriate for their age and level of psychosexual development and are imposed under pressure – by violence or seduction – and violate social taboos in regard to family roles.⁸²
- Child sexual abuse occurs in activities between a child and an adult, or between one child and another who, because of their age or their development, is in a position of responsibility, trust or power. These activities, -- whose purpose is to gratify the needs of the other person – encompass but are not limited to: enticement for the child to become involved in any type of illegal sexual activity, exploitation of children by means of prostitution or of other forms of illegal sexual practices, and the exploitation of children in the production of pornographic materials and displays.⁸³
- Coercion and asymmetry of age are often the criteria that define child sexual abuse. In order to involve the child or adolescent in sexual or erotic activities of any kind, the adult uses coercion, which involves the use of strategies such as seduction, gifts, blackmail, threats, psychological manipulation and/or the use of physical force. Asymmetry of age is itself an asymmetry of power, which hinders true freedom of decision in the child or adolescent who ends up ceding or not managing to escape the will of the adult.⁸⁴
- Sexual abuse of children or adolescents is one of the worst forms of violence. The victims suffer irreparable damage to their physical, psychic and moral integrity. It harms their right to integrity, intimacy, privacy, and principally it violates their right not to be subjected to any kind of violence, abuse, exploitation or maltreatment. These rights are protected at the international level by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁸⁵

In conclusion, it is all conduct of a sexual nature – in deed and even in word – to which a minor who is not in a position to choose, discern and/or protect him/herself (because he/she lacks the resources to do so, and because he/she is in a position of total inequality, disadvantage or defenselessness) is exposed or subjected.

⁸¹ N.B. What is stated regarding minors also applies to vulnerable adults.

⁸² UNICEF, Kempe en Barudy, 1998, pg. 161, cit. in *Maltrato Infantil en Chile*, 2015, p. 9.

⁸³ OMS, 2001, Intebi, Valoración de sospechas de abuso sexual infantil, 2007, in UNICEF *Abuso Sexual – Porqué, cuándo y cómo intervenir desde la escuela – Guía conceptual*, Argentina 2013, p. 15.

⁸⁴ Cfr. Naomi Pereda, *El espectro del abuso sexual en la infancia: definición y tipología*, in Revista Psicopatología y salud mental del niño y del adolescente n. 16, Fundación Orienta, Spain, 2010.

⁸⁵ UNICEF, *Abuso sexual contra niños, niñas y adolescentes: Una guía para tomar acciones y proteger sus derechos*, Argentina 2016, pg. 8.

Some characteristics of Child Sexual Abuse:

- Approach of a sexual nature, between an adult and a child or adolescent, whether or not there is physical contact, with or without the use of force or intimidation.
- The abuser/aggressor seeks his/her own sexual gratification.
- In sexual abuse there is always asymmetry between the abuser and the abused in which the former holds greater power whether because of age, physical strength, mental maturity or relationship of authority.
- Whatever the conduct of the child or adolescent, the person responsible is always the adult abuser.
- It is irrelevant to establish in allegations of child sexual abuse whether or not the child or adolescent has given consent. The abuser takes advantage and exploits the minor's vulnerability, weakness, immaturity, inexperience and the lack of information for his own benefit, without regard to the consequences for the child or adolescent.
- The abuser always exerts violence and abuse of power on the body and the mind of a child or adolescent, although it might not be done with physical violence.⁸⁶

The Dynamic of Sexual Abuse and the Abusive System

Save The Children España (2012) states: *child sexual abuse involves the transgression of the intimate and personal boundaries of the child. It involves the imposition of sexual behaviors on the part of a person (an adult or other minor) toward a child, carried out in a context of inequality or asymmetry of power, usually by means of deception, force, lies or manipulation. It can include sexual contact, as well as activities without direct contact such as exhibitionism, exposure of children to pornographic material, grooming (pursuit by means of social networks) or the utilization or manipulation of children for the production of visual material of sexual content.*⁸⁷

For us, the term “child” also encompasses adolescents and vulnerable adults.

We present here some elements that can help to understand better the abusive dynamic and system.

- **Sexual abuse as an abuse of power**

In the majority of definitions of sexual abuse two criteria are established:

1. Coercion: the aggressor uses his/her position of power in order to interact sexually with the minor.
2. Asymmetry of age: the aggressor is significantly older than the victim, not necessarily in chronological age.

Félix López and Amaia del Campo, recognized authors in this field, affirm: *“In reality, this asymmetry of age determines many other asymmetries: anatomical asymmetry, asymmetry in development and specification of the sexual desire (which is not specified or consolidated until adolescence), asymmetry in sexual affect (the phenomenon of the attraction in pre-pubescent*

⁸⁶ Cfr. UNICEF, *Por qué, cuándo y cómo intervenir desde la escuela ante el abuso sexual a niños, niñas y adolescentes – Guía conceptual*. Argentina 2013, p. 16.

⁸⁷ Save the Children, “Violencia sexual contra los niños y las niñas. Abuso y explotación sexual infantil”. *Guía de material básico para la formación de profesionales*. Spain 2012, p. 8.

*has fewer sexual connotations), asymmetry in social skills, asymmetry in sexual experience, etc. Asymmetry itself represents a coercion.*⁸⁸

It is important not to conceive of sexual abuse as a matter concerning only the sexuality of the individual, but as an abuse of power, fruit of this asymmetry. A person has power over another when he obliges him to do something that the latter does not want, whatever be the means that he uses for it: threats, physical force, blackmail. The person with power is in a position of superiority over the victim, which deprives the latter of the use and realization of his freedom. However, it is equally important to understand that “power” does not necessarily result from difference in age, but also from other factors. Sexual abuse among equals is a reality to which we cannot close our eyes. In this case, the coercion is produced by the existence of threats or because there is seduction, but the difference in age can be minimal or non-existent. Even so, it would be considered sexual abuse.⁸⁹

There are different types of sexual abuse, perpetrated by different types of persons, grades of closeness, or relationship, which the authors try to classify. We will present one of these:

* Classification of child sexual abuse

- Family sexual abuse or incest: The most frequent aggressor is the father; it could also be the stepfather, the brother, the cousin, the uncle, the grandfather, etc.
- Sexual abuse outside the family: The aggressor can be a neighbor, an acquaintance, or a friend of the family: a teacher, a godfather, a priest, the Sister, etc. This type of abusive sexual conduct may or may not involve physical contact.
- Sexual abuse with physical contact: includes all conduct in which the aggressor touches the victim in areas of obvious sexual significance, the behaviors can be of the aggressor to the victim (the most frequent form) or vice-versa.

* Forms of Sexual Abuse of Children and Adolescents

- Touching the genitals of a child or adolescent on the part of the abuser.
- Touching other parts of the body of the child or adolescent on the part of the abuser.
- Observing the seminude or nude body of a child or adolescent.
- Touching or kissing the genitals of a child or adolescent.
- Self-erotization by the abuser in the presence of a child or adolescent.
- Prompting/urging the child or adolescent to touch his/her own genitals.
- Exposing children or adolescents to acts with sexual connotation such as: exhibition of genitals, carrying out of the sexual act, masturbation, verbal sexualization.
- Violation or vaginal, oral or anal penetration, or the attempt to do so, whether with their own genitals, with other parts of the body (ex. fingers) or with objects (ex. sticks), by the abuser with or without the use of force or intimidation.
- Deceiving or obliging a child or adolescent to see pornographic material (Ex. magazines, films, photos etc.) or to use him/her for the development of pornographic material producing images or sound recordings of abuse of children or adolescents by means of the internet or other information technology and communication.

⁸⁸ Félix López and Amaia del Campo, in Save the Children, *Abuso Sexual Infantil: Manual de Formación para Profesionales*, p. 17.

⁸⁹ Cfr. Op. Cit.

The authors state that the aggressor dehumanizes his victim, for instead of respecting him in his status as a subject, he takes him as an object to serve his own gratification and satisfaction.⁹⁰

Josefina Martínez clearly describes how the process develops:

In the framework of this relationship of domination, the abuser makes use of a series of sophisticated maneuvers of deception and coercion. It is a process of seduction and of gradual erotization of the affective ties, where the aggressor gradually wins the trust of the child or youth, taking advantage of his emotional dependency. Thus, on occasion, gifts, privileges and special attention are put into play to convince the victim that he/she is someone special, like a chosen one, a truly fortunate person. It will be in this context where, with the intention of confusing the victim, he will present the abusive actions as if these were normal: a game, a way to show affection, a supposedly educational or formative gesture, an act of caring.

Considering that the word seduction does not adequately express the extent of domination that the abuser exerts over his victim, it is described as a spell, an experience similar to sorcery, by means of which the victims are submitted to a gradual nullification of their critical sense and a weakening of their will. The child or youth, with no awareness of being controlled, will gradually become imprisoned in an increasingly all-enveloping spiral, falling into a trap from which it will be very difficult for him to be able to escape.

Seduction and spell are terms that show that, in general, sexual abuse is a relational process that is developed over time, and therefore, does not happen overnight. One-time abuses are extremely rare, and it is even rarer for these to be committed by strangers.

In this respect, it is necessary to consider that the aggressor creates the occasion to commit his crime, looking for a way to be alone with the child or youth upon whom he has set his sights. Aware that he is doing something that would be condemned by others, he takes all the necessary precautions to avoid being discovered. The invasion of the body of the victim often begins with insinuations and subtle touching, and can progress to more and more severe transgressions of his privacy.

In those most extreme cases, the abuser generates totalitarian relationships, assuming complete and restrictive control over the life of the one he has chosen as victim. In order to achieve this, he will undertake to isolate him, whether it be by forbidding or restricting his opportunities for social contact, or by negatively predisposing him toward other significant persons. Under such circumstances, the one who abuses becomes the only standard, forcing the child or youth to adopt his viewpoints as reality, and his words as the official pronouncement to which he must adhere, with no possibility of dissent.

With the aim of acting with total impunity, the aggressor forbids the victim to refer to the abusive acts. Explicitly or implicitly, he obliges him to secrecy, implementing what is known as the rule of silence. In order to guarantee the success of this silencing, he can utilize various strategies, such as using derogatory and blaming speech that insinuates to the child or youth that he has been the instigator, and hence the cause of what has happened. He can resort to manipulation, insinuations of complicity that, by means of phrases that make use of the idea of “we,” make the victim think that he is the co-perpetrator or co-participant in shameful deeds that must be hidden (ex. “we’re not going tell anyone about what we’re doing”). Finally, another very effective recourse are the threats that serve as effective methods to attain control over a person. These debilitating techniques make the victim live in a state of constant fear. Together with direct threats of personal

⁹⁰ Barudy, 1998, 1989; Perrone and Nannini, 1997, quoted by Josefina Martínez in *Abuso sexual y dinamica relacional: el lugar de los Terceros*, Rev. Testimonio November 2014, p. 2.

harm (“no one will believe you”, “they will scold you”, “nobody will love you,” “I’m going to kill you,” “they will expel you”), threats against their loved ones can be even more effective with a child or youth (“you’ll make your mom suffer”, “you’re going to make everyone fight,” “you’re going to cause division,” “I am going to harm your family.”)

In this desolate panorama, keeping silence becomes an adaptive strategy for the victim, as self-protection against the possible punishment that he would receive for reporting the actions, but also as an altruistic act, aimed at protecting significant others from the pain that the disclosure would cause them. Intimidated into silence, the child or young victim will remain isolated and unable to ask for help.⁹¹

We can, therefore, speak of stages and of phases in an evolving process and of an evolving dynamic that leaves the victim more and more isolated, lost and incapable of defending himself.

*** Stages of Child Sexual Abuse in the Family** (Outline and description by Jorge Barudy)⁹²

Stage 1: System of Hidden Equilibrium

Phase 1. Seduction

- *There is an entertaining and/or desired activity that is carried out within an accustomed frame of reference.
- * The abuser starts out by choosing the place and the form in order to avoid discovery.
- *The adult manipulates the dependence and trust of the child or adolescent.

Phase 2. Abuse/abusive interaction

*Consists of a gradual and progressive process of erotic content. Behaviors of exhibitionism or voyeurism, which are expressed with oral kissing, sexual games, and progress to touching the genitals (for example in the bath), and sometimes going as far as establishing a coital relationship.

Phase 3. Secret

The “code of silence” and threats appear. The aggressor aims to keep the abusive situation secret at any cost (blackmailing, lying, blaming).

*The abuser tells the child or adolescent that what has happened is a secret between the two of them.

Barudy explains that in this stage the child or adolescent also experiences pleasure, which allows the abuser to blackmail him to prevent him from reporting it, and in this way, makes him a participant and “responsible” for the act.

⁹¹ Josefina Martínez, op. cit. pp. 3-4.

⁹² Protocolo para la Prevención de Abuso Sexual en Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes, in Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, Ciudad de México, September, 2017, pp. 20-31.

Stage II: Family Crisis

Phase 4. Disclosure

* It is deliberate when children or adolescents decide to tell about what is happening because they can no longer tolerate it. In the case of adolescents, it usually happens when they have attained self-awareness and confront the jealousy of the abuser, and it begins to bother them.

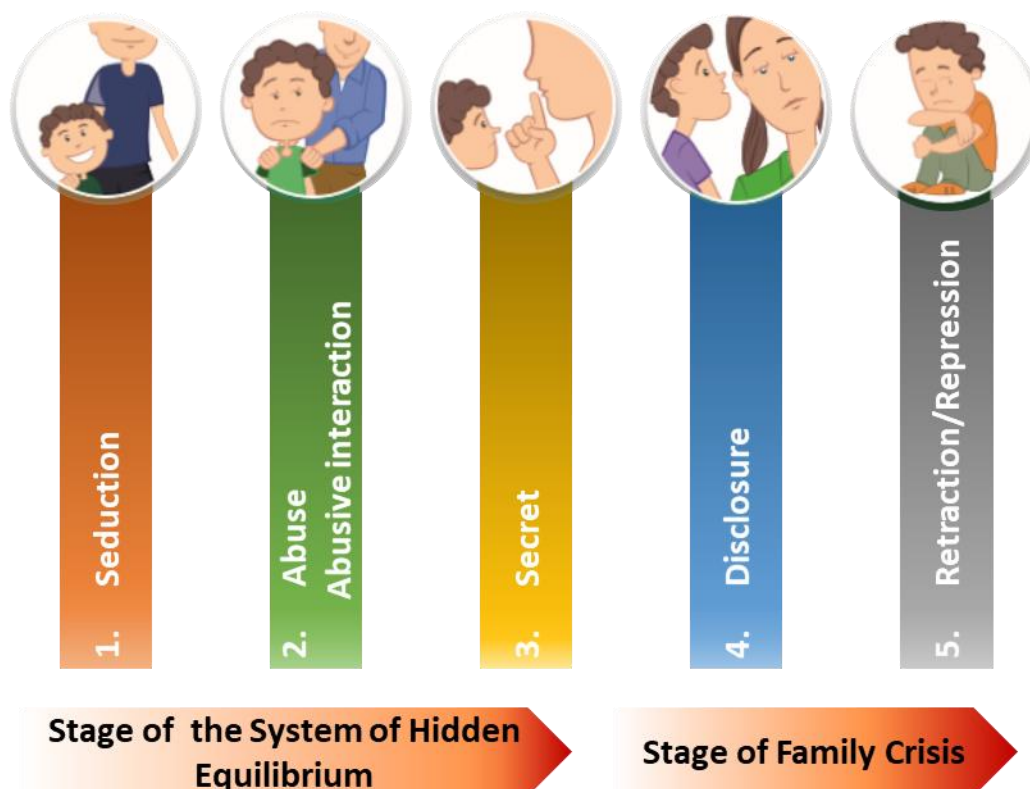
*It is accidental when they are caught by a third person, or symptoms appear which make it possible to denounce or divulge the act.

Disclosure does not always happen. Often in their adult life certain circumstances will make them recall the abusive event, about which they had never told anyone, and even then it is difficult to reveal it.

Phase 5. Retraction/Repression

*The adult and some members of the family try to discredit the child or adolescent, in what he says, in himself; the accusations tend to point to the abused person as culpable, and they deny the evidence of the acts.

* The abuser always puts pressure on the child or adolescent so that they retract; he attempts to prove that the act never happened.



In spite of the fact that child sexual abuse happens in all social classes, religions, and sociocultural levels, that it affects children and adolescents of different ages, and that there is no typical profile of the “victim,” certain characteristics have been identified as factors that place children and adolescents at risk of being sexually abused.⁹³

▪ **Characteristics of Children and Adolescents**

Individual characteristics	Family and social characteristics	Social characteristics
*Low self esteem *Passive attitude *Difficulty in developing assertiveness *Tendency to submission *Little capacity for making decisions *Timidity or shyness	*Living apart from his parents *Living in isolation *Little or no sex education *Unsatisfied need for affection and/or attention *Having a disability *Adults living temporarily in the house	*Engaging in prostitution *Orphans *Institutionalized *Belonging to an ethnic minority *Living or working in the street

Nor does there exist a specific profile for the sexual abuser, but we can consider some aspects and elements:

▪ **Characteristics of the Sexual Abuser**

Sex: generally male
Age: mainly middle-aged adults (between 25 to 50 years), although there is a considerable group between the ages of 18 and 20.
Frequently they seek work or activities that allow them to be close to children.
In many cases they do not have criminal records.
They do not acknowledge the acts, nor do they assume responsibility for them.
Generally they have a family and children.
Relationship with the victim: they are close relatives and educators; persons known to the family without any special relationship, priests, family friends, strangers.

▪ **How the Aggressors choose the Children and Adolescents**

From families with emotional or economic needs.
That believe that they are “bad,” or those who are not valued by society.
With low self-esteem or who need love and attention.
Who feel isolated from their friends or their family, or who have been rejected by their families or communities.
Those for whom it is difficult to tell anyone what is happening; those who will be believed only with difficulty (they are considered “liars” or “troubled children”).
Who cannot physically defend themselves.
Who believe that they are invulnerable (the aggressors consider them “a special challenge”).
Who have already suffered abuse.

⁹³ Cfr. Idem, pp. 31-36.

▪ The Strategies Employed

In the case of family members, educators, priests, friends and adults known to the victim, frequently they take advantage of the the child or adolescent's previous trust in them.
Behaviors with double meaning.
The use of surprise, when the child or adolescent does not expect the behavior of the aggressor and does not understand well what is happening, hinders him from reacting, offering resistance, or protesting quickly.
Deception in order to hide the true significance of the action.
The use of rewards and punishments.
Verbal threats and the fear of unknown aggressors.
Physical violence, which is the least frequent.

▪ Behavior of the Sexual Aggressor

Possessive and jealous of the victim.
Denies the child or adolescent normal social contacts.
Accuses the child or adolescent of being promiscuous or seductive.
Excessively attentive/vigilant.
Poor impulse control.
Socially isolated.
Unsatisfactory adult relationships.

▪ Consequences in the life of the Children and Adolescents

The emotional, cognitive and behavioral consequences of sexual abuse in the lives of children, adolescents and vulnerable adults, short, medium and long term, can be devastating, permanently damaging their lives.

– Consequences in the mental health of children and adolescents.

* Post-traumatic stress disorder *Eating disorders *Anxiety disorders *Depression *Suicide or suicidal ideation *Difficulties in formation of sexual identity *Specific phobias *Sexual dysfunctions.

– Short term consequences or in the initial period of the aggression

Emotional

*Feelings of sadness and helplessness *Sudden mood swings *Irritability and rebellion *Various fears *Shame and guilt *Anxiety *Generalized fear *Low self-esteem *Rejection of his/her own body.

Cognitive

*Educational underachievement *Difficulty in attention and concentration *Lack of motivation in schoolwork and in activities in general.

Behavioral

*Aggressive behaviors *Rejection of adults *Hostility toward the aggressor *Fear of the aggressor *Early pregnancy * Drug or alcohol consumption *Running away from home *Self-harming or suicidal behavior.

– **Medium term consequences**

Emotional

*Depression disguised or manifested *Anxiety disorders, sleep disorders (nightmares, insomnia)
*Eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia, obesity) *Distortion in sexual development *Fear of sexual
expression *Suicide attempts or suicidal ideation.

Cognitive

*Grade repetitions *Learning disorders

Behavioral

*Running away from home *Dropping out of school and involvement in criminal activities
*Ingesting drugs and alcohol *Excessive interest in sexual games and compulsive masturbation
*Early pregnancy *Sexually transmitted diseases.

– **Long term consequences**

Emotional

*Sexual dysfunctions *Low self-esteem and poor self-concept *Stigmatization (feeling different
from the others) *Depression *Various emotional disorders.

Cognitive

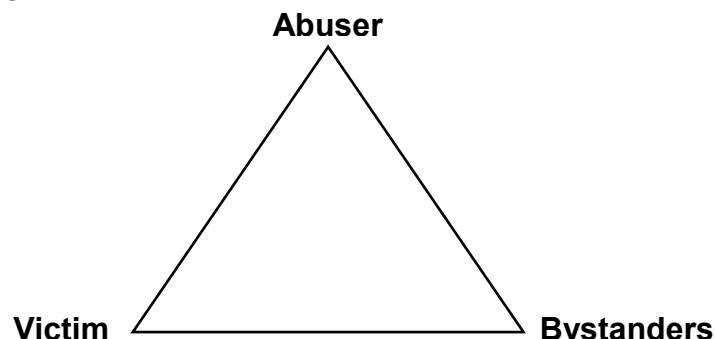
*Academic failure

Behavioral

*Prostitution *Sexual promiscuity *Alcoholism, Drug addiction, Delinquency *Social
maladjustment *Conflictive family relationships.

▪ **The Triangle of Abuse⁹⁴**

The abusive system can be represented by a triangle, which illustrates who abuses, the victim and the bystanders.



At the upper vertex of the triangle, the aggressor occupies a position of power with regard to his victim, whether because he older, more experienced, or because he is in charge of his care,

⁹⁴ María Josefina Martínez Bernal, *Abuso sexual y dinámica relacional: el lugar de los Terceros*, in Revista Testimonio, Chile, November, 2014, pp. 2, 4, 5.

education or guidance. The relationship, on being asymmetrical and unequal, shows an abusive and unjust use of sexuality. Therefore, one can say that sexual abuse is a form of abuse of power, which makes it impossible for the victim to give his consent and or resist in the face of sexualized behaviors that, far from constituting an invitation, are in reality a coercion.

In one of the lower vertices of the triangle is the child or youth victimized by the aggressor. The relationship of dependency that the abuser maintains with the victim is what makes the latter vulnerable, for the affection or admiration that he professes for the abuser, can hinder the work of looking with critical eyes at the kind of relationship that perpetrator presents to him. Even when the victim succeeds in judging the inappropriateness of his actions, the asymmetry of the relationship makes him lack the necessary power, strength and freedom to confront and stop the abuser.

At the third vertex we find the Bystanders. Generally they are people in the victim's environment that, on realizing the eminent danger of an abuse, or its actual occurrence, could "do something" in order to prevent or interrupt the abuse. Nevertheless, in reality, frequently, either because they do not realize what is happening, or because they do not want to see, or because they see but are not capable of accusing, they do nothing. Therefore, in some way, they become part of the dynamic of the abuse, through their ignorance, indifference or complicity.

As has been said, the challenge will be to work to empower these 3 types of "bystanders" to be able to be "active bystanders." *Becoming a bystander who takes action, rather than a spectator, is not a simple matter. It is not a question of merely one act of courage, carried out imprudently, without measuring the consequences for the victim or even for oneself. (...) The presence of support networks give power to spectators, allowing them to "level the playing field" and gather the strength necessary to become agents. Only in this way will they have the option to confront the aggressor and the circle that very probably is ready to shield him.*

▪ **A Program for Training Bystanders**

In this sense, and by way of example of an intervention, INSPIRE presents the program "Bringing in the Bystander." This is an interactive workshop in which participants are taught to recognize situations of sexual violence or harassment, and to safely intervene in order to stop them.

In this program the norms which support sexual violence are identified and challenged, and the norms of community responsibility for prevention and protection are promoted. The program prepares the participants to recognize problematic or dangerous behaviors, to develop empathy toward the victims, to apply safe and effective methods of intervention, and to commit to taking action as a bystander.

Developed by *Prevention Innovations* at the University of New Hampshire in the United States, the program targets university students. This program has been carried out in more than 300 secondary schools and universities in Australia, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Currently the curriculum is being adapted for younger students.

The basic components of the training given them, in three 90-minute sessions are:

- Bystander responsibility
- Local examples and statistics
- Sexual violence continuum, causes and impacts
- Identifying risky situations and choosing safe interventions.

The implementation of the program involves:

- Interactive discussion
- Practice of the skills
- The participants sign Bystander pledges
- The participants receive ABC reminder cards (Active Bystanders Care)

The results of the program indicate a positive change in the understanding of and the attitudes toward sexual violence: increased willingness and confidence to intervene, and an increase in self-reported interventions in situations of violence or potential violence.⁹⁵

▪ Conclusion

The recognition of the existence and seriousness of abuse, of its disastrous consequences in the life of the victims, above all when they are minors or vulnerable adults, should spark in all of us who approach this horrifying phenomenon, the drive to promote programs for prevention of abuse so that it will never happen again.

The “Inspire” Manual states: *The growing accumulation of evidence about what is effective in preventing and responding to violence makes all of us responsible for applying the lessons learned, whether it be in our homes, our communities or at the worldwide level. The abundant research and proven interventions can and must be utilized in order to draw up and apply strategies of prevention of violence and of response to it, which may contribute to making the invisible visible and to end violence in childhood.*⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Cfr. INSPIRE Handbook: action for implementing the seven strategies for ending violence against children. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO, pp. 82-83.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.97.

APPENDIX 2

Primary Prevention Program

We present an example of a program of individual work with minors and vulnerable adults in Primary Prevention.

This program⁹⁷ consists of actions that basically focus on fostering skills, and healthy, resilient attitudes and behaviors such as:

- Instructing about self-care and sexual violence, providing sexual education focused on recognizing, accepting and taking care of one's own body, and learning to identify violent situations.
- Educating about the biological functions of the reproductive area, the rights and responsibilities of minors and vulnerable adults, and about establishing appropriate boundaries with regard to other children, mothers, fathers and other adults.
- Fostering the development of skills and protective capacities such as self-esteem, perception of control and of what is happening. The discovery of his/her strengths and his/her capacity to achieve personal fulfilment.
- Cultivating in minors and vulnerable adults behaviors that lead to autonomy and values that will equip them to distinguish between respect and submission.
- Developing and reinforcing in minors and vulnerable adults the development of skills of self-care and protection, as well as connection with and confidence in their own feelings and emotions, rather than in an external authority. This will help them to identify and act in the presence of risks and boundary transgressions, and learning specific ways of where and how to report these risks and ask for help.
- Prevention and care of unplanned pregnancies in minors and vulnerable adults.
- Informing minors and vulnerable adults about sexual abuse, not only as possible victims, but also as possible aggressors, in a sequenced, scheduled manner adapted to the characteristics, ages, interests of children, as well as of the customs of the different populations and regions.
- Informing about the risks of social networking profiles, as well as how to avoid publishing personal information, for example, their full name, address, phone number, or that of others whom they know, and to avoid publicly sharing photos of family members, friends or any of their personal information.
- Providing the confidence to communicate/report if someone molests a minor or vulnerable adult on the internet, and if that person makes him/her feel fear or uneasiness.

⁹⁷ Cfr. Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, *Protocolo para la Prevención del Abuso Sexual en Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes*, Ciudad de México, 2017, pp. 54-57.

APPENDIX 3

Modules of Formation on the specific topic of Abuse and its Prevention

Integrated into their human formation, we want to propose to the Sisters and lay staff formation in the most important matters on the topic of abuse and its prevention, as those indicated in our Policy for Prevention point 13.2.

- *Prevention of abuse of power in its different forms: manipulation of conscience, abuse of authority, sexual abuse, economic abuse and others.*
- *Definition of sexual abuse of children, adolescents and vulnerable adults and its forms.*
- *The process of sexual abuse and its stages and phases.*
- *How to be an “active bystander” and learn to detect signs of danger.*
- *Characteristics of sexually abused children, adolescents and vulnerable adults.*
- *Characteristics of the sexual abuser and his/her behavior.*
- *Selection of victims and the strategies employed.*
- *Indicators of sexual abuse in children, adolescents and vulnerable adults.*
- *Short, medium and long-term consequences of sexual abuse on victims.*
- *Sexual abuse of children, adolescents and vulnerable adults by means of the internet and other information and communication technologies.*
- *Other forms of violence: physical, psychological and sexual assault of children, adolescents and vulnerable adults.*⁹⁸

Furthermore, it is important to know **the general guidelines for prevention of abuse to minors and vulnerable adults**, which we indicate briefly.

These guidelines should be developed with children, adolescents and vulnerable adults, as well as with families and in the schools and community centers, so that they may be less exposed to sexual abuse. They will include, for example, the following elements:

- *To avoid every type of aggression and violence that puts physical and emotional integrity at risk (ex. Hair pulling, striking the head, humiliating, insulting).*
- *To be treated daily within the parameters of the Rights of the Child.*
- *To know that there are persons who love and protect them.*
- *To speak with precision and clarity about what sexual abuse is, the risks and means of protection.*
- *To foster high self-esteem.*
- *Recognizing the different types of touches, those that make one feel good, as well as refusing those that make one feel bad. Point out that there are secrets that are harmful and that cannot remain secrets, for example: when someone wants to touch intimate or private parts. To live in a family that offers them support, trust, credibility and security. To be educators in respect for the body “my body is my territory.”*
- *To learn to say “No” as a way of establishing boundaries of respect for oneself and for others.*⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Cfr. Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, *Protocolo para la Prevención del Abuso Sexual a Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes*, Ciudad de México, October, 2017, pp. 4-5.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pg. 41.

APPENDIX 4

Resources for Minors and Vulnerable Adults

We offer here a selection of resources of videos and books that can help to approach the abuse issue with minors and vulnerable adults.

➤ Videos about Child Abuse Prevention - Educational Games for Children

The nonprofit Barbara Sinatra Children's Center Foundation in conjunction with Wonder Media has developed a national campaign on a child abuse awareness and prevention.

www.bsccfoundation.org and www.wondergrovelearn.com

- **Body parts, good and bad touches and other safety tips**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt-oEULGLr4>
- **My body belongs to me, private parts, secrets...**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-5mdt9YN6I>
- **My body safety rules**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u03EHVf-7vI>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Introduction**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWg30kFDQT8>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Grades K-3 - All Lessons: Tell a grown up, Safe touch-Unsafe touch, Stranger Safety, Doesn't matter who it is, Shout-run-tell, Hitting is wrong**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8R2g5QrDAw>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - A Friendly Stranger Safety**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SY7RhBszp0k>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Recognize the Signs**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNoNISlj8Ws>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Shout Run Tell**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkraVxm8If4>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Safe Touch / Unsafe Touch**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNTUMNKSNowk>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Secrets**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAD17zMqjHc&t=79s>
- **Protect Yourself Rules – Neighbor**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cEGFo8AjLY> / 3:

➤ Videos on Sexual Abuse for Adolescents

www.wondermedia.com & Joshua center on child abuse & Barbara Sinatra Children Center Foundation – Fight Child Abuse

- **Grooming & Sexual Abuse**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0Ujv3stTZM>
- **Friends Can Help Stop Sexual Abuse**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3L0iKqCaC0>
- **Don't let Pressure End Up as Sexual Abuse**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9ICVYLShvc>
- **Saying No to Prevent Sexual Abuse**
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tm_gyeNwzW8
- **Online Sexual Abuse Can Happen**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEivufW2IWs>
- **Sexual Abuse in the Family**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOyg6IrfuzA>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Cyber Bullying**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=916K8xRxQZw>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Tell**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWqTzeITGLY>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Secrets**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAD17zMgiHc>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Bullying**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mrE5zgEvt4>
- **Protect Yourself Rules - Grades 4-6 - All Lessons (New)**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RteEiMNIYo>
- **Stop the Secrets that Hurt - Sexual Abuse is Confusing**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4xwdFWjIOW&t=48s>
- **Stop the Secrets that Hurt - My Tutor Abused Me**
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vE_KSbV9O00&t=104s
- **Stop the Secrets that Hurt - What Happens When You Tell**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDoykuSJMr0>
- **Stop the Secrets that Hurt - 3 Good Reasons to Talk About Abuse**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmX9K6703wg&t=79s>
- **Stop the Secrets that Hurt - Tell the Whole Story**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yq-M8oYr3II>

- Stop the Secrets that Hurt - Dealing with Abuse is Hard
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eNTGUs3N9w>
- Stop the Secrets that Hurt - How Sexual Abuse Hurts
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvjNV18fJQ>
- Stop the Secrets that Hurt - We Thought We Were Broken
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQIYNyg1ALU>

➤ Educational Posters for Children

- Educate 2 Empower: <https://e2epublishing.info/posters>

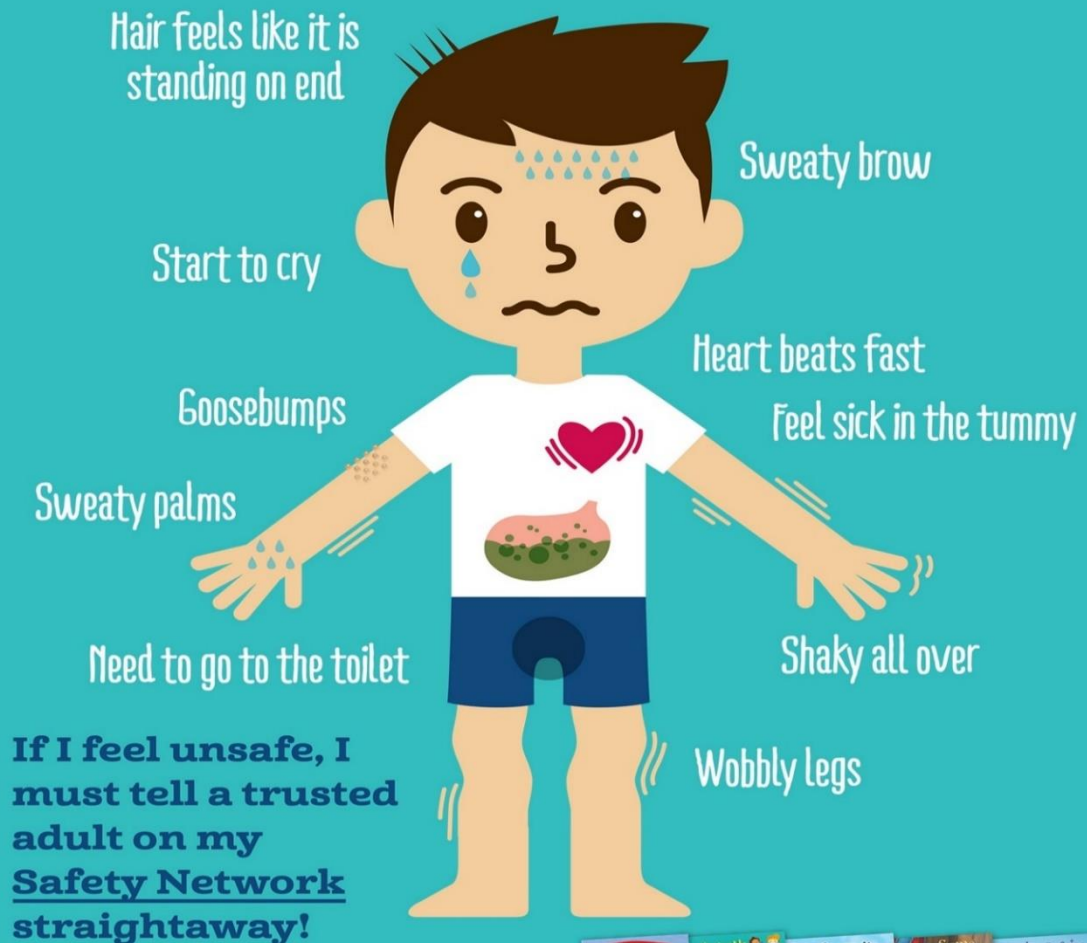


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https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5aa73dd224a6942b4074be70/1520909798299/Poster_US_A3-Color-MBSR.pdf
- [jpeg](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5aa73eec419202c439e893b4/1520910081888/PosterW_US_1500-MBSR.jpg) for re-posting:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5aa73eec419202c439e893b4/1520910081888/PosterW_US_1500-MBSR.jpg

My Early Warning Signs

If I feel unsafe my body lets me know.

Here is how!



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For more information go to www.e2epublishing.info



- [pdf](#) for printing (best at A3 or larger):
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5aa740410d9297e66dc112bd/1520910412276/Poster_US_A3-Color-MEWS.pdf
- [jpeg](#) for re-posting:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5aa740d7e2c4839970cfc4f8/1520910562851/PosterW_US_1500-MEWS.jpg
- [These two posters are available in French, Indonesian, Italian, Spanish, and Vietnamese in <https://e2epublishing.info/posters>]

➤ Feelings Cards (A3 Poster)

- https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5b46bacff950b7b6b708f8ff/1531362015876/pA3_E2E_FeelingsCards-1500.jpg
- https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5b46baa01ae6cff696a1e35e/1531361958696/pA3_E2E_FeelingsCards.pdf - PDF for printing.

This poster has two major learning outcomes:

1. Help your child(ren) to more accurately express their feelings by developing their emotional vocabulary.
2. Help your child learn to recognize the feelings of others by facial expressions.

Feelings Cards



✂ Cut out each card. Cut out and paste the key word and alternative words on the back of each card, or fold under.

Lesson Ideas:

Cut up the cards. Attach the words onto the back of each card by either gluing them in place or folding them under along the dotted line. Shuffle the cards and ask individual children to select a card to describe how they are feeling. Explore why they might be feeling that emotion today.

Display the complete poster.

Discuss with the children the feelings featured and alternative words that could be used instead of the 'key' word written, e.g. This child is feeling 'sad'. Let's talk about the other words we can use to describe feeling sad? Encourage the children to use alternative words in their everyday language and written work.

Play 'Memory' with the cut out cards and the cut out labels. Have children match the words to the child's expression.

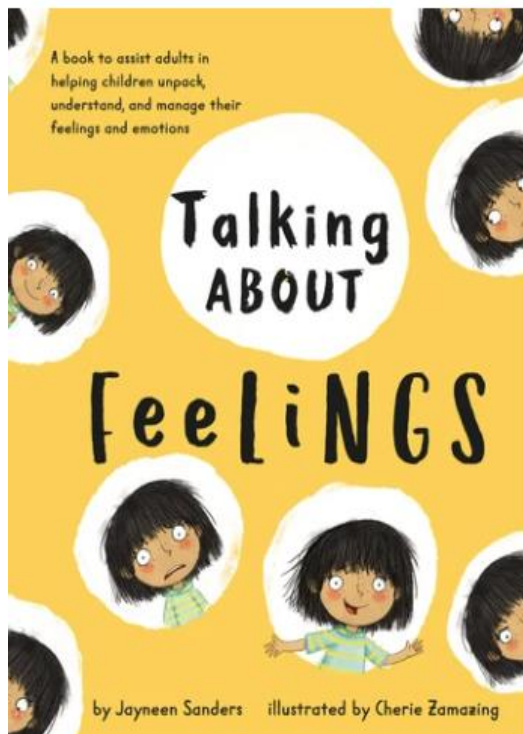
➤ **Poster about feelings for young children**



➤ **Books (Shop online)**

<https://shop.e2epublishing.info/collections/body-safety>

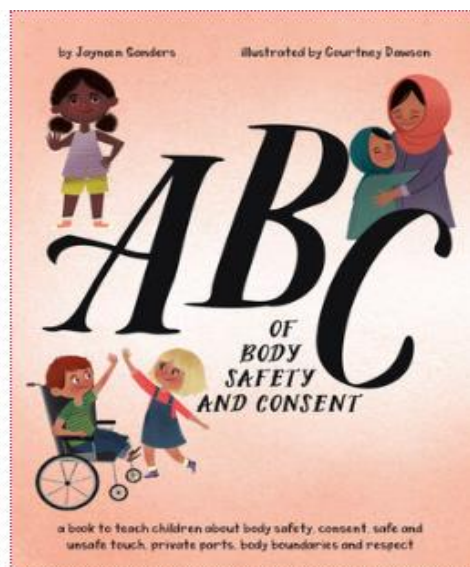
Story is a powerful medium to discuss difficult topics with children in an appropriate way.



The book, **Talking About Feelings**, also encourages children to understand and manage their changing feelings and emotions, and to talk confidently about how they are feeling.

Providing children with the skills and the words to express their feelings is key to helping them move forward in a positive manner. *Talking About Feelings* is the perfect book for parents, caregivers, educators and health professionals to help children unpack challenging emotions in an interactive and engaging way.

This book is best suited for children aged 4 to 10 years.



ABC OF BODY SAFETY AND CONSENT - REGULAR
PRICE \$14.95 AUD

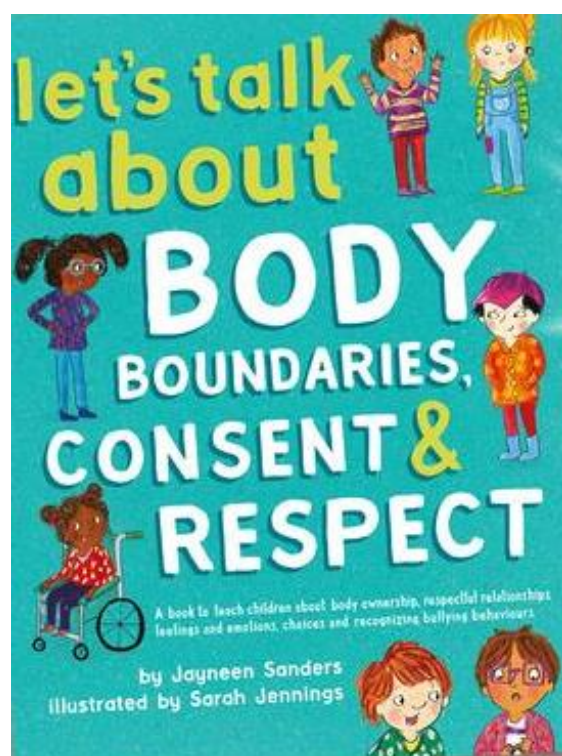
The 26 'key' letters and accompanying words will help children to learn and consolidate age-appropriate, crucial and life-changing body safety and consent skills. Designed as a 'dip in and dip out' book, the text, the child-centred questions and the stunning illustrations will reinforce key skills such as consent, respect, body boundaries, safe and unsafe touch, Early Warning Signs, Safety Network, private parts, and the difference between secrets and surprises. Also included are Discussion Questions for parents, caregivers and educators.

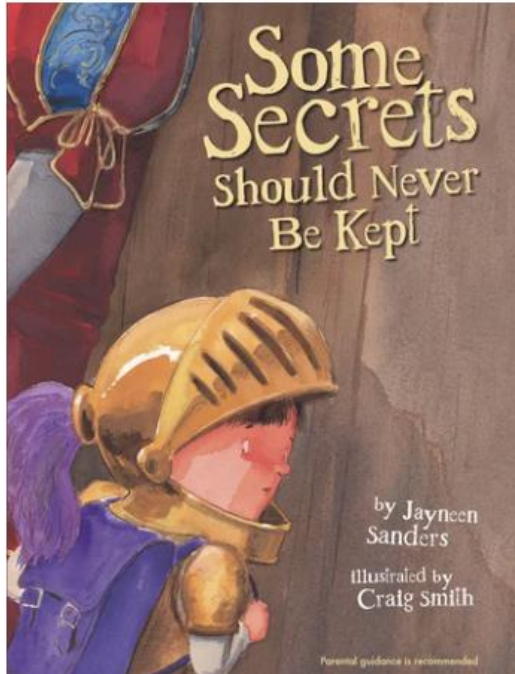
Suitable for children 4 to 10 years.

Teaching young children about body boundaries, both theirs and others, is crucial to a child's growing sense of self, their confidence and how they should expect to be treated by others. A child growing up knowing they have a right to their own personal space, gives that child ownership and choices as to what happens to them and to their body. It is equally important a child understands, from a very young age, they need to respect another person's body boundary and ask for their consent when entering their personal space.

This book explores these concepts with children in a child-friendly and easily-understood manner, providing familiar scenarios for children to engage with and discuss. Also included are in-depth Discussion Questions for parents, caregivers and educators to further enhance the learning and to initiate important conversations around body boundaries, consent and respect.

Best suited for children ages 4 to 10.





Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept was written as a fable with an important message, i.e. if a child is ever touched inappropriately they need to tell a trusted adult and keep on telling until they are believed.

Body Safety Education, also known as protective behaviours or child sexual abuse prevention education, involves so much more than focusing on stranger danger.

It is also crucial for children to learn that they must never keep secrets that make them feel bad or uncomfortable (in fact, we teach it's best not to have secrets in families, only happy surprises). The trouble with secrets is that they are the main tool used by child molesters to ensure children remain silent about the abuse. Ensuring the secret is kept is of utmost importance to the perpetrator. Therefore, threats and insisting no-one will believe the child is used as a way of controlling the child to be silent.

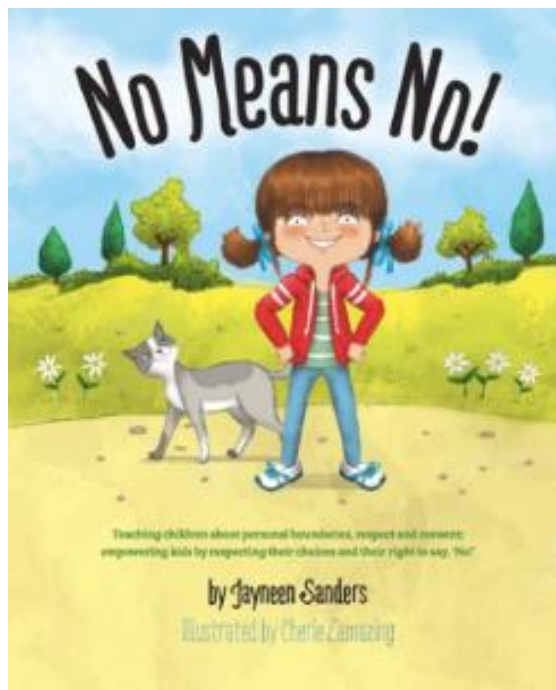
This book is an invaluable tool for parents, caregivers, teachers and healthcare professionals.

Suitable for children aged 3 to 12 years.

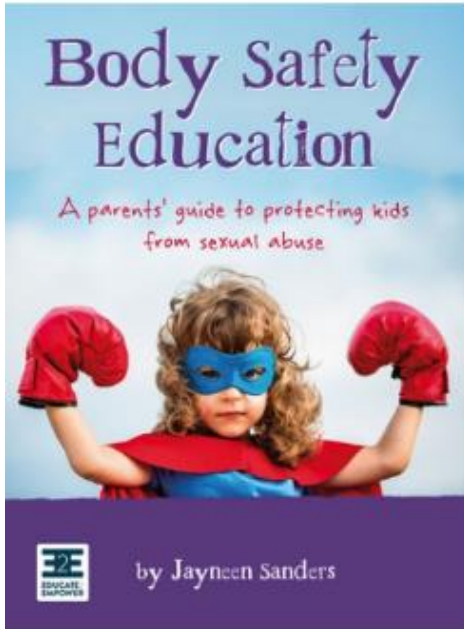
No Means No! is a book about an empowered little girl who has a very strong and clear voice in all issues, especially those relating to her body and personal boundaries.

With the prevalence today of online and offline bullying and various forms of abuse, such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse; our young people need to learn (from a young age) to always speak up when their rights are not being respected. The aim of this book is to empower young children and to give them a voice so they can grow up into empowered adults. When a child, teenager or adult says, 'No!' to any form of coercion, this should be immediately respected. A world where 'No!' does actually mean 'No!' can be a world with far less violence and increased respect for humankind.

This book can be read to children from 3 to 9 years. It is a springboard for discussions regarding children's choices and their rights.



The 'Note to the Reader' at the beginning of the book and the 'Discussion Questions' on the final pages, guide and enhance this essential discussion.



Body Safety Education is a book for parents, carers and educators.

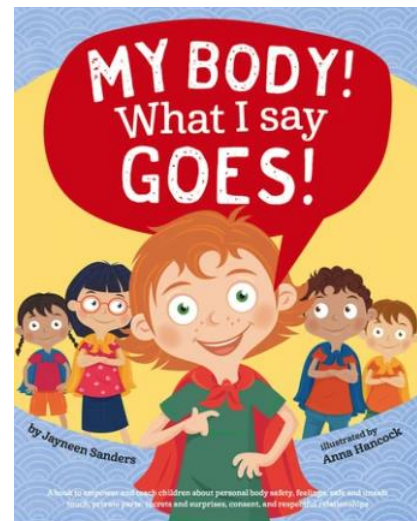
It provides all you need to know to help protect children from sexual abuse - presented in an easy to read and friendly, non threatening format.

It is good for teaching protective behaviours and body safety to children aged 3-12 and also recommending it to parents everywhere.

My Body! What I Say Goes! A book to empower and teach children about personal body safety, feelings, safe and unsafe touch, private parts, secrets and surprises, consent, and respectful relationships.

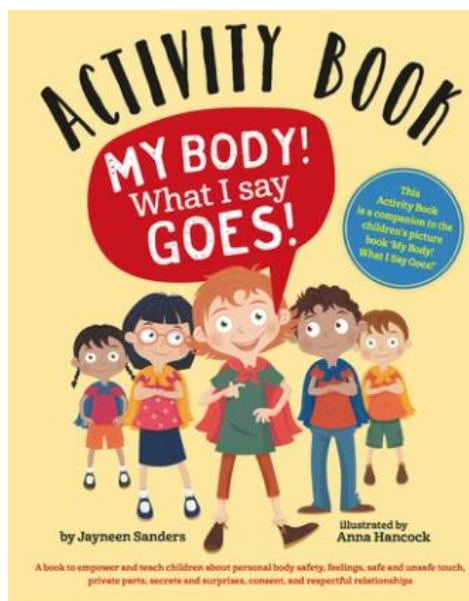
Parents, caregivers, and educators have a duty of care to protect children by teaching them Body Safety skills. The crucial skills taught in this book will empower children to say in a strong and clear voice, "*This is my body! What I say goes!*"

Best suited to children aged 3 to 9 years.



My Body! What I Say Goes! Activity Book

The activity book reinforces the critical messages ensuring the child gains maximum benefit from the learning contained in the picture book.



➤ Educational Posters for Adolescents

How Do You Know If You Are in an Unsafe Relationship?

An unsafe and exploitative relationship can be very dangerous for you. Here are five checklists featuring **warning signs** that may help you identify if you are in an unsafe relationship. If you are experiencing some of these warning signs, seek help from a professional organization that works with people in domestic and family violence situations.

Control

- ☐ The person may try to control everything you do. At first they may seem charming and say all the right things, but as time goes on, they try to control your life; they want to know what you are doing and/or who you are with at anytime of the day or night.
- ☐ They may control yours or the household money.
- ☐ They may stalk you physically and/or by phone and/or on social media.
- ☐ They gradually start deciding who you should mix with, where you should go, who you should speak to, what you should wear, etc.
- ☐ They may be jealous of your relationship with family and friends, and try to turn you away from them.
- ☐ They may refuse to talk to you about your relationship or important issues, for example, family.
- ☐ They do not trust you and you do not trust them.
- ☐ They may also threaten to harm themselves if you do not do what they ask. They may refuse to eat, cut or injure themselves or say they will commit suicide to manipulate you.
- ☐ They may promise you fancy gifts, expensive trips or take you to beautiful restaurants in exchange for a relationship or taking care of them or simply to make you feel obliged to them.
- ☐ They may decide where you are to work or study.
- ☐ They may try to hinder your progress in school, college or work and eventually make you drop out.
- ☐ They may ask you or force you to take and share revealing photos or videos and then they may use these to blackmail you in some way.
- ☐ They may touch you inappropriately and/or threaten you.

Abuse

- ☐ The person may physically hit and/or kick you and/or threaten to harm or kill you.
- ☐ They may shout, scream and/or say verbally abusive things to you.
- ☐ They may sexually assault you. They may force you to do sexual acts when you do not want to.
- ☐ They may force you to watch pornography.
- ☐ They may say things to you to make you feel awful and damage your self-esteem.
- ☐ They may be cruel and unkind to you in secretive ways that others can't see.
- ☐ They may be abusive to you in front of others and make fun of you.
- ☐ They may make fun of and/or are critical of your body, how you look and/or how you dress.
- ☐ They may share details of your personal relationship with friends in a harmful manner and character shame you.

Manipulation

- ☐ The person may try to turn other people against you and tell lies about you.
- ☐ They may make you feel like everything is your fault.
- ☐ They may make you feel like everything you do is not good enough.
- ☐ They may say that they are much more powerful and stronger than you, and that you are a weak and useless person.
- ☐ They may also trick you and say that you are lucky to be with them because no one else would want to be with you.
- ☐ They may bully you into doing things that are illegal or against your beliefs.
- ☐ They do not tell you where they have been but expect you to always tell them where you have been or where you are going.
- ☐ They may compare you to other people to make you feel a lesser person.
- ☐ They may insist that you are mad or crazy if you argue back or accuse them of any form of manipulation or abuse. They may say you are imagining it and may threaten to harm themselves if you don't do what they tell you to.

- ☐ They may blackmail you by saying that they will disclose your secrets and/or share images of intimate conversations or situations.

Inequality

- ☐ The person may expect you to do all the work and they do very little.
- ☐ They may say that women are not equal to men and that you are a lesser person.
- ☐ They may treat you as a lesser person and unequal to them in status in the community and/or family.
- ☐ They may treat you as stupid and that you are incapable of trying anything new.
- ☐ They may not respect your 'No' and do not ask your consent for anything.
- ☐ They may threaten that they are going to leave you, and you will have nothing and be nothing.

Value

- ☐ The person may say they only value you for one thing; that might be your looks or ability to make money.
- ☐ They don't value your emotions or feelings. They only abuse you and/or make fun of you if you are anxious, scared and/or sad.
- ☐ The person does not make you feel good about yourself, and you do not value yourself ever since you have been in the relationship.
- ☐ They are often not interested in your work or projects.
- ☐ They are often not interested in meeting your friends and family.
- ☐ They may make you feel lonely and isolated.

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- [Unsafe Relationships Checklist - All in One Page - \(A3\) pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5dd496845efb5727a67f6159/1574213262754/E2E+Unsafe-Relationships+A3P.pdf) for printing:
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How Do You Know If You Are in an Unsafe Relationship?

An unsafe and exploitative relationship can be very dangerous for you. Here is a series of **warning signs** that may help you identify if you are in an unsafe relationship. If you are experiencing some of these warning signs, seek help from a professional organization that works with people in domestic and family violence situations.

Abuse



- ☐ The person may physically hit and/or kick you and/or threaten to harm or kill you.
- ☐ They may shout, scream and/or say verbally abusive things to you.
- ☐ They may sexually assault you. They may force you to do sexual acts when you do not want to.
- ☐ They may force you to watch pornography.
- ☐ They may say things to you to make you feel awful and damage your self-esteem.
- ☐ They may be cruel and unkind to you in secretive ways that others can't see.
- ☐ They may be abusive to you in front of others and make fun of you.
- ☐ They may make fun of and/or are critical of your body, how you look and/or how you dress.
- ☐ They may share details of your personal relationship with friends in a harmful manner and character shame you.

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- [Unsafe Relationships Checklist - Abuse - \(A4\) pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5dd49816dddfa84a06099948/1574213680536/E2E_Unsafe-Relationships_A4P.pdf) for printing:
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[Unsafe Relationships Checklist - Abuse - jpeg](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5dd49a79e9f3c379942314d5/1574214273629/E2E_UnsafeRelationships_Abuse.jpg) for sharing on Social Media:
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Control



- ☐ The person may try to control everything you do. At first they may seem charming and say all the right things, but as time goes on, they try to control your life; they want to know what you are doing and/or who you are with at anytime of the day or night.
- ☐ They may control yours or the household money.
- ☐ They may stalk you physically and/or by phone and/or on social media.
- ☐ They gradually start deciding who you should mix with, where you should go, who you should speak to, what you should wear, etc.
- ☐ They may be jealous of your relationship with family and friends, and try to turn you away from them.
- ☐ They may refuse to talk to you about your relationship or important issues, for example, family.
- ☐ They do not trust you and you do not trust them.
- ☐ They may also threaten to harm themselves if you do not do what they ask. They may refuse to eat, cut or injure themselves or say they will commit suicide to manipulate you.
- ☐ They may promise you fancy gifts, expensive trips or take you to beautiful restaurants in exchange for a relationship or taking care of them or simply to make you feel obliged to them.
- ☐ They may decide where you are to work or study.
- ☐ They may try to hinder your progress in school, college or work and eventually make you drop out.
- ☐ They may ask you or force you to take and share revealing photos or videos and then they may use these to blackmail you in some way.
- ☐ They may touch you inappropriately and/or threaten you.

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- [Unsafe Relationships Checklist - Control - \(A4\) pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5dd49816dddfa84a06099948/1574213680536/E2E_Unsafe-Relationships_A4P.pdf) for printing:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5dd49816dddfa84a06099948/1574213680536/E2E_Unsafe-Relationships_A4P.pdf
[Unsafe Relationships Checklist - Control - jpeg](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5dd49ad2e9f3c37994231f96/1574214363357/E2E_UnsafeRelationships_Ctrl.jpg) for sharing on Social Media:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/50769910e4b07864e5d07147/t/5dd49ad2e9f3c37994231f96/1574214363357/E2E_UnsafeRelationships_Ctrl.jpg

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Manipulation



- ☐ The person may try to turn other people against you and tell lies about you.
- ☐ They may make you feel like everything is your fault.
- ☐ They may make you feel like everything you do is not good enough.
- ☐ They may say that they are much more powerful and stronger than you, and that you are a weak and useless person.
- ☐ They may also trick you and say that you are lucky to be with them because no one else would want to be with you.
- ☐ They may bully you into doing things that are illegal or against your beliefs.
- ☐ They do not tell you where they have been but expect you to always tell them where you have been or where you are going.
- ☐ They may compare you to other people to make you feel a lesser person.
- ☐ They may insist that you are mad or crazy if you argue back or accuse them of any form of manipulation or abuse. They may say you are imagining it and may threaten to harm themselves if you don't do what they tell you to.
- ☐ They may blackmail you by saying that they will disclose your secrets and/or share images of intimate conversations or situations.

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How Do You Know If You Are in an Unsafe Relationship?

An unsafe and exploitative relationship can be very dangerous for you. Here is a series of **warning signs** that may help you identify if you are in an unsafe relationship. If you are experiencing some of these warning signs, seek help from a professional organization that works with people in domestic and family violence situations.

Inequality



- ☐ The person may expect you to do all the work and they do very little.
- ☐ They may say that women are not equal to men and that you are a lesser person.
- ☐ They may treat you as a lesser person and unequal to them in status in the community and/or family.
- ☐ They may treat you as stupid and that you are incapable of trying anything new.
- ☐ They may not respect your 'No' and do not ask your consent for anything.
- ☐ They may threaten that they are going to leave you, and you will have nothing and be nothing.

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Value



- ☐ The person may say they only value you for one thing; that might be your looks or ability to make money.
- ☐ They don't value your emotions or feelings. They only abuse you and/or make fun of you if you are anxious, scared and/or sad.
- ☐ The person does not make you feel good about yourself, and you do not value yourself ever since you have been in the relationship.
- ☐ They are often not interested in your work or projects.
- ☐ They are often not interested in meeting your friends and family.
- ☐ They may make you feel lonely and isolated.

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APPENDIX 5

Examples of Pedagogical Experiences to work on with Minors in the framework of our Educational Mission¹⁰⁰ and of Prevention of Abuse.

Here we give some examples of pedagogical programs/experiences with the purpose of offering some guidelines for formation for children, adolescents and vulnerable adults on the topic of sexual abuse, which can help to program and plan the formative modules in each place, country or circumscription. In this case, it is a matter of self-protection and care as forms of prevention of abuse.

The INSPIRE Handbook¹⁰¹ presents the following Approach: Helping children protect themselves from sexual abuse. Recognition of and effective response to potential threats of sexual abuse are protective measures. Some programs teach children about body ownership, the difference between good and bad touches, how to recognize abusive situations, to say no and tell a trusted adult.¹⁰²

INSPIRE points out IMpower as a program of formation that responds to this approach:

Designed by Lee Paiva, foundress of the NGO “No Means No, Worldwide,” it is addressed to girls and adolescents (between the ages of 10-20), and consists in a 12-hour course conducted in weekly 2-hour lessons by qualified instructors. The classes take place in the local school and cover an integral plan of studies, from lessons about consent, trust, self-esteem, assertiveness, corporal autonomy and empowerment, even classes in self-defense and immobilization, in order to disable the assailants. Teaching personal defense to girls in Nairobi (Kenya), it has reduced by half the rate of sexual aggression toward the participants.

As a parallel, Lee Paiva created another program for boys, in which the classes focus on respect for women and gender equality in order to put a stop to harmful stereotypes, and techniques to intervene in assault attempts. In the year after the training, 73% of the boys that intervened in an assault prevented its completion. To this date, Lee Paiva has taught more than 300,000 boys and girls to say No to sexual violation. In all the sites in Kenya and Malawi where the program has been implemented, it has been a resounding success, since it has shown that the rates of violation, pregnancies and attacks have been reduced to 50%.¹⁰³

Links to videos about this program in English:

<https://www.nomeansnoworldwide.org/approach>;
<https://www.nomeansnoworldwide.org/>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwo6jR476DE>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkNZbBdFIAI>.

¹⁰⁰ Cfr. Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Educational Style, 2017.

¹⁰¹ INSPIRE Handbook: Action for implementing the seven strategies for ending violence against children.

¹⁰² INSPIRE Handbook: Action for implementing the seven strategies for ending violence against children, Geneva, World Health Organization, 2018 License CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO, p. 265.

¹⁰³ Cfr. Lee Paiva, No means no in any part of the world! <https://www.nomeansnoworldwide.org/>

APPENDIX 6

Mechanisms, Definition and Examples of Child Maltreatment

Maltreatment is a violation by any other person of a person's right of to respect and to physical or emotional integrity, affecting concretely or potentially, his/her health, physical, psychological and social development, or his/her dignity. Maltreatment can consist of one isolated act or of repeated acts. Here we give some examples of emotional maltreatment and its consequences.

In general the literature divides maltreatment into the following categories; physical, emotional, sexual violence (all of which are active forms) and negligence (a passive form). In this epigraph we will try to explain briefly and give examples of psychological and emotional maltreatment.

Psychological and emotional abuses result from the deprivation of an environment of security or of affective well-being, indispensable for growth, development and balanced behavior of the minor or vulnerable adult. They encompass different situations, from deprivation/inconsistency of care or of affection appropriate to the age and personal situation, to complete emotional rejection, through the continuous disparagement of the victim with frequent negative repercussions at the behavioral, psychological and emotional levels.

Here we will present some examples of emotional maltreatment and its consequences in signs, symptoms and indicators of emotional abuse:

▪ **Examples of emotional maltreatment:**

- Insulting and yelling (e.g. name calling)
- Threatening and intimidating (e.g. threats of abandonment)
- Humiliating (e.g. pointing out defects and failures in behavior and in physical appearance)
- Rejecting, ignoring and belittling (e.g. tell the victim that he/she should never have been born)
- Using strategies of emotional and psychological abuse in order to punish (e.g. threatening the use of physical force; shutting him/her up in a dark room or in a locked room)
- Emotional unavailability of the parents or caregivers (lack of emotional connection)
- Lack of response to the needs of the person
- Constant criticism, systematic putting down, and devaluing, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
- "Conditional" attention in which the level of attention and care shown by the parents/caregivers depends on the way in which the victim behaves
- Obliging the victim to assume responsibilities inappropriate to his/her age or state.
- Use of irrational or severe disciplinary methods
- Exposure to domestic violence
- Serious overprotection (e.g. preventing the victim from relating with his/her friends or with another parent or other members of the family.)

▪ Signs, symptoms and indications of emotional abuse

(Behavioral symptoms)

- Aggressive behaviors: aggression against self or others) and/or self-mutilation;
- Excessive anxiety or difficulty in interpersonal affective relationships;
- Eating disorders;
- Loss of bladder/bowel control;
- Suicidal behavior or ideation;
- Emotional instability;
- Insecurity and blocking; learned helplessness;
- Sadness, low self-esteem, frequent and sustained self-devaluation (e.g. “I’m stupid, worthless”);
- Inappropriate reaction to suffering (e.g. “I deserve it”);
- Physical, emotional, mental or scholastic development that is below expectations;
- Defiant, oppositional behaviors;
- Sudden disturbance of verbal fluency (e.g. stuttering, mutism), exaggerated reaction to small mistakes;
- Extreme fear in a certain situation;
- Neurotic behaviors (self-harming, pulling out one’s hair, constantly fanning oneself);
- Extreme passivity.

(Others)

- Repeated episodes of emergency room visits, due to headaches, muscular and abdominal pain without any apparent organic cause.¹⁰⁴

In the light of these examples, we can easily understand the terrible damage that such behavior can cause in children, adolescents, and vulnerable adults, and to feel, because of it, the urgent need to protect them and to promote relationships of good, healthy and positive treatment.

¹⁰⁴ Portuguese Province of the Society of Jesus, *Manual SPC – Sistema de Protección y Cuidado de Menores y Adultos Vulnerables*, June 2018, p. 29.

APPENDIX 7

Record of the Interview / Accusation

Given that, according to Canon Law, the reports of acts that could constitute a crime on the part of a Sister can constitute a sufficient basis for the Major Superior to assume the responsibility of investigation, there is no need for a specialized format for the record of the accusation. The report of the one who claims to have been the victim of abuse or of the one who declares it in his/her name is sufficient.

➤ What elements is it important to document in writing?

Regarding the **interview** as such:

- a) Name of the person who listened to the report/account
- b) Place, date and time of the interview

Regarding the data of the **person who reports** that he/she has suffered abuse or recounts the abuses suffered by another person:

- a) The record of his/her personal information requires his/her consent, but it is very important that everything is put into writing and that the person signs each page of the minutes of the interview.
- b) If the person wishes to keep his/her identity confidential, this does not constitute an obstacle to record his/her account and have it reach the Major Superior. The one who listened attests, in this case, that the accusation is not anonymous, but that is from a concrete source.
- c) If the person consents to submit his/her information, it is advisable to gather, in addition to his/her name, his/her identity card (ID), age and contact information.
- d) In any case, it will be advisable to inform the person (at the most appropriate moment, depending upon the characteristics of the interview, which can take place in very different circumstances) about the limits to confidentiality: the process of the investigation could be considerably shortened; in the case of sexual abuse of a minor, one cannot keep it secret, since that would constitute an additional crime.

Regarding the **record of the events reported**:

- ✓ It is very important that no judgement be made; what the victim asks is that we listen seriously to him/her. It is not necessary to tell him/her that we believe him/her or that he/she is right.
- ✓ It is important to record everything in writing (or, at least, if there is any difficulty, the essentials of what is recounted by the person) and that the person signs, page by page, the minutes of the interview. She must be shown that this is for her own protection, and a sign that of the seriousness with which the Institute regards the investigation.
- ✓ If the person has given details, the advantage of recording them now is that it avoids having him/her retell them. (It is important to remember that each time that a victim of sexual abuse relates what he/she has lived through, he/she relives it.)

- ✓ It is not the task of the person who listens to the report to ask for more than what the person says, even when she perceives incongruity or gaps in the narrative. This is the role of the one who investigates. The most important thing in the first encounter is empathy and attentive listening.
- ✓ The narrative must contain, at least, a brief description of the facts, name or elements that indicate the identity of the accused Sister, the approximate date, and the place or places in which the acts occurred.

If the person submits some type of **complementary document or documents with his report** (audios, copies of mails, photos, photos of the telephone screen, of WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom or others) it is advisable to record these also in writing.

Finally, it is advisable to record also the **orientation given to the person**. For example: to whom the information that he/she has submitted will be sent, in what time-frame, what could happen afterward, who will inform him/her of this, etc.

If it is possible, it will always be advisable for the person who makes the accusation to be able to read and correct in writing what has been recorded, and if possible, **to sign it**. The person who has received the report will also sign it.

It is advisable, besides, to give the person an exact copy of the original of his accusation.

It is recommended to **number the pages** using the following format: Page 1 of 80, Page 53 of 80, etc.

APPENDIX 8

Samples of Press Releases

Different formats of Press Releases are suggested:

a) INFORMATION ON THE RECEPTION OF AN ACCUSATION AND BEGINNING OF A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

1. The Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in(country) reports that it has received an accusation against Sr.ACI (name) for a presumed sexual abuse of a minor. This accusation was presented by (the entity that has made the accusation)¹⁰⁵ According to the testimony of the accuser(s) the incident(s) had occurred in(place) when Sr.(name) worked in(said institution, or in X activity, or)

2. The Provincial Superior of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Sr. (name) in accordance with the policy of the Congregation, has declared the opening of a preliminary canonical investigation. While the canonical investigation is being carried out, the Provincial Superior has ordered that (indicate the pastoral measures that have been taken, for example, prohibiting the accused from contact with minors, assigning her residence, etc.). Given that the deed of which she is accused had occurred in (school, social services center, etc.), this entity has complied with the legal duty of reporting to the Court

3. Sr.(name) has declared her innocence or has acknowledged the crime, has stated her willingness to cooperate and her desire to exercise her right to defense, before the canonical court and well as the civil court, so as to shed light as soon as possible upon the acts of which she is accused.

5. As the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we reaffirm in the presence of the community, our absolute commitment to an expeditious ascertainment of the truth, cooperating with the investigation conducted and appropriately communicating its conclusions. As Pope Francis reminds us, “the wounds never go away,” the pain of the persons that we have harmed “cries out to heaven.” (Letter of Pope Francis to the People of God, 20 August 2018).

6.....(Place and date)

b) DECLARATION OF THE CONCLUSION OF A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION IN WHICH THE ACCUSATION WAS DEEMED CREDIBLE

1. The Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus reports the conclusion of the preliminary investigation carried out by the lawyer begun by an accusation against Sr. aci, of sexual abuse. The accusation has been deemed credible.

¹⁰⁵ If it is a person or persons who have made the accusation, it is not advisable to make his/her name public since it can give rise to harassment, social punishment, etc.

In contrast to the above, the name of the accused Sister, if it is made public, allows for other possible victims to be able to come forward to submit their testimony, on seeing that they can count upon the guarantee of a proper forum in which to do so.

2. The information about this decision has been communicated personally to the victims of Sr.

3. As a congregation, the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus ask the victims for pardon because of the grave harm done to them, at the same time we thank them for their courage in submitting their testimonies, which were vital in ascertaining the facts and sanctioning in accordance with the gravity of these. (We also wish to ask pardon of the educational/parochial/etc. communities affected.)

It is with great shame that we acknowledge the abuse committed, especially because of the harm that it has caused to minors, taking advantage of the trust and authority placed in Sr. in her role as(Director/Teacher/Director of Pastoral Ministry) and in areas within our (schools/ social service centers/...) where the care of minors is the greatest personal and institutional duty and responsibility.

4. In regard to Sr.(indicate what will be done next, whether to begin an administrative canonical process, or initiate her process of expulsion from the Congregation, or the measures that will be taken in order to ensure that she will not abuse again in the future, according to the case.)

5. In regard to the reparation measures (indicate those which have been taken or will be taken, for example):

- We have offered financial support for therapeutic treatments to those victims who have requested it. This offer of support will be reiterated to each of the victims.
- Moreover, within the process of reparation to the victims, we commit ourselves to increase opportunities for dialogue with each of them in order to continue to define the most adequate means of reparation.

6. We reaffirm our absolute rejection of any action which harms the physical or moral integrity of any person, especially minors. Likewise, we want to express our commitment to the care of all persons, by means of concrete actions, such as efforts toward prevention and creation of safe and healthy environments, reception and rigorous investigation of the accusations which we receive, cooperation with the relevant judicial authorities, and transparency in moving the process forward.

7.(Place and date)

c) INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONCLUSION OF A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION DEEMED NOT CREDIBLE

1. The preliminary investigation carried out by the lawyer, following an accusation against Sr. aci, of sexual abuse has been concluded.

2. This investigation was unable to verify the facts reported, a conclusion that was communicated this morning, personally, to the person who presented the information mentioned above. Thus also, we express to the accuser our full willingness to cooperate, if he/she decides to present his/her accusation before the court.

3. As the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we reaffirm our commitment to truth, justice and reparation to any person who has been the victim of abuse.

