

Guide for Individuals Reporting an Allegation of Sexual Abuse

The Southern Province of the Society of the Divine Word recognizes that the sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or brother has devastating consequences for the victim and his or her family, for the lay and religious communities, and for the perpetrator.

The Society of the Divine Word has become increasingly aware of the effects of this tragic behavior and has developed a steadfast commitment to help those affected. This guide is intended to provide basic information on the procedures for reporting and responding to allegations of sexual abuse.

Where to Turn for Help

If you or someone you know believes that a member of the Society of the Divine Word has engaged in the sexual abuse of a minor, regardless of when, where, why, how, or how long ago the alleged abuse occurred, we urge you to report such behavior immediately to one of three people whose duty it is to address such matters:

The Provincial Superior, the leader of the Southern Province, is ultimately responsible for all the members, ministries, and activities of the Society of the Divine Word in the Southern USA.

Provincial Superior

204 Ruella Avenue

Bay St. Louis, Mississippi 39520

ussprovincial@gmail.com

Tel: (228) 467-4322

The Chairperson of the Sexual Abuse Review Board convenes the independent Board composed of lawyers, law enforcement and other trained professionals that review and advise the Province administration on all matters related to incidents of sexual abuse, prevention of abuse and the protection of children.

Sexual Abuse Review Board

Deacon Steven DeMartino

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

sdemartino@cmsm.org

(914) 330-3727

The Victim Assistance Coordinator provides assessment and counseling services. For victims of clergy sexual abuse, the counseling service facilitates the Society of the Divine Word's abuse reporting and requests for assistance.

Victim Assistance

Mrs. Gae Savino, LMSW
Mindful Heart Counseling Services
gsavino@aol.com
(914) 391-5966

How to Report Sexual Abuse

Any adult reporting sexual abuse as a minor or any minor abused by a member of the Society of the Divine Word should contact one or more of the individuals/offices noted above for assistance. The allegation will be handled with the strictest confidentiality and utmost sensitivity and reported to the proper civil authorities in accord with prevailing laws and statutes.

The person reporting the sexual abuse of a minor is free to report the incident directly to the appropriate local, county/and or state law enforcement authorities.

If there is suspicion or knowledge that a child is currently being abused, the one so informed should immediately notify the proper civil authorities. In Mississippi, call the Department of Children and Family Services Child Abuse Hotline: (800) 222-8000 (Nationwide); or call: (601) 432-4570 for help in locating the proper authority of the state/country in which the alleged abuse is occurring.