

*What You Can Expect When Making a Report of Sexual Abuse*  
*Saint Mary's Abbey*  
2020

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Saint Mary's Abbey recognizes that sexual abuse by members of its monastic community can have devastating consequences for survivors and their families, as well as for the lay and religious people of the Catholic Church. We have become increasingly aware of the effects of this tragic behavior and have developed a steadfast commitment to helping those affected.

The Benedictine monks of Saint Mary's Abbey, guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church, believe that human suffering as well as the weaknesses and imperfections of human beings deserve a response rooted in love, compassion, and concern. Saint Mary's Abbey recognizes that cases involving allegations of sexual abuse by a member of the monastic community requires actions that are loving and compassionate to the survivor, fair to the accused, and sensitive to the greater good of the Catholic people and the community at large.

This guide is intended to provide basic information about (1) how Saint Mary's Abbey defines sexual abuse (2) what its procedures are for responding to complaints of sexually inappropriate behavior and sexual abuse, and (3) to whom those subjected to sexual abuse can turn for help.

**Sexual abuse of a minor** is sexual contact between a religious and a minor.

Sexual exploitation or sexual abuse can include actions such as:

- Sexual touching or other physical contact that makes the person being touched to feel uncomfortable;
- Giving a sexually charged gift (such as lingerie);
- A prolonged hug when a brief hug is customary behavior;
- Kissing on the lips when a kiss on the cheek would be appropriate;
- Showing sexually suggestive objects or pornography;
- Sexual intercourse, anal, or oral sex;
- Innuendo or sexual talk;
- Suggestive comments;
- Descriptions of sexual experiences, fantasies, or conflicts; and
- Sexual propositions.

*\*This is not an exhaustive list.*

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To be clear, Saint Mary's Abbey stance is this: Sexual abuse of a minor by its Members, employees, and volunteers is contrary to Catholic morals, doctrine, and canon law. It is never acceptable. It is entirely the responsibility of the Member to maintain appropriate emotional and sexual boundaries with those with whom he works and/or serves.

Saint Mary's Abbey responds to all allegations and reports of sexual abuse with great care. To ensure that we handle each report promptly, thoroughly, and compassionately, Saint Mary's Abbey established a Case Management Office and a Victim's Advocate. The Victim's Advocate is a lay professional who will listen to, understand, and offer help, including appropriate psychological counseling for those affected by sexual abuse by a Member.

In every case, Saint Mary's Abbey will immediately report an allegation of sexual abuse to the prosecutor's office. Additionally, through the Case Management Office and independent investigators, Saint Mary's Abbey will respond swiftly to evaluate and investigate any accusation of sexual abuse by a Member.

Saint Mary's Abbey, consistent with the directives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, also established a Review Board, known as the Abbey Review Board (ARB). This interdisciplinary board of lay professionals advises the Institute on all matters related to sexual misconduct.

Any Member who has been found to have an established allegation of sexual abuse of a minor against him will be removed from ministry and placed under restrictions to ensure he does not have unsupervised access to minors.

In addition to establishing procedures for responding to sexual abuse, Saint Mary's Abbey has undertaken a series of measures to prevent future incidents of abuse. These include extensive mandatory psychological evaluation of candidates before they enter formation and the provision of continuing education programs for Members about issues of sexuality and personal conduct.

It is our firm belief that Religious must maintain appropriate boundaries with all people. We call upon those with knowledge of a Member's inappropriate behavior - whether past or present - to come forward with this information and prevent further harm. In short, we ask everyone to join with us to protect the safety of children,

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women, and men, and with firm determination, to promote healing where there is pain.

**If you or someone you know believe that a Member has violated the boundaries outlined in this guide, we urge you to report such behavior immediately to the Major Superior, the Case Management Office and/or the Victim's Advocate, using the contact information below.**

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**IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE, REPORT IT DIRECTLY TO THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES:**

**For abuse of minors:**

<https://www.nj.gov/dcf/reporting/hotline/>

**New Jersey Clergy Abuse Hotline**  
855-363-6548

**For any act of abuse:**

**Morris County Prosecutor's Office (973-285-6200)**

**OR CALL YOUR LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY**