

PROTECTING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS PROVINCE RELEASE NAMES OF ACCUSED FRIARS

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q. What information are you releasing?
- A. The Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Conrad (Mid-America) is releasing the text of the recent audit report findings and an accompanying list of the names of Capuchin members or former members against whom there has been made a credible claim of the sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult. The list is the result of an independent audit of the Province's personnel files and other relevant documents by an outside, independent group of qualified professionals.
- Q. What is your definition of "vulnerable adult"?
- A. For the sake of this audit, a vulnerable adult is a person 18 or older who evidences one or more of the following criteria: advanced age, developmental disability, mental illness, physical disability, requires supervision or physical care, lacks the personal and social skills to live independently, or is susceptible to the power differential of religious position and/or status.
- Q. What criteria determined the inclusion of Capuchin members on this list?
- A. Friars' names are included on this list if there has been a credible allegation of the sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult. However, inclusion on this list in no way implies that the allegations are true and accurate or that the accused friar has been found guilty of a crime or is liable for civil claims.
- Q. What constitutes a credible allegation?
- A. A credible allegation means, in the opinion of those completing an administrative or criminal investigation, it is determined to be more likely than not that the alleged abuse occurred. Credibility is established either through a friar's own admission or through a criminal or internal administrative investigation. The absence of evidence in a sexual abuse claim does not mean that abuse did not occur. It is equally important to note that a reference to or allegation of sexual abuse does not necessarily mean that sexual abuse did occur.
- Q. What is a Provincial Independent Review Board?
- A. In keeping with the requirements of the USCCB's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* which are adapted for religious communities in the Conference of Major Superiors of Men's *Instruments of Hope and Healing: Safeguarding Children and Young People and Standards for Accreditation*, the Province established a Review Board comprised of independent, lay professionals in the fields of medicine, law enforcement, mental health, etc.. The purpose of the Review Board is to provide advice and outside expertise to the Provincial Minister in addressing all reports of the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. The Review Board assists the Provincial Minister in determining the credibility of a claim and, if necessary, provides a recommended course of action.

Q. Why is your Province releasing this list?

A. The sexual abuse scandal that rocked the Church in 2002 has resurfaced. The people of God, rightly so, are demanding accountability, transparency and oversight from outside, independent sources. By conducting this independent audit, our Province is seeking to begin the process of restoring trust and making amendment for any past mistakes.

Q. Are any accused Capuchins still functioning in public ministry?

A. No Capuchin member against whom a credible accusation of the sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult has been established is serving in public ministry.

Q. If a friar has a credible accusation against him, why is he still a Capuchin?

A. Dismissal from the priesthood and religious life is a canonical process governed by Church law which is wholly separate from matters pertaining to criminal or civil law. While a friar may have seriously violated criminal and/or civil law and in so doing committed a serious abuse of the pastoral care entrusted to him, he still retains the rights and protections of canonical law. A separate canonical process must therefore be undertaken to establish ecclesial penalties, which may include dismissal from the Order and/or the priesthood.

Q. What does it mean that a member of the Province is on a Safety Plan?

A. Safety Plans are required for a member who has received a credible allegation of sexual abuse against a minor. The Independent Review Board assists the leadership of the Province in the creation of an individual member's Safety Plan. The elements of the Safety Plan are developed in writing for each member, reviewed by the Independent Review Board and shared with the member and his supervisor, the Provincial Minister and his Council, and as appropriate, with members of his local community. The Safety Plan must be signed by the member and the Provincial Minister and defines risk reduction strategies, requires intervention programs, imposes restrictions in regard to technology and travel, prescribes access to outside visitors and more. All members on Safety Plans must have a designated supervisor who oversees and ensures their adherence to the plan.

Q. What are the Capuchins doing to ensure the protection of minors and vulnerable adults?

A. In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, a comprehensive protocol for addressing allegations of the sexual abuse of minors. Since that time, the Capuchins have had a zero-tolerance policy of sexual misconduct between a member and a minor or vulnerable adult. The Province is accredited by Praesidium, Inc., an organization providing risk management assessment, consultation, policy development and training materials for the prevention of sexual misconduct and appropriate response to allegations. The Province is regularly updated and audited by Praesidium to ensure the Province's adherence to the standards set forth by the Conference of the Major Superiors of Men. The Province's most recent Praesidium audit and update was in late 2017 and the Province was re-accredited for another 5 year period starting in June 2018.

Further, the Province has greatly enhanced its requirements and screening process for men wishing to join the Capuchins. These requirements include, but are not limited to:

- A completed national sex offender registry check.
- A completed criminal background check for every jurisdiction in which the candidate has resided for the previous seven years.
- A minimum of five references from specific sources.

- Two face-to-face interviews with Capuchins including a behavioral assessment which goes into great detail about the candidate's family background and sexual history.
- A psychological evaluation and psychosexual history conducted by a licensed psychologist with experience in conducting psychosexual histories, assessing psychosexual health and identifying potential indicators of future misconduct.
- A review of all publicly accessible content on social media platforms, personal websites and/or blog sites.
- Finally, vocation directors responsible for the recruitment of future candidates are provided with education to assist in identifying candidates who may be at risk of sexually abusing a minor or vulnerable adult.

Q. What should I do if I have been abused by a Capuchin?

A. If you or someone you know has been abused by a member of the Capuchin Province, you are urged to contact local law enforcement and/or the appropriate child protection agency in the area where the suspected abuse took place. You are further encouraged to contact Jason Faris, the Safe Environment Coordinator for the Capuchin Province of St. Conrad at 303.477.5436. If the alleged victim is a minor, we are required to report the allegation immediately to civil authorities.

Q. What happens when a Capuchin member is accused of sexual abuse?

A. When a Capuchin member is accused of sexual abuse involving a minor or vulnerable adult, several things happen simultaneously. First, the Province reports the allegation to law enforcement. Second, the accused member is suspended from public ministry pending the outcome of an administrative investigation in tandem with the Independent Review Board consultation. Third, if so desired, the Province offers pastoral care to the alleged victim. The results of the internal investigation are then submitted to the Independent Review Board who help determine if the accusation is credible and, if so, provides a recommendation to the Provincial Minister. Ordinarily, if law enforcement decides to conduct a criminal investigation of the allegation, the Province's own internal investigation is suspended until any criminal investigations are concluded.

Q. Have the Capuchins sought guidance from any independent organization specializing in the prevention of abuse?

A. The Capuchin Province of St. Conrad is accredited by Praesidium, Inc., an independent firm that provides organizations with advice and training in the area of sexual abuse prevention. Praesidium's ongoing accreditation process is intentionally rigorous and ensures that the Province's policies and practices are consistent with current standards of child protection.

Q. Do the Capuchins receive training in the Province's Safe Environment Program?

A. Every member of the Capuchin Province of St. Conrad, beginning with the first year of formation, must read and sign the Province's "Provincial Policy on Sexual Misconduct" and complete comprehensive safe environment training. In addition, all members of the Province renew their safe environment training annually through updates and materials provided by Praesidium, Inc.

Q. Does the Province of St. Conrad work with law enforcement to investigate claims of abuse?

A. The Capuchin Province of St. Conrad reports allegations of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult to law enforcement and/or appropriate child protection agencies, as required by State law. The Province will cooperate with law enforcement during the course of a criminal investigation.