

ROMAN UNION OF THE ORDER OF SAINT URSULA

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Roman Union of the Order of Saint Ursula (*the Institute*) is a branch of the spiritual family founded by Saint Angela Merici. We are an international Religious Institute of pontifical right and we share in the mission of the Church to proclaim Jesus Christ and to extend the reign of God through our various ministries throughout the world.

Each person is created in the image and likeness of God and has an intrinsic dignity. As Ursulines we have been exhorted from the very first by Saint Angela to be respectful of all and to insist on the dignity and respect required for a person to reach their true potential. (Counsels, Prologue #9, Counsels #3, 7)

Our Institute is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that is safe, respectful, supportive, nurturing and caring for all people, especially children¹ and vulnerable persons². Saint Angela encouraged us to be full of concern for those entrusted to our care, to ‘guard them and watch over them as most vigilant shepherds’. (Counsels, Prologue) We categorically state that any and all abuse of a child or vulnerable person is wrong.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the welfare and safety of children and vulnerable persons.

SCOPE

In fulfilling our mission today in the church, Ursuline Sisters are involved in a variety of ministries, many of which include working with *children* and *vulnerable persons*. Safeguarding of children and vulnerable persons is the responsibility of all. Each sister has a duty to make herself aware of her responsibilities in ministry to protect those children and vulnerable persons with whom she works. This includes the reporting obligation imposed on a member of an Institute of Consecrated Life under the Motu proprio *Vos sets lux mundi* 2019 Art. 3.

This policy applies to the Roman Union of the Order of Saint Ursula, to any Corporate Entity of the Institute and to any ministry by a community or an individual undertaken in the name of the Institute. It aims to complement existing policies developed by Conferences of Major Superiors of Religious Institutes and Bishops’ Conferences. Each community/group/province leader has a responsibility to ensure that clear and comprehensive written policies and procedures are in place in her province/country to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable persons.

Where the Institute, province, group and/or community is the direct employer or has volunteers working in its institutions the principles of this Safeguarding policy apply.

CREATING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

The creation of safe environments for children and vulnerable persons is the responsibility of all concerned. For this reason, it is important to work with others – parents, employees, volunteers, civil authorities, community organisations – in developing safe environments.

¹ Those defined as a “minor” in accord with the Motu proprio *Vos estis lux mundi* 2019 Art. 1§2, (a).

² As defined in the Motu proprio *Vos estis lux mundi* 2019 Art. 1§2, (b).

In creating a safe environment for children and vulnerable persons to achieve their highest potential, due attention should be given to the following:

1. Openness of the physical environment; e.g. open doors, glass panels, spaces in clear view of others in the building;
2. An environment of listening and respectful caring for all;
3. Clear understanding of civil requirements and canonical obligations such as mandatory reporting;
4. Clear policies in relation to supervision and risk management, the use of photos and all forms of social media;
5. Appropriate and timely response where the safety, welfare or well-being of a child or vulnerable person is at risk;
6. Demonstration of personal behaviours that promote the safety, welfare and well-being of children and vulnerable persons;
7. Pastoral support, risk management and counselling for Complainants and other affected persons;
8. Pastoral support, risk management and counselling for Respondents;
9. Management of conflict of interest issues and ensuring due process when an allegation is made;
10. Transparency of rules and values demonstrated in the working environment.

In all ministry situations there should be a *Code of Conduct* for all Ursulines, employees and volunteers. This is best developed in consultation with those involved and, once developed, needs to be communicated and undertaken by all concerned. (See Appendix II)

ACCEPTANCE OF MEMBERS TO THE INSTITUTE

The Ursuline Formation Handbook³ refers to processes for safe recruitment in relation to prospective members of the Institute. The criteria for acceptance as a postulant in the Institute are clearly set out in the Handbook.⁴ Superiors are to admit candidates to the novitiate of the required age (at least 18 years), who have the health, suitable character, and sufficient qualities of maturity to embrace the life of an Ursuline Sister (c. 642). This health, character and maturity are to be verified even by use of experts, if necessary (c. 642).

RECRUITMENT AND ADVERTISING

Recruitment refers to the engagement of staff and volunteers in our ministries.

Provinces and groups should have in place procedures to be followed in the recruitment of employees and volunteers.

Situations vary according to the nature and purpose of a particular position. In any recruitment process due regard needs to be given to:

³ Ursulines of the Roman Union Formation Handbook – 2012

⁴ *Ibid* pp.19-27

- a) Clear role descriptions and accountabilities
- b) Open advertising and application processes
- c) Interviews
- d) Checking of identification documents and references, including referee checking and information sharing with former employers and/or organisations;
- e) Police clearance (where available) that there is no legal impediment to working with children or vulnerable persons.

FORMATION

Formation refers to both initial formation as Ursuline religious, employees or volunteers and to ongoing formation and training (c. 659§1) which needs to be consistent, current and relevant. Formation is to be systematic and practical (c. 660§1)

All stages of formation should include specific education on abuse and safeguarding, dealing with such issues as

- I. Creating safe environments
- II. Recognising the signs of sexual abuse
- III. Recognising behaviours which may indicate a person is a perpetrator
- IV. Identifying the different forms of abuse – physical, sexual, emotional/psychological and neglect - and managing risks, indicators and warning signs
- V. The damage to victims of sexual abuse
- VI. The impact on families and communities of sexual abuse
- VII. Ministry to those who have been abused
- VIII. Support of staff

As Ursulines we commit ourselves to the ongoing and regular formation of all concerned in this most important area of Child Safeguarding. This ongoing formation (in Safeguarding) of Ursulines is to continue as part of their practical formation through their life (c. 661).

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

While there may be delegations within the institute and province/group the final responsibility for dealing with complaints and the quality of the response to such complaints lies with the Prioress General in cases involving allegations against sisters in the Institute and the provincial or group leader in all other cases within their province/group. The Prioress General should be informed of any allegations of abuse against Sisters of the Institute and any other allegations which may impact on the mission of the Institute. She may appoint a delegate to accompany the complaint handling process. The canonical process for dismissal should be initiated in appropriate cases (Art. 3 Chapter VI Title II Part III Book II 1983 CIC).

Each province/group will develop guidelines with regard to reporting and its own detailed procedures for responding to complaints and disclosures of abuse of children and vulnerable persons. Such protocols must include clear statements on the following:

- 1) Those persons to whom the protocol applies
- 2) To whom a complaint must be directed in the first instance
- 3) Reporting of criminal behaviour to the police or appropriate authority
- 4) Reporting to other civil authorities as required

- 5) The procedure to be followed for receiving and investigating complaints not referred to the police i.e. when the accused person has died, when the behaviour complained of is not illegal in State Law but breaches the Code of Conduct or when the police have investigated but are not intending to prosecute. This procedure should –
- (a) be robust and transparent
 - (b) contain clear directions as to who is an appropriate person to receive the complaint
 - (c) provide for the establishment of a safeguarding committee of competent people which includes at least one independent person;
 - in the case of a sister making a complaint this committee should be led by an independent person and the sister be assigned an independent person to accompany her
 - (d) be able to be implemented in a timely manner
 - (e) provide for a support person for the person making a complaint
 - (f) provide for appropriate support according to the requirements of Canon Law for religious (cf. C#619) and, for employees and volunteers, according to their employment contract or volunteer agreement.
 - (g) outline precautionary measures to manage the current risk
 - (h) set out the outcomes for both accused and complainant and how these will be shared
 - (i) provide for a review process
 - (j) always take care to preserve the rights, good name and confidentiality of both the complainant and the accused as well as the presumption of innocence of the accused
 - (k) ensure that no steps are taken in an investigation and no statements are made that might prejudice the outcome of possible criminal or civil proceedings, or interfere with a Police investigation

Good record keeping at all stages of this process is essential. Every allegation, whether current or historical, must be investigated by the appropriate authority.

In any complaints process it is important to distinguish between civil, criminal and canonical processes.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This policy applies to all members of the Institute, all employees and volunteers in ministerial works undertaken in the name of the Institute. Alongside the specific policies and procedures developed at province/group/community level, this policy needs to be made available to, and commitment sought from, all relevant persons. (See Scope, page 1)

There should be a clear identification of relevant officers for the implementation of this policy. E.g. Safeguarding Officers, Designated Liaison Persons, Contact Persons. A Flow Chart at province level would assist this process.

There should be a regular review of the policy and associated documents in the provinces, in addition to the formation processes undertaken in relation to Safeguarding.

When General visitation takes place in any Province or Group, the General Councillor carrying out visitation will examine the relevant policies and implementation plans.

To facilitate implementation and accountability there may be meetings held within the institute of relevant personnel from each province in order to engage in ongoing formation, share experiences and review policies and procedures.

Date of approval by the Prioress General with the consent of her Council: 30th August 2019

Review to take place in three years at the General level.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Cecilia Wango".

Prioress General

APPENDIX 1

DEFINITIONS

Institute	Roman Union of the Order of Saint Ursula
Child	Any person under the age of 18* years. (*This may vary according to the relevant civil authority); a child is one defined as a “minor” in <i>Vos estis lux mundi 2019 Art. 1§2, (a)</i> .
Vulnerable person	Any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offence.
Abuse of Power	The improper use of authority by someone who has that authority by virtue of the person that they are and/or the position that they hold. It can be characterised by grooming, bullying, harassment or any behaviour which seeks to advantage one person over another. The abuse of an ecclesiastical power or function is a delict in canon law (c. 1389§1).
Child Abuse ⁵	<p>Child abuse is the mistreatment of children through any act or omission that results in harm or violence. There are four major categories of child abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and psychological/emotional abuse:</p> <p>physical abuse refers to any non-accidental physically aggressive act towards a child. Physical abuse may be intentional or may be the inadvertent result of physical punishment. It results in – or has a high likelihood of resulting in – harm for the child’s health, survival, development or dignity. Physically abusive behaviours include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning and kicking;</p> <p>sexual abuse refers to a person who uses power, force or authority to involve a child or young person in any form of unwanted or illegal sexual activity. This can involve touching or no contact at all. This may take the form of taking sexually explicit photographs or videos of children, forcing children to watch or take part in sexual acts and forcing or coercing children to have sex or engage in sexual acts with other children or adults. Grooming refers to a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child as a precursor to sexual abuse. It includes establishing a ‘special’ friendship/relationship with the child. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents and other adults to think that the</p>

⁵ World Health Organisation 2006 **Preventing Child Maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence** and Catholic Professional Standards Ltd Australia <https://www.cpsltd.org.au/safe-church/support-materials/glossary/>

relationship with the child is 'normal' and positive. The process can take as little as a few days or as long as months or even years.

neglect

refers to a failure by a caregiver to provide the basic requirements for meeting the physical and emotional developmental needs of a child. Physically neglectful behaviours include a failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention; cf. Can. 1389, §2.

psychological abuse

refers to inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts and a failure to provide adequate non-physical nurture or emotional availability. Psychological abuse involves both isolated incidents, as well as a pattern of failure over time on the part of a caregiver to provide a developmentally appropriate and supportive environment. Acts in this category may have a high probability of damaging the child's physical or mental health, or its physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Psychologically abusive behaviours include rejecting, ignoring, isolating, terrorising, corrupting, verbal abuse and belittlement.

Grooming

refers to a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child as a precursor to sexual abuse. It includes establishing a 'special' friendship/ relationship with the child. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents and other adults to think that the relationship with the child is 'normal' and positive. The process can take as little as a few days or as long as months or even years.

APPENDIX II:

CODE OF CONDUCT

Each province will develop a Code of Conduct which should include the following:

1. Development of respectful relationships
2. Values in relation to the exercise of power and authority
3. Appropriate physical contact
4. One on one encounters
5. Conflict of interest matters