

**Union of Sisters
of
the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin
Mary**

**Congregational
International Child Safeguarding
Policy & Standards**



Effective Date: 10 February 2023

Review Date: 9 February 2026

Union of Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Congregational International Child Safeguarding Policy & Standards

We commit ourselves to a spirituality of being in communion that seeks God in the inter-connectedness of the whole of creation and empowers active love for self, others and all of nature. (Congregational Gathering 2006)

*Every Unit Community shall have, in keeping with civil and legal requirements of the respective country, and with canonical and congregational requirements a policy for safeguarding minors and vulnerable adults.
(Our Way of Life – Directives of the Congregation (D10))*

Units of the Congregation

The Presentation Congregation is structured according to different Units and Mission areas in the following countries: Ireland, England, India, Newfoundland and Labrador, West Indies, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, New Zealand, The Holy Land, Pakistan, Philippines, Slovakia, Thailand, United States of America, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Each Unit and Mission Area has its own child safeguarding policy and procedures in keeping with civil legislation, church regulations and this congregational policy. Each Unit and Mission Area also has its own Designated Liaison Person.

If you have a concern with regard to the welfare and safety of a child in any of these Presentation Congregation locations, please contact the relevant Unit.

Congregational International Child Safeguarding Statement

As a Congregation we are committed to safeguarding and respecting the sacredness of all Life. Our commitment is exercised in accordance with Gospel-based values, our Charism, Constitutions, Directives, Congregational Gathering Documents, and U.N. Convention Guidelines on the Rights of the Child.

We are particularly committed to safeguarding the dignity and fundamental rights of all people in our care especially children and to ensuring their safety and well-being and we will work in partnership with parents/guardians to do this. We recognise each child as a gift from God, and we value and encourage the participation of children in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

All our members and all those who work with us under our authority (clergy, religious, staff and volunteers) have a responsibility to safeguard children through promoting their welfare, health and development in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.

Details of the person to contact if you are concerned about the welfare and safety of a child:

Please contact the Designated Person in the country and Presentation Unit concerned.

If the contact details are not available to you, please contact **the Congregational Administration in Ireland** for the relevant contact details -

Phone: + 353 (0)45-525335

Email: congregationalsecretary@pbvm.org

Congregational Administration

The Congregational Leadership Team is in Ireland and consequently for its administration in Ireland it follows ‘Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016’, and the civil laws and regulations of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Generalate Administration’s compliance with the policy, its practice, monitoring, reporting and evaluation is carried out through the child safeguarding structures of **the Presentation North East Province Ireland** for Monasterevin and Lucan and through **the Presentation South West Province Ireland** for Nano Nagle Birthplace Ballygriffin and the International Presentation Community at Nano Nagle Place, Cork.

If you have a concern with regard to the welfare and safety of a child in any of these Presentation Congregation locations, please contact the Congregational Administration of the North East or South West Units.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In developing and implementing the Child Safeguarding Policy we are guided by the following foundations:

1. Gospel

Children have a key place in the heart of Jesus who said: *'Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it'*. (Luke 18: 17). This places a sacred obligation on the Church to ensure that children are welcomed, cherished, and protected in a manner consistent with their central place in the life of the Church.

2. Children's Rights, National Law and Canon Law

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outlines the forty-two fundamental rights to be implemented in national law by signatories to the Convention (this includes the Holy See). Full realisation of these rights will ensure that children will be *'brought up in a spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity'*.

The Presentation Congregation, as part of our charism, commits to upholding our obligations under the civil legislation of the countries in which we minister and the requirements of Church law.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all members, and all those who work with Presentation Sisters (lay staff and volunteers). All are required to comply with it. Full understanding of and adherence to this policy should lead to a deepening in the understanding of, and respect for, the rights of children and young people to participate as people of faith in the life of the Church.

The care and protection of children involved in the activities of the Presentation Congregation is the responsibility of all Presentation personnel and is a requirement that applies regardless of the nature of the activity in which the children are involved. Everyone has a role to play in creating an environment in which children can develop and be safe.

Congregational Standards for all Units of the Congregation

All Units of the Congregation take their standard for child safeguarding from this Congregational International Policy and comply with the Church and State regulations in their own country by developing a Unit/Country specific policy.

Where the civil legislation and guidelines are inadequate and not in line with best international practice, we, adhere to the best practice set out in this policy and, in conjunction with other concerned groups, actively lobby to change the system. In these circumstances each Unit clearly explains to the Congregational Leadership Team why a particular action is not possible and what actions have been put in place to mitigate risk of abuse of children.

CONGREGATIONAL STANDARDS

1. Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

We,

- develop in each Unit a policy for the safeguarding of children.
- create safe environments for children, in safe, secure premises by carrying out hazard/risk assessments of children's activities.
- use a child-centred approach, where the full participation of all children is encouraged and facilitated, practicing positive engagement with children – we do not allow physical harm or smacking of children.
- receive parental and child consent for all activities.
- ensure that all adults, Sisters, employees, and volunteers, who work with children are appropriately vetted, recruited and trained.
- maintain appropriate staff to child ratios.
- ensure that there is appropriate supervision for all activities and that suitable codes of conduct/behaviour for children and adults are drawn up.
- have a safe use of digital media policy.
- have a proper reporting and recording system in place.
- clear procedures around visiting personnel including clerics and including having a sign in and sign out procedure.

2. Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations

We,

- create in each Unit procedures and systems for recording, reporting and responding to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations.
- encourage responsible whistle blowing by creating a whistleblowing procedure.
- adhere to the safeguarding children civil legislation/guidelines in each country where we minister and to reporting allegations, concerns, suspicions to the appropriate authorities
 - *Where the civil legislation, guidelines and practice are inadequate and not in line with best international practice and it is unsafe to report we, adhere to the best practice set out in this policy and, in conjunction with other concerned groups, actively lobby to change the system. Reporting in such cases will be through the PBVM designated child safeguarding person.*

3. Care and Support for the Complainant

We,

- set in place structures for the care and support of the complainant and care and support for others who may be affected by the allegation

4. Care and Management of the Respondent

We,

- take just and appropriate action in relation to Presentation personnel who are accused or who have been abused, remembering that the safety of children at all times is paramount.

5. Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

We,

- provide, support and ensure that Child Safeguarding training takes place wherever Presentation Sisters/personnel minister. Where relevant, we provide appropriate training in internet safety for all those involved with children, including parents.

6. Communicating the Safeguarding Message

We,

- communicate, appropriately, the Presentation policy and procedures to all personnel, to children and their families and to the wider public.

7. Assuring Compliance with the Standards

We,

- develop a plan of action at Congregational and at Unit level to assure compliance with the child safeguarding standards and we review the plan annually.
- carry out a self-audit of safeguarding procedures annually and address issues arising.
- regularly review implementation of this policy.

COMMITMENTS

Together with the Standards and Principles outlined above, the Presentation Sisters, as part of the Catholic Church commit to:

a) Reporting

Each one of us, Sisters, employees and volunteers, has a duty to notify the statutory authorities (in accordance with the local Unit Policy) of suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that a child is being or has been abused:

- physically
- emotionally
- sexually
- through neglect

Suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations may relate to possible abuse by Presentation personnel, but they can also relate to incidents in the child's family, or elsewhere in the community.

[Where the civil legislation, guidelines and practice, in a particular country, are inadequate and not in line with best international practice and it is unsafe to report we, adhere to the best practice set out in this policy and, in conjunction with other concerned groups, actively lobby to change the system. Reporting in such cases will be through the PBVM designated child safeguarding person.]

b) Caring for the welfare of all children and the adults who work with them

We commit to implementing measures to create and maintain environments that are safe for children, that prevent abuse and that create nurturing, caring conditions for children and the adults who work with them. We will continue to strengthen and review practice so that all environments for children are safe. This will be done through training, support, communication and quality assurance.

c) Responding appropriately to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations

Anyone who brings a suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or past abuse of a child to the notice of Presentation Sisters will be responded to sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in line with the Unit policy, statutory child protection procedures and Church requirements.

All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that reach the threshold for reporting to the civil authorities will be reported through the appointed Presentation representative if it is safe to do so (see note under (a) above). This will be done irrespective of the status of the person (lay, cleric or religious) who is suspected of having been abusive to a child. If the allegation relates to a lay member of staff or a volunteer, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must be reported to the lead person of the Presentation Sisters.

If the allegation relates to a cleric or religious from another country, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must also be reported to the Presentation Sisters and the Church authority in the country of origin.

All Presentation personnel will co-operate with the statutory authorities.

d) Caring pastorally for complainants and other affected persons

Those who have suffered child abuse by Presentation personnel will receive a compassionate and just response, and will be offered appropriate pastoral care, counselling and support as they seek to rebuild their lives.

An appropriate pastoral response to the family, congregation, community and to the wider community will be provided, with due regard to the right of privacy of those directly involved, and to the administration of justice.

e) Caring pastorally for respondents and other affected persons

The Presentation Sisters in their response to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of child sexual abuse will respect the rights under civil law and canon law

of accused religious or other personnel. A legal presumption of innocence will be maintained during the statutory and Presentation enquiry processes. As the processes develop, additional assessment, therapy and support services may be offered to the respondent.

The Presentation Sisters will take responsibility for ensuring that any member of the congregation who is considered to constitute a danger to children is managed according to a risk management plan.

All requisite steps will be taken to restore the good name and reputation of anyone who has been wrongly accused of abusing a child.

Respondents belong to families and religious communities. The Presentation Sisters will be mindful of the need to provide support to members of families and communities affected by the respondents' changed situation.

Commitment of all Presentation personnel:

All Presentation personnel in ministry with children will be required to read their Unit Policy and to commit in writing to follow its procedures and these Standards.

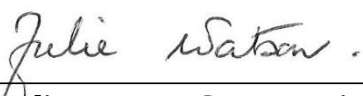
Commitment of Congregational Leadership Team:

The Congregational Leadership Team commits to:

- a) receiving and approving each Unit's policy and its review,
- b) monitoring, annually, the actions and plans of each Unit and Mission Region of the Congregation in relation to its compliance with these standards,
- c) evaluating practices and procedures during Congregational Leadership Team visits to Units and
- d) providing training at international level periodically.

Review:

These standards and policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if necessary.

Signed: 

Sr Julie Watson, Congregational Leader

Dated: 10 February 2023

Review date: 09 February 2026

Related Unit and Congregational Policies:

Health & Safety, Safe Use of Digital Media, Bullying, Whistleblowing, Data Protection, Transfer Policy and Procedures

APPENDIX

[Sample]

[Title of Congregation / Unit _____]

Declaration of Adherence to the policy

[Name of Policy _____]

I have read the above-named policy dated _____ and have understood my responsibilities in relation to its contents and will abide by the directions of the policy. I will attend all information and training sessions provided in relation to this policy.

Signed: _____

Position held: _____

Date: _____