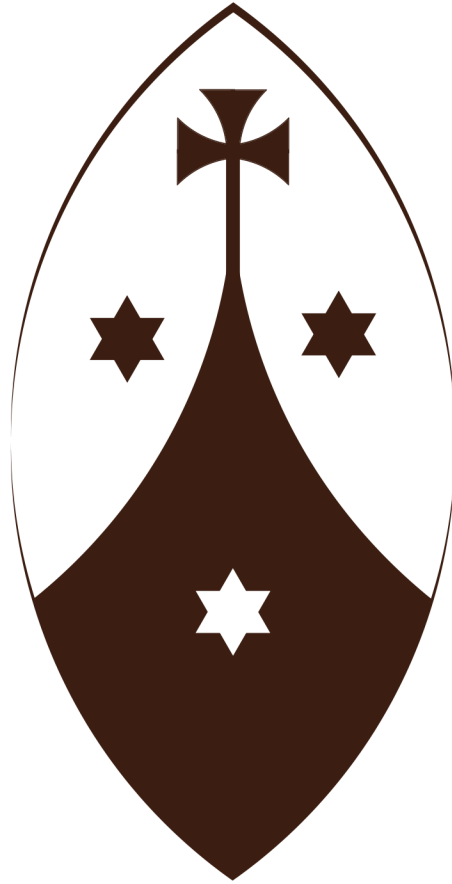


SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES 2023



**CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR
CHILDREN & VULNERABLE ADULTS**

**SEMI-PROVINCE OF ST. THÉRÈSE
OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FRIARS**

DISCALCED CARMELITE FATHERS OF OKLAHOMA, INC.

THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FRIARS' COMMITMENT

The Discalced Carmelite Friars are a community of men – priests and religious brothers – serving the Church through a life of contemplative prayer. They strive to foster growth in the spiritual life, helping women and men grow in friendship with God and with neighbor, all under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel. Our commitment to the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to live according to a higher standard, the imitation of Christ himself, should be reflected in observing our Safe Environment Policy.

The Discalced Carmelite Friars of the Oklahoma Semi-Province are dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. By establishing boundaries for a healthy ministry with minors and by maintaining a constructive vigilance, we can minimize, even obviate, the possibility of sexual abuse. Such prevention begins with education and training, both in initial and on-going formation. We will offer pastoral and spiritual support to any victims who may have suffered abuse by a Member of our Province and for the families of those victims, as well as professional counseling, if requested. Our hope and prayer is to bring some healing and peace to anyone who has suffered such abuse.

The Policy, Code of Conduct, and other information included in this: “2023 Safe Environment Policy”, while not exhaustive, focuses on the effort to live Christ-like behavior in the realm of chastity and the need to promote environments safe for those whom we serve.

We pledge our cooperation with civil authorities. All allegations of sexual abuse of a minor will be reported immediately to appropriate government agencies.

If you need to report an incident of abuse, we encourage you to contact our Survivor Assistance Coordinator, Fr. Ralph Reyes, OCD, at raul.reyes@carmelitefriarsocd.com.

POLICY

Pastoral Care

- I. It is the policy of the Semi-Province that all Members conduct themselves in a manner so as to protect minors or vulnerable adults from all forms of sexual abuse.
- II. The Semi-Province and its Members are committed to intervening should a Member violate the Semi-Province policies regarding boundaries with minors.
- III. All Members are to use means reasonably available to prevent the occurrence of any kind of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult.
- IV. The Semi-Province and its Members will respond pastorally and compassionately to any person who reports sexual abuse of a minor in order to promote healing for survivors of sexual abuse.
- V. The Provincial is to coordinate assistance to the individual allegedly abused and to the individuals related to the alleged victim.
- VI. All Members of the Semi-Province are to treat seriously any allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult by any Member of the Province.

Education

- VII. The Semi-Province educates its Members on the knowledge and skills necessary for preventing and responding to abuse and utilizes systems of support and accountability for its Members.
- VIII. The Provincial of the Semi-Province will demonstrate transparency and commitment to the Members of the Semi-Province in key areas of abuse prevention and response.
- IX. Screening and Formation Programs:
 - a. The Semi-Province will employ adequate screening and evaluation techniques in determining the fitness of candidates for the Province.
 - b. The Semi-Province screens new Candidates for a history of sexually abusing minors or violating the boundaries of minors.
 - c. The Semi-Province and its Members provide specialized support and accountability at each stage in the initial formation of Members.

Reporting

- X. All Members of the Semi-Province have the duty to report any alleged sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult directly to the appropriate civil authorities immediately regardless of mandatory state laws.
- XI. The Provincial must also be notified of any allegations.
- XII. The Semi-Province and its Members adhere to written protocols for responding to reports and allegations of sexual abuse of a minor and maintains documentation of adherence to those protocols in a manner that guarantees it will be available to future leadership.

Investigation

XIII. External investigation:

- a. The Semi-Province and its Members pledge our cooperation with civil authorities. All allegations of sexual abuse of a minor will be reported immediately to appropriate government agencies.

Internal investigation:

- a. The Semi-Province investigates all reports and allegations of sexual abuse of minors by a Member, to the extent possible, based on the information provided.
- b. The Provincial shall attempt to gather sufficient information of the alleged sexual abuse so as to complete a preliminary report and respond to the alleged abuse.
- c. The Provincial will designate an investigator to independently gather information regarding the allegations.
- d. Upon the completion of the investigation, the Provincial, in consultation with the Review Board, will take appropriate action.
- e. The Semi-Province will utilize a Review Board for the purpose of providing consultation to the Provincial on the response to all reports and allegations of sexual abuse of minors.
- f. To the fullest extent possible, the Institute will document every effort to restore the good reputation of a Member who has been falsely accused of the sexual abuse of a minor.

Supervision

- XIV. The Semi-Province will maintain a written, individualized Safety Plan to guide the supervision of any Member against whom an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor has been established.
- XV. The Semi-Province will identify appropriate levels of supervision for Members who have Safety Plans.
- XVI. The Semi-Province will ensure Members on a Safety Plan do not work in any position that allows access to minors or in any ecclesiastical ministry.
- XVII. The Semi-Province ensures Safety Plans are reviewed annually by the Major Superior and the review board to ensure ongoing compliance and the overall efficacy of the plan

Policy Adherence

- XVIII. All members of the Province must execute a statement of receipt and agreement, acknowledging that they have read the Policy with its attached documents and agree to abide by them.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Events with minors present:

A. Off-site events:

1. Members are prohibited from transporting minors without written permission or consent of their parent or guardian.
2. Members are prohibited from unnecessary and inappropriate physical contact with minors while in vehicles.
3. Minors should be transported directly to their destination. No unnecessary stops should be made.
4. Members are prohibited from having minors stay at their residence.
5. Requests for exceptions should be submitted to the Superior of the monastery.
6. Changing and showering facilities or arrangements for members must be separate from facilities or arrangements for minors.

B. Prohibited Behaviors:

1. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of illegal drugs while supervising minors.
2. Providing or allowing minors to consume alcohol or illegal drugs.
3. Using inappropriate language and jokes in the presence of minors.
4. Speaking to minors in a way that is harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
5. Communication with minors through social media is strictly prohibited. If any communication is necessary, it should be done with the assistance of the legal guardian. This includes, but is not limited to, pictures, electronic/text messaging, or social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and WhatsApp.
6. Discussing sexual activities with minors, unless it is in an educational setting and the member is trained and authorized to discuss these matters.
7. Engaging in any sexually-oriented conversations with minors, unless the conversations are part of a legitimate lesson and discussion for teenagers regarding human-sexuality issues. On such occasions, the lessons will convey to the youth the Church's teachings on these topics.
8. Being nude in the presence of minors.
9. Possessing pornographic materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, or material on the internet: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.).
10. Sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags, or small tents with minors.
11. Engaging in sexual contact with minors. For the purposes of this policy, sexual contact is defined as vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral intercourse or the touching of an erogenous zone (including but not limited to the thighs, genitals, buttocks, pubic region or chest) of another for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying either individual.

C. Physical Contact:

1. Members are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of minors. No form of physical discipline is acceptable for the correction of misbehavior of minors, this includes: spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force.
2. In order to maintain the safest possible environment for minors, the following examples of affection are forbidden and must not be used by members in ministerial roles with minors or vulnerable adults, at any time for any reason:
 - i. Inappropriate or lengthy embraces;
 - ii. Kissing on the mouth;
 - iii. Holding minors over four years old on the lap;
 - iv. Touching buttocks, chests or genital areas;
 - v. Showing affection in isolated locations such as bedrooms, closets, or staff only areas;
 - vi. Being in bed with a minor,
 - vii. Touching knees or legs of minors;
 - viii. Wrestling with minors;
 - ix. Tickling minors;
 - x. Piggyback rides;
 - xi. Any type of massage given by minor to adult;
 - xii. Any type of massage given by adult to minor;
 - xiii. Any form of unwanted compliments that relates to physique or body development.

D. Appropriate affection between members, minors and/or vulnerable adults constitutes a positive part of church life and ministry. The following forms of affection are usually regarded as appropriate examples for members in ministry with minors or vulnerable adults, but with caution:

1. Hugs-brief, casual but not full frontal;
2. Pat on the shoulder or back;
3. Hand-shakes;
4. "High-fives" or hand slapping;
5. Verbal praise;
6. Holding hands while walking with small children;
7. Sitting beside small children;
8. Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children;
9. Pats on the head when culturally appropriate