

GUIDELINES OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE WELLBEING AND PROTECTION² OF MINORS

Norms within the Movement for the promotion of the well-being of children and young people

Introduction

The Focolare Movement – Work of Mary is an international body, a private association of pontifical right (³) with legal character. It is based on a spirituality centred on the Gospel, on Christian love as a way of life and directs its aims to the realization of unity and to the building of universal fraternity⁴.

It is a religious and civil association that includes people from every culture, language, race and religion, spread throughout the world.

Through its youth sections (in particular the Gen 3, Gen 4 and Teens for Unity), through its various activities for minors, the Focolare Movement promotes the integral formation of the person, in his/her unique identity.

The Focolare Movement recognises in every child and young person their dignity according to the Gospel, helping to develop their human and spiritual capabilities and bring out the best in each one. In activities concerning minors, the Movement aims at an educational approach based on communion-fellowship that places Jesus' presence at the centre of the relationship (see Mt 18.20).

Furthermore, accepting the principles proclaimed by International Law regarding the protection of minors [cf. Articles 3 and 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child], the Focolare Movement is committed to preventing and avoiding any type of violence, abuse, maltreatment and bullying⁵ of minors, also that perpetrated by other minors, during any of these activities. It does so, first of all, by

¹ The present Guidelines are a revised version of the ones adopted by the Focolare Movement in April 2014.

² The official title uses the word 'protection'. Elsewhere in the text, the term 'safeguarding' is also used, which is common in some countries.

³ The Focolare Movement is recognised in many nations through national bodies. These guidelines serve as guidance for the communities of the Focolare Movement in the various countries of the world; all Focolare National Centres will ensure these guidelines are adapted to their respective cultural and legal entities.

⁴ See art. 6 of the General Statutes of the Work of Mary.

⁵ According to the international definition, bullying means psychological or physical oppression, repeated over a period of time, by a person or group of "more powerful" people towards another person who is considered as "the weaker". It is important to consider, in order to identify this behaviour from others: 1. age - bullying is a form of abuse of power between peers (children and young people) that has to be separate from other types of behaviour, for example, involving adults or adults with minors; 2. the context: bullying starts and develops mainly in the school context or through social media; 3. other behaviour such as, for example, deviant behaviour in young people in different forms, that presuppose, in contrast to bullying, committing a crime.

adopting the following precautions:

a) Entrusting minors to people responsible for their actions and behaviours, who are committed to living the gospel, according to the spirituality of communion of the Movement, and who are trained to be with them (as specified in the criteria for the promotion and protection of the wellbeing of minors in the First Part of the Document);

b) Offering and ensuring safe environments for children, in which recreational and training activities are carried out, suitable for their age, without psychological pressure, and where their dignity is respected and safeguarded, and their development fostered and encouraged;

c) Cultivating a culture of respect and esteem for others, safeguarding the freedom, altruism, and the equality, dignity and autonomy of everyone, so as to prevent any form of abuse among peers;

d) Responding effectively and promptly to any report of abuse against a member of the Focolare Movement in accordance with the provisions of these Guidelines; committed to reconstruct, as far as possible, the truth of the reported allegation;

e) Informing the legal authority, where the legal norms of the country requires mandatory reporting;

f) Guaranteeing the Movement's closeness and offering every form of support to those who have suffered abuse and also to their families;

g) Offering, with the aim of guaranteeing ever greater protection and safeguarding for children, psychological and spiritual support to every member of the Focolare Movement who has committed an offence against a child, a young person or a vulnerable adult.

- For the purposes of these guidelines, a 'minor' is considered to be equivalent to a 'vulnerable person', the latter being understood to mean any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal freedom that in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or want, or in any event, to resist the offence. In order to enable the Focolare Movement to protect vulnerable persons, the parents/carers should - before every activity - inform the leaders of the activity and document the physical and psychological condition of the person.

FIRST PART

Criteria for the promotion and protection of the well-being of minors

Given that the primary interest of the Focolare Movement is the promotion of the wellbeing and protection of minors, with this document we intend to outline a practice already in use and which will be embedded always more in the activities of the Movement where minors are involved throughout the world.

In fact, in some countries the Focolare Movement has already produced guidelines in compliance with local laws and / or with what is required by the respective Episcopal Conferences, which bind the members of the Focolare Movement in those nations.

The adult members of the Focolare Movement, who have been chosen on the basis of maturity and are trained to carry out activities with minors, are required to attend a preparatory course lasting at least six hours, in which they will study the subject of safeguarding minors, from the point of view of guidelines given by ecclesiastical authorities, and those given by legal, psychological and family perspectives. After verifying their acquired skills, adults must sign a declaration every three years stating that they know and want to apply the norms of conduct towards minors.

They must also declare under their sole responsibility that they have not been convicted of crimes against public morality and public decency, family morals and moral freedom. The course is part of a framework of permanent training, where there are subsequent refresher courses, possibly every two years, which will also be attended by those responsible for the focolare and the safeguarding officers.

People who carry out activities with minors will ensure that they have a close relationship with the minor's family, and involve the family as much as possible. Activities involving children and young people must be well prepared and the local communities of the Focolare Movement must be informed in advance (by ways and means that are possible and appropriate), along with the general programme and the topics that will be discussed, so that the parents can be informed.

For the safety and success of the activities engaging minors, at least two adults must always be present. When the group exceeds eight minors, the number of adults will increase (depending on the nature of the group and the activities that take place). Proportionally, if possible, there must be one adult for every eight children.

As far as possible, parents will be asked to provide the transport for their children; if this is not possible, their specific consent will be requested, even if it is not in written form.

Conversations with minors should be carried out in places that are open, accessible and visible to others.

For overnight stays it is preferable to use large rooms; and have separate areas for girls and boys. Adults should sleep in separate rooms, but close to those of the minors, to ensure appropriate vigilance.

Minors who are able to use toilets and showers on their own will be accompanied only in emergency situations or in case of a particular need of the child. If a minor has special needs, the help to be given will be agreed with the family.

Parents will have to give a written consent every year allowing their children to participate in activities organised for them. In the same way, they will have to issue the required consent regarding the publication of images and experiences of minors. If the parents wish, they can request more information on the programmes and be present during the activities, with due discretion.

Regarding action to be taken where there is suspicion of abuse committed by members of the Focolare Movement and / or during activities carried out within the Focolare Movement, kindly refer to the second part of this document.

Central Commission for the Promotion of the Well-Being and Protection of Minors (CO.BE.TU.) and the Supervisory Board

To achieve the commitment taken and its stated aims, the Focolare Movement has established a Central Commission for the promotion of the wellbeing and protection of minors (CO.BE.TU.), made up of 7 (seven) members, all of whom have proven experience and expertise in various areas ⁶.

This Commission, in full cooperation and close collaboration with the educational agencies of the Focolare Movement, will implement the most appropriate initiatives aimed at training members of the Work of Mary, especially those who carry out activities with minors.

Besides this, and at the specific request of the President, CO.BE.TU will take all necessary steps for the internal investigation foreseen for the cases where a member of the General Council, or a focolarino or focolarina, whether of a shared life or married, is accused of alleged abuse regarding a minor.

The victims will be offered medical help, which includes therapeutic help and immediate psychological support, as well as legal information and any other type of support that is necessary.

CO.BE.TU. also has the task of supervising and assisting those responsible for the protection of minors in the zones, or other areas, in carrying out the tasks assigned to them, by giving them appropriate directives and guidelines.

The Focolare Movement has also set up a Supervisory Board made up of three people, appointed by the President, at least one of whom is not a member of the Focolare Movement, with the task of monitoring the protection of minors within the association and the activities and work done by CO.BE.TU. For this purpose, the two bodies will meet at least once a year, preferably in June.

The members of CO.BE.TU. and of the Supervisory Board will have a three-year term, renewable no more than 3 times.

Zonal or local commissions for the protection of minors

In order to achieve the objectives indicated in the introduction to this document, the delegates of the Work of Mary in the zone will create zone commissions according to the same criteria used for the Central Commission. In the meantime, as the commission is being set up, they will appoint two people, a man and a woman, who will be chosen for the task of safeguarding officers among the members of the Work of Mary. They will be people with suitable skills and experience. They will carry out their tasks in complete freedom and independence and in close collaboration with their delegates and with CO.BE.TU.

The task will be assigned to them for a three year period renewable no more than 3 times, and must be put in writing by the zone delegates (see Appendix B – Sample of mandate).

The commissions or the safeguarding officers in the zone can be helped by other people who are specialists, possibly with experience in this area, including people outside the Work of Mary.

⁶ Moral, medical, psychological, pedagogical and legal areas.

When cases of sexual abuse, violence, maltreatment and bullying against minors are reported within the zone (except in cases being dealt with CO.BE.TU), the commissions or those responsible for safeguarding in the zone have the task to carry out the internal investigation according to these guidelines, and to engage in effective collaboration with the statutory authorities of the place, who are responsible for determining the facts and the protection of the victims, while in every case maintaining the relationship with the family of the minor (the parents or whoever has parental authority).

The victims will be offered medical help, which includes counselling and immediate psychological support, as well as legal information and any other type of support that is necessary.

The commissions or the safeguarding officers will send CO.BE.TU. an annual report on their activities.

These norms are applicable also for the little towns of the Focolare Movement ⁷.

It will be the responsibility of the zone delegates or those responsible for the zonettas to ensure that the aims and the tasks contained in the Guidelines are fully implemented in the various parts of the zone. Until such time as, in a zone or zonetta, the commissions or the safeguarding officers have been appointed, in the case of allegations, at least two people, a man and a woman, who have the required requisites, will be appointed to verify the facts and to follow the procedures contained in these Guidelines.

SECOND PART

Procedure to follow when allegations of sexual abuse, violence, maltreatment and bullying of minors are reported

Being informed of illicit conduct and procedures to be followed

It must be emphasised that the Work of Mary is aware of the legal obligation, on the part of those responsible for it, to take all necessary measures so as to prevent any kind of abuse regarding minors occurring within it.

The Work of Mary is also aware that every person has a moral duty to report their knowledge or suspicion of any kind of alleged abuse regarding minors and any situation in which it is perceived that a child with whom they have come into contact is experiencing harmful or neglectful behaviour.

In fulfilling this duty, the paramount well-being of the child must be kept in mind as a primary concern. For this reason the members of the Focolare Movement are obliged to report every formed of alleged sexual abuse ⁸, stalking ⁹, violence, maltreatment and bullying of minors, by adults who are in charge

⁷ By little towns the Focolare Movement means "Examples of modern towns (...) where members of the various vocations of the Work of Mary live permanently" (Article 44 of the General Statutes). Due to the uniqueness of the little towns with respect to the other zones of the Focolare, it will be possible to proceed with a specific regulation that regulates their specific activities.

⁸ According to the definition of the World Health Organization (WHO) for sexual abuse: "The involvement of a minor in sexual acts, with or without physical contact, to which they cannot freely consent due to their age or the power of the abuser, the sexual exploitation of a child or young person, child prostitution and child pornography".

⁹ Stalking or harassment syndrome is the combination of acts of persecution, obsessive and repeated acts against a person, which are expressed through harassment, repeated messages and phone calls, spying, continued damaging acts, etc. This situation creates a forced and controlled relationship between the persecutor and the victim, thus generating in the victim vulnerability, anxiety and fear that affect their daily life.

of their care, or by minors themselves, who are members of the Focolare Movement, or by other people, during activities organized by the Focolare Movement or connected with it in any way.

The allegation is communicated to the commissions, or to the safeguarding officers of that place, where it is said the abuse took place.

Anyone who receives a spontaneous confidential disclosure by a minor, who claims to be a victim of any of the abuses listed above, is obliged to:

- listen carefully to the child without asking specific questions, letting the child tell what he or she experienced without putting pressure on the child ¹⁰;
- be as calm as possible, remembering that the child has decided to disclose the abuse received due to the trust placed in the adult;
- accompany the child to their parents to inform them of exactly what they said, unless the child's disclosure of abuse is against a parent or guardian, and unless doing so would mean putting the child in danger;
- make sure, as far as possible, that the child urgently receives all the care needed;
- explain—where appropriate—to both parents or guardians the procedure for reporting to the competent authorities;
- write down, as precisely as possible, all the information – name, address, telephone number and the report of what the minor said, keeping too - as far as possible the exact words that he or she said;
- inform immediately the commissions or the safeguarding officers for the place where the alleged abuse has taken place. In the absence of these, the Delegate of the Work of Mary in the zone will urgently appoint two people to manage the case.

If the confidential disclosure is made to a minor, the minor will inform the youth leader as soon as possible of what has happened, if that person is present, or inform an adult whom they trust as soon as possible. In this way it is possible to proceed promptly as set out in this document.

Duties entrusted to the Commissions or the Safeguarding Officers for the Protection of Minors: obligations and the preliminary investigation

The Commissions or the safeguarding officers, after receiving the disclosure, have the task to make sure as much as possible that the minor urgently receives all the help necessary, and immediately inform the Delegates of the Work of Mary in the zone/zonetta, CO.BE.TU. and, with regards to the cases specified below - the Co-President.

From the moment they receive the disclosure, the Commissions or the safeguarding officers, except those cases that are being dealt with by CO.BE.TU., have the task of managing the case; therefore any request or information concerning this disclosure, from anyone, must be immediately sent to them. All information must be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

If a disclosure is reported regarding the members of the General Council of the Work of Mary, or the

¹⁰ For how to listen to a minor see Appendix A

focolarini/e of common life with perpetual vows or the married focolarini with promises, CO.BE.TU. will coordinate and manage the case having been given this specific mandate by the President of the Focolare Movement.

In this case, all of the disclosure must be sent to the Co-President who will send it to CO.BE.TU. asking them to begin the internal investigation.

In the event that the accused person is a diocesan priest or a male/female religious, a deacon, or a consecrated person, it will be the Co-President or the delegate of the Work of Mary in the zone or the person responsible for the little town (in the case of abuse which took place in a little town), to inform the Bishop of the diocese in which the priest is incardinated or the General Superior of the institute to which the religious man or woman belongs.

In these cases, no preliminary investigation will be undertaken, because it is the responsibility of the Ordinary [the bishop] of the place according to the norms of Canon Law.

All the aforementioned people will maintain strict confidentiality regarding all that has been communicated to them by the Commissions or by the safeguarding officers of the zone/zonetta.

It is necessary to avoid giving credence to information that is clearly untrue or defamatory; this is why the Commissions or the safeguarding officers will ensure that the privacy of all those involved is maintained.

Apart from the hypothesis of manifest groundlessness of the reported facts, the Commissions will start the internal procedure according to the norms, foreseen for the case of disclosure regarding Members of the General Council of the Work of Mary and focolarini/e (Cf. *infra* Appendix A of the Guidelines), making sure to be in touch with the parents of the minor or their guardians, except in cases where situations of family hardships or difficulties emerge or where the integrity of the child is at risk due to the family environment.

Procedure regarding communication to the competent authorities

The Focolare Movement, in relation to its obligation to report to the statutory authorities, will abide by the criminal law of every country or nation and follow the directives of the Bishops' Conference of that place.

Therefore, in view of such an obligation, the people responsible for the little towns, the delegates of the zone/zonetta where abuses have taken place, at the end of the internal investigation carried out by CO.BE.TU. or by the zone/zonetta's commissions, when the abuses have been verified and confirmed, - will send a document to the legal authorities, including a detailed report of what took place, guaranteeing the closest collaboration and sharing with them all the information they have.

Only in cases where the parents of the minor have good reason to disagree with this procedure, and state their reasons in writing, for the safety of the minor him/herself, will no communication will take place with the legal authorities. In this case, once the letter referred to above is received, the Focolare Movement will not proceed and the documentation will be stored in the respective archives, stating what happened and the reasons for this decision. However, in countries or nations where the abuse has taken place and the criminal law requires mandatory reporting, the authorities will be informed of the complaint in all cases.

If, from the internal investigation, a situation of abuse in the family has emerged, for the sake of safeguarding the minor it is necessary to inform the competent authorities.

The right of each member of the Focolare Movement to present, independently, a denunciation or notification to the competent judicial authority remains valid.

(APPENDIX A)

Internal Procedures in the Work of Mary

Internal procedures in the sections and branches of the Work of Mary

The procedures established in the Work of Mary, when there is disclosure of a possibility of alleged sexual abuse, violence or maltreatment and bullying of minors, against its members, are necessarily different taking into account the variety and internationality of the people who belong to it (see articles 129-140 of the General Statutes) and the consequent legal conditions deriving from Canon Law and the General Statutes and the Regulations. In fact, in the sections and branches which are part of the Work of Mary, some members have received Sacred Orders and the "legal status of a cleric". Others have vows and have the "legal status of a religious", and others have "juridical status as lay people" with vows or promises or spiritual commitments.

The members of the Work of Mary who are ordained priests may belong to the Focolarini section, to the branch of diocesan priest and permanent deacon focolarini, to the branch of diocesan priest and permanent deacon Volunteers, to the branch of the Gens and to the branch of the religious.

A) Procedure for the clergy, deacons, men religious and consecrated women

In canonical penal law, as well as in civil law, sexual abuse of a minor by a cleric is considered a crime.

In the event of a disclosure of alleged sexual abuse, violence or maltreatment regarding minors, by a cleric who is a member of the section of the Focolarini or the branch of the priest focolarini or the priest Volunteers or the diocesan permanent deacons, whether focolarini or Volunteers, the Co-President of the Work of Mary¹¹ will inform the Bishop of the diocese where the cleric or the deacon is incardinated, who will then follow the procedure foreseen in Canon Law.

In the case where a cleric is accused, or a religious non-cleric, of the branch of religious, or a consecrated woman of the branch of consecrated¹² women, the delegate of the Work of Mary in the zone, or the Co-President, when the accused is totally at the service of the Movement, will inform the General Superior of the Institute of Consecrated Life or the Society of Apostolic Life to which they belong, in order to enforce the legal penal procedure¹³ for the members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of

¹¹ The duties of the Co-President are regulated in the General Statutes. Among them is to ensure and guarantee that internal life is in conformity with the morals and the discipline of the Church; the Co-President also has responsibility for the priests who are members of the focolarini section regarding the carrying out of their ministry (Article 93 b) and c); In the Regulation of the Focolarini section (Article 95) it is also established that the Co-President present the case to the Bishop of the diocese where the focolarino will be ordained and incardinated.

¹² The term religious refers to members of Institutes of Consecrated Life, Societies of Apostolic Life and new forms of consecrated life (cf. can. 605 of the CIC).

¹³ Can. 1395, §2 of CIC which refers to can. 695, §1.

Apostolic Life.

The Superior of the accused person, while waiting for the investigation by the church and state authorities, must remove that person from the tasks in which they are in contact with minors, directly or indirectly, and give that person a different job where there is no such risk.

The Superior will also encourage the accused person to undergo a psychological test or to get medical or legal advice.

According to the outcome of the canonical process, the internal procedure will begin regarding the accused person, following the procedures noted in the Regulations of the section or the branch to which they belong, which are current at the time of the disclosure.

B) Procedures regarding the lay members, the members of the General Council and men and women focolarini

If a male focolarino or a female focolarina, whether of a shared life or married, is accused of alleged abuse regarding minors, the Co-President will send immediately to CO.BE.TU. - within 10 days – the written request to begin the preliminary investigation according to the norms contained in these guidelines - the goal of which is to verify whether the facts in the disclosure are true.

In this phase, it may be necessary and duty bound to take measures to allow the investigation to proceed in complete freedom, especially to stop the abuse and avoid scandal.

Because of this, those responsible for the accused person, while waiting for an outcome of the investigation, will forbid that person to have any type of contact with minors, so that they will not undertake any activity which may put minors at risks. In communicating this cautionary measure, the responsible person, for the above noted goals, will avoid referring to the content of the disclosure, the victim and the names of any other people involved; only stating that the action of caution is justified due to a “safeguarding concern”.

Preliminary investigation and internal procedures

CO.BE.TU., after receiving the request and the documentation from the Co-President, will appoint, in writing, two people, a man and a woman, to be chosen preferably among its members or among those of the zone commission of the area in which the alleged abuse was committed.

At the beginning of the preliminary investigation, the two people in charge will determine who should be heard during the investigation and will assess on a case-by-case basis what is necessary in order to achieve the aims of the investigation.

At this stage, it should be considered necessary to interview the *presumed victim* (this will happen only in exceptional cases if they are still a minor, and with the help of a psychologist) in order to determine the facts, as well as *any witnesses* indicated by them (above all to verify that the allegations are well founded). In cases where the facts are in themselves clear and certain, they will, instead, proceed directly to the next step¹⁴.

¹⁴This may be the case, for example, where the victim has submitted a detailed written report or has attached a complaint to the judicial authority.

At the end of the preliminary investigation, the alleged perpetrator of the abuse must be summoned, with a notice of at least ten days, and informed of the charges against him or her, so that they can indicate elements regarding their defence, assisted if they wish by their own lawyer. It must be ensured that the accused person and their lawyer have access to the files, in order to prepare their own defence.

In the event of a serious and real impediment, maintaining the possibility of filing a written plea, the alleged perpetrator of abuse may request that the hearing in their defence is postponed, only once, with an extension of the deadline for the conclusion of the preliminary investigation to a corresponding degree.

If deemed relevant for the purposes of the decision, the exculpatory evidence indicated by the accused person, as well as any other official documents, will be admitted.

The acquisition of the admitted evidence will take place in the adversarial procedure of the parties (injured party and accused person) with the assistance of their defence lawyers if appointed.

The preliminary investigation must be carried out within 90 days of receipt of the documentation by the two people in charge; before the end of this period, for justified reasons, they may request that CO.BE.TU. grant an extension for a maximum of 60 days.

At the end of the preliminary investigation, the person who conducted the investigation must send the documents to CO.BE.TU., along with their own *Report* setting out the investigative measures taken, the choices made in this regard and the results obtained.

CO.BE.TU., having received the *Report*, depending on the outcome of the activity carried out in the preliminary investigation, within 60 days will issue a *Reasoned Opinion* on the decision to be taken against the accused.

Therefore, CO.BE.TU. will adopt the following measures, alternatively: 1) if the truthfulness of the reported facts could be excluded or the information acquired is insufficient, they will propose the closure of the case; 2) if the suspect has admitted guilt or the report was found to be justified, they will write their written opinion with the proposal of a disciplinary measure to be imposed on the accused.

Exceptionally, where there is a need for probative integration, the same must be carried out in public discussion by the parties, within 30 days of the request.

The opinion of CO.BE.TU. will be immediately communicated to the section or branch to which the accused person belongs, to the President and Co-President of the Work of Mary, as well as to the people in charge of the procedure, if they are external members of CO.BE.TU.

The central delegate of the section with his/her council, having taken note of the reasoned opinion of CO.BE.TU., will adopt immediately, and in any case in no later than 30 days, the final decision under the respective Regulations. The measure adopted, by the section or branch, must be communicated immediately, and in any case no later than 10 days after its adoption, and at the same time to CO.BE.TU., to the accused person and their lawyer.

CO.BE.TU. will immediately inform those responsible for the little towns or for the zone or zonetta in which the abuse happened, so that, if the conditions are met, they can immediately inform the legal authority.

Subsequently, having ascertained the communication of the measure to the above subjects, CO.BE.TU. will ensure that the victim is informed or, if he or she is still a minor, their parents or guardians. The violation of the terms and provisions foreseen for the internal procedure, without prejudice to the eventual responsibility of the subjects to which it is attributable, does not determine the forfeiture of the same or the invalidity of the sanction imposed, provided that the right of defence of the accused person is not

irrevocably compromised.

Appeal

An appeal against the final decision may be lodged within 15 days of the measure. The request for withdrawal or modification must be addressed in the first instance to the President. This appeal automatically brings about the suspension of the sanction. The President decides within 30 days of the appeal. If the answer is negative or considered unsatisfactory, despite the President having corrected the decision or not having corrected it, it is possible to make a hierarchical appeal to the Dicastery for the *Laity, the Family, and Life*, in the Vatican, within 15 days of the new decision or after the 30th day in the case of a failed decision. If the outcome of this initiative remains the same as the initial decision, i.e. unsatisfactory for the applicant, he or she may make administrative recourse to the Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura.

Practices to be followed in the case of criminal investigations and prosecutions by the judicial authorities.

During criminal investigations, the utmost prudence is needed and an evaluation with the investigating authority, of the possibility of eventual actions; at this stage, those responsible for the Movement will avoid starting a formal internal investigation (unless the circumstances make it necessary), also to avoid possible overlapping with the legal authority. This is all the more true if, thanks to the collaborative attitude of the suspect, the possibility of a repetition of possible abuses is reduced to a minimum.

The cooperative attitude also includes the willingness of the accused to leave, at least temporarily, any task entrusted to him or her, and to avoid participation in public events and conferences organised by the Focolare Movement.

It is necessary to be cautious in making *public statements* and it is desirable to appoint a spokesperson for the Focolare Movement, if needed.

Where necessary, the accused will be helped to find a *trustworthy lawyer*, on the understanding that the criminal responsibility is of that person.

2. In particularly complex cases of the verification of the reported facts, and when the outcome of the internal investigation has not revealed sufficient elements to justify the imposition of the sanction, CO.BE.TU may suspend the internal proceedings until the end of the pending criminal one. In this case, the suspended internal proceedings can be reactivated if there is sufficient evidence to conclude the proceedings, including on the basis of a non-definitive court order.

3. If the internal procedure, which is not suspended, ends with the imposition of a sanction and, subsequently, the criminal procedure is defined with an irrevocable sentence of acquittal, the President, at the request of the person concerned, will reopen the internal procedure to modify or confirm her decision relating to the outcome of the criminal proceedings. The request must be submitted within six months of the irrevocable judgement.

4. If the internal procedure ends inconclusively and the criminal trial ends with an irrevocable judgement of conviction, the President requests the reopening of the internal procedure to adopt the outcome of the criminal trial. The internal procedure shall also be reopened if the irrevocable conviction results in a lesser penalty than that which has been applied.

5. In the cases referred to in points 2, 3 and 4, the internal proceedings shall be resumed or reopened, respectively, by renewal of the charge, within sixty days of knowledge of the new evidence or of receipt of the request for reopening. The proceedings shall be conducted with a full new time frame, as envisaged, for their conclusion.

6. The arrival of new and significant facts not known at the time of the decision shall entitle the parties concerned to submit to the President, at any time, a request to reopen the internal proceedings within the time limits and in the manner set out in the preceding paragraphs, with a petition for revision of the decision already taken. The decision will be taken by the President, after the preliminary investigation, if she deems it necessary, and hearing the opinion of a competent trustworthy person.

For other lay members

The norms and procedures for reporting cases concerning members of the General Council, as well as focolarini and focolarine, will be adopted, with the necessary adaptations and as far as applicable, by the zone or local Commissions for safeguarding, for cases within their competence, concerning the other lay

CENTRAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE WELL-BEING AND PROTECTION OF MINORS

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members of the Work of Mary, (Volunteers, Gen 2, Gens, youth of the youth sector of the branch of religious men/consecrated women, people who belong to the wide ranging movements, adherents and sympathisers).

The zone or local commissions will inform CO.BE.TU. regularly and without delay of the outcome of the various phases of the procedure, and they will follow its instructions.

In case of disagreement and dissent from these indications, the zone or local commissions will communicate their reasons.

In case of irreconcilable and enduring conflict, CO.BE.TU. will take over the management of the case, taking the necessary measures to complete the internal procedure.

This will also be the case in the event of serious irregularities committed by the zone or local commissions for safeguarding, in conducting cases submitted for their attention.

C) For minors participating in the activities of the Focolare Movement

The Focolare Movement - recalling the commitments made in the introduction to these Guidelines – spreads a culture of respect and esteem for others among the minors who participate in the activities of the Movement.

For this reason it is committed to developing activities directed towards prevention and combating all forms of child abuse, with an approach that is educational and not punitive.

If there is a disclosure that a minor has committed an alleged sexual abuse, violence or maltreatment or acts of bullying towards another minor, in accordance with the laws in force in that country where they live, while waiting for the internal investigation, the alleged minor will be suspended from any task and any activities that may pose risks to their peers.

The verified responsibility of the minor is incompatible with the requirements for participating in the life and activities of the Movement, where minors are present. If conditions allow, in collaboration with the family, the child will be helped to start a process of awareness of the seriousness of the acts carried out, which will allow them to participate again in the activities.

If during the course of an event (congress, summer camp, workshop, Mariapolis,...), the minor behaves in a way contrary to the principles contained in these Guidelines and, in any case, not so serious as to deem it necessary to initiate the internal procedure, the leader of the event, in an open and sincere dialogue with the minor, will immediately try to shed light on what has happened and will help the minor to be aware of their own behaviour - inviting them to accept their responsibility. The parents of the child must be immediately informed of what has happened.

If, despite the above effort by the leader, the child's attitude persists, the initiation of an internal investigation will be evaluated, according to the rules contained in these Guidelines.

Guarantees

During the internal investigation, the defendant must be assured of exercising his/her right of defence.

In such a phase, where the conduct of that person is not known, all appropriate caution must be taken to avoid those measures that endanger the good reputation of the accused. In particular, it will not be necessary to make known the motives for the measures taken, unless there is good reason to do so.

It remains true and possible – for all those who have a real and actual interest - to request information about the outcome of the internal investigation. However, the Commission has the sole discretion to evaluate this request.

If the member is transferred to another place, the new person responsible for them will be informed of any proceedings regarding that person.

Copies of all documents produced and used in the internal proceedings must be kept in a confidential file kept by CO.BE.TU. and by the zone and local commission.

(APPENDIX B)

Model for Mandate

Letterhead**Work of Mary/Focolare Movement****Dear Mr./Mrs.****CONFERMENT OF THE TASK OF SAFEGUARDING OFFICER**

The undersigned _____, born at _____ on (DOB)
 _____ and resident at _____
 _____ telephone: _____,

Delegate of the Focolare Movement – Work of Mary – for the zone/ zonetta of
 _____,

-with regard to the content of the "Guidelines of the Focolare Movement for the Promotion of the Well-Being and Safeguarding of Minors",

- since, from information taken, the undersigned has verified that

Mr / Mrs _____ born in _____
 on DOB _____
 and resident at _____ Street _____
 tel. _____,

possesses the requirements asked for carrying out the tasks entrusted to the "safeguarding officer"; hereby

AUTHORISES

the above mentioned person to carry out the tasks and functions assigned to the "Safeguarding Officer" for the zone/zonetta of _____.

According to the aforementioned Guidelines, the assignment lasts for three years and, upon expiry, will be automatically renewed with the same duration (3 years) in the absence of revocation by the delegate and or resignation by the Safeguarding Officer.

_____, at _____

Signature**Seal of the Work of Mary**

**ACCEPTANCE OF ASSIGNMENT AND DECLARATION
OF COMMITMENT BY THE SAFEGUARDING OFFICER**

The undersigned _____, born in _____
on DOB _____
and resident at _____ on Street _____
telephone: _____,

- having seen the act of appointment _____ with which the Delegate of the Focolare Movement – Work of Mary - of the zone / zonetta _____ has entrusted to the undersigned the tasks and functions of "Safeguarding Officer" for the zone / zonetta of _____,

DECLARES

- to accept this appointment by committing myself to carry out its duties according to my conscience, in full freedom and autonomy, in cooperation and close collaboration with the Delegates of the zone / zonetta and the other members of the Commission and in accordance with the "Guidelines of the Focolare Movement for the Promotion of the Well-being and Safeguarding of Minors", of which I declare to have full knowledge;

- not to have been convicted of crimes against public morality and good conduct, family morality, moral freedom and against the personality of the individual.

The undersigned commits themselves to keeping strictly confidential all the news and information of which they will become aware in the conduct of their duties;

_____, at _____

Signature

APPENDIX C

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MINOR

The cases when a minor who is the victim of abuse, discloses it themselves, are very rare. Frequently the perpetrator, through violent verbal and non-verbal behaviour keeps the victim under their power and control, thus taking the lead-role in their relationship. Within this complex relationship, a series of dynamics and defence mechanisms come into play, which very often put the minor in a position where he/she cannot rebel, or does not feel the need to denounce abuse, remaining in a sense, passive and silent.

More often and likely, the reality of abuse is determined through signs of distress that the behaviour of the minor shows, as a consequence of the abuse itself.

Signs of Distress

The behaviour of the minor is absolutely relevant. Case studies show that there are no specific indicators that make it possible to state with certainty whether the child has been the victim of abuse or violence. There are signs that the child expresses through his or her behaviour. These have to be interpreted very carefully with the help of specialists.

Physical violence leaves visible signs on the victim's body; instead for other types of abuse or other forms of violence the signs are not so clear. In these cases, the minor often shows a sudden change in behaviour, different from their usual reactions. Care must be taken in particular, when the child:

- is confused, finds it difficult to express himself/herself in words;
- is sad and tends to isolate himself/herself from the others;
- has frequent crises of anger or crying;
- is particularly aggressive or hyperactive;
- suddenly changes his/her habits, their way of playing, drawing, etc.;
- continuously complains of physical pains that do not have a medical cause (e.g. headache, stomach ache, tiredness);
- has regressive behaviours (e.g. enuresis, which is the involuntary emission of urine when over 5-6 years of age), shows fears that are characteristic of previous developmental stages, such as extreme dependence on the significant adult);
- has problems with ordinary biological functions (e.g. sleeping and eating disorders);
- at school shows loss of interest and concentration and has poor results;
- shows seductive behaviour with adults and / or plays games with inappropriate sexual content with their peers;
- is afraid of being alone; is afraid of adults (or of someone in particular);
- develops new fears.

In actual fact, every child can show these attitudes; however, when these signs are **frequent and excessive** they can become indicators of abuse.

How to listen to the child who spontaneously discloses to you having suffered abuse

If a minor, given the particular trust they put in an adult, should disclose having been the victim of abuse, violence, mistreatment or acts of bullying, an attitude of attentive care is necessary in the person hearing the disclosure.

The adult should listen without asking questions, listening only to what the child wants to say. Invasive and inappropriate questions should be avoided, because they have a negative effect on a person who has already suffered damaging experiences.

If it is necessary to give input to the dialogue with the victim, we suggested using some of their own words to encourage him or her to continue (e.g. "you said that day you were at home ...").

Another important aspect in these conversations is having control of one's emotions. It is essential in this moment of listening that the adult knows how to control their emotions, even when the situation scares us because of its seriousness. The child should perceive that the adult is alongside them, non-judgemental, supportive, giving security to the child as they listen to him/her; otherwise the child might close themselves in their suffering and their sense of guilt and shame could grow.

If the adult has this attitude, the child will feel free to speak and will also have the opportunity to know another way of relating to adults. It is not the task of the adult in whom the child confides to determine the truthfulness or accuracy of their story, and even less so to make a diagnosis. The adult must rather offer a space in which the child can express themselves and be recognised as a victim, a fundamental starting point for starting a possible journey of personal healing.

For this reason it is absolutely forbidden to record the interview with the minor or to arrange further interviews with the minor. Please refer for this aspect to the procedures set out in these Guidelines.