

Loreto Sisters

Guidance on Responding to Someone who makes an Allegation of Abuse not Related to Church Personnel

Anonymous allegations are to be carefully considered. They are frustrating but they cannot be disregarded. The complainant should be informed that anonymity might significantly restrict the ability of professionals to access information or to intervene to protect a child, and they need to be encouraged to be as open as possible. The complainant can be given time and encouragement to reconsider their stance on maintaining anonymity.

These allegations most likely will take the following formats:

1. No named complainant and no named respondent:

This information should be first passed to the DLP. If the DLP is unsure whether or not the information received reaches the threshold, they should consult with the statutory authorities and follow their advice.

2. Named respondent but no named complainant:

In most instances the anonymous reporter does give the name of the respondent. It must be remembered that the person named in this way has the right to be considered innocent of any wrongdoing and to their good name, so great care needs to be taken to protect and uphold these rights, while attempting to deal effectively with the situation.

Anxiety and fear may persuade some people not to immediately reveal their identity. It can be difficult to act on information given under these circumstances, unless at some point the name of the person raising the concern or making an allegation becomes known.

This information should be passed to the DLP of the respondent's Church body, who will consult with the statutory authorities (on a no name basis if required) to ascertain if the threshold has been reached. If the threshold has been reached the DLP will formally notify the statutory authorities and follow the processes outlined in Standard 4. If the threshold has not been reached or the statutory authorities have concluded their investigation the 'guidance on the process for religious following the conclusion of any investigation by the statutory authorities' should be followed.

3. Named complainant but no named respondent:

This information should be passed to the DLP, who will consult with the statutory authorities (on a no name basis if required) to ascertain if the threshold has been reached. If the threshold has been reached the DLP will formally notify the statutory authorities and follow their advice as to how to proceed, without the name of the respondent.

This is in line with national legislation and policy as outlined in the Guidance on Reporting Allegations of Abuse.



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