

Vulnerable Persons Safeguarding Statement of the Order of Franciscans Secular (OFS)¹ in Ireland

This statement has been prepared with reference to the HSE “*Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse - National Policy and Procedures*”². We, members of the Order of Franciscans Secular in Ireland, recognise and uphold the dignity and rights of all vulnerable persons³, are committed to ensuring their safety and well-being and will work in partnership with all stakeholders to do this. We recognise each vulnerable person as a gift from God, and we value and encourage the participation of vulnerable persons in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. All OFS members have a responsibility to safeguard vulnerable persons through promoting their welfare, health and development in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.

1. Nature of Services:

The Order of Franciscans Secular belongs to the Franciscan Family. It is formed by the union of all its Catholic fraternities throughout the world. The members commit themselves to live the Gospel after the manner of St. Francis. They do so in their state⁴ of life by following the Rule approved by Saint Paul VI in 1978. The Order of Franciscans Secular (Third Order) was founded by St. Francis in 1221 due to the wish of so many people to be part of the Franciscan movement. The ethos of the Order of Secular Franciscans is one of profound respect for the dignity of all human life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death. Members are over 18 years of age and typically meet on a monthly basis for prayer and fraternity. Some fraternities may have apostolic or social events that could involve attendance by vulnerable persons. The Order is completely voluntary, has no property and does not have any employees.

2. Principles:

We are committed to the following principles:

- Mandatory reporting.

Each of us has a duty to notify the statutory authorities of suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that a vulnerable person is being or has been abused:

- physically
- emotionally
- sexually
- through neglect
- psychologically
- financially or materially

¹ The official name of the order is in Latin: *Ordo Franciscanus Sæcularis (OFS)*

² <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/socialcare/safeguardingvulnerableadults/safeguardingvuladts.html>

³ A Vulnerable Person, in the context of this statement, is an adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard himself / herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation. The restriction of capacity may arise as a result of physical or intellectual impairment vulnerability to abuse is influenced by both context (e.g. social or personal circumstances) and individual circumstances.

⁴ The order is primarily made up of married and single lay people. However, membership is also open to secular clergy.

- through discrimination

Suspensions, concerns, knowledge or allegations may relate to possible abuse by a member of the OFS, but they can also relate to incidents in the vulnerable person's family, or elsewhere in the community.

- Caring for the welfare of all vulnerable persons and persons who work with them.
- Responding appropriately to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations.
- Caring pastorally for complainants and other affected persons.
- Caring pastorally for respondents and other affected persons.

3. Risk Assessment

The table below sets out identified risks to the safety of vulnerable persons involved in activities that take place under the auspices of the Order of Franciscans Secular, or using facilities provided by the Order; and the steps taken to minimise the risks of abuse. We are committed to observing Standards and Guidance such as those outlined in the HSE *Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse - National Policy and Procedures*.

Identified Risks	Procedures in Place to Manage Risks
That those working with vulnerable persons may be unsafe or unsuitable to do so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safe Recruitment Procedures for members and other volunteers, involving screening, appropriate references, ○ For all Clergy and Religious: Certificate of "good standing", and (for clerics) a <i>Celebret</i>. ○ Appropriate Training in Safeguarding. ○ Garda Vetting for relevant members (as required)
That those working with vulnerable persons may behave inappropriately towards them	Codes of Behaviour for Adults who deal with vulnerable persons.
That vulnerable persons who use our services may behave inappropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Codes of Behaviour for Vulnerable Persons ○ Anti-Bullying Policy
That the environment in which events involving vulnerable persons is facilitated fails to meet effective safeguarding practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintenance of Attendance Registers and adequate supervision ratios; ○ Consent from Parents/Guardians/Carers and (where appropriate) from vulnerable persons ○ Contact Details of Parents/Guardians ○ Recording of Incidents/Accidents
That external groups who bring vulnerable persons to OFS events do not have appropriate Safeguarding Standards	Ensuring that all external groups which include vulnerable persons have appropriate Safeguarding policies in place.

That those who wish to behave dangerously or unethically towards vulnerable persons may be able to do so	<p>Procedures governing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adequate supervision ○ “Whistle-blowing” ○ the reporting and recording of concerns and complaints.
Those who wish to exploit vulnerable persons through the use of digital media in our ministries might be able to do so	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring control of access to media ○ Securing parental permission for access to media ○ Providing guidance in training re internet use.
OFS members may fail to report an allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Procedures for the reporting to the civil and relevant authorities of concerns, suspicions, knowledge or allegations regarding the safeguarding of vulnerable persons; ○ Procedures for the maintenance of records of such reports.
OFS members may fail to understand their responsibilities to safeguard vulnerable persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appropriate training for all members ○ Role-Specific training for those with special responsibilities in the area of Vulnerable Persons Safeguarding ○ Regular training needs assessment at local, regional and national level by elected councils.
That Vulnerable persons and their parents may not understand the OFS policy, procedures and structures for the safeguarding of vulnerable persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Publicising of the Safeguarding Policy by (e.g.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Appropriate posters for vulnerable persons – Information leaflets – Information/consultation sessions – Special celebrations drawing attention to the safeguarding of vulnerable persons (“Safeguarding Sundays”) – Publication on the internet ○ Cooperation with other organisations that promote the safeguarding and welfare of vulnerable persons.
That the procedures for safeguarding vulnerable persons may fail to be implemented	<p>Procedures are in place to ensure that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Designated Liaison Person makes an annual report to the National Council on the status and management of current and historical allegations of abuse; ○ Incoming council members at National, Regional and Local fraternity levels are briefed by their predecessors on child safeguarding issues;
That the Order may fail to appoint a “relevant person” to be a point of contact with Tusla and maintain a list of mandated persons	<p>All required members are appointed: The Designated Liaison Person (DLP), Deputy DLP; the Coordinator of Safeguarding (a “relevant person”).</p>

4. Procedures

Our Vulnerable Persons Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements outlined in the HSE *'Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse – National Policy and Procedures'* (2014).

In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard vulnerable persons while they are availing of our service:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a vulnerable person attending an OFS event
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of people who would be in contact with vulnerable persons
- Procedure for provision of and access to safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person

5. Implementation

The Order of Franciscans Secular in Ireland is committed to safeguarding vulnerable persons through the implementation of this statement and the associated policy, which are based on the HSE *'Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse – National Policy and Procedures'* (2014). This Safeguarding Statement⁵ and our practice expresses our commitment to ensuring that in our ministries and in any place under our control vulnerable persons are kept safe from harm. The implementation of the Vulnerable Persons Safeguarding Policy is subject to oversight and monitoring by the National, Regional and Local Fraternity Councils, the Designated Liaison Person; and, when necessary, appropriate or desirable, in consultation with An Garda Síochána and other bodies such as the HSE. We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. The OFS is committed to the implementation of this Vulnerable Persons Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep vulnerable persons safe from harm while engaging with us. The possibility of risks to vulnerable persons is subject to regular assessment as determined by the National Council of the Secular Franciscan Order in Ireland.

Signed:

Ms Philomena Rooney, National President of the Order Franciscans Secular in Ireland

Date:

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⁵ A pdf version of this document is available electronically at the <https://ofsgalway.com/national-ofs/>