

# Loreto Sisters

## Guidance Managing Child Safeguarding Allegations, Suspensions, Concerns or Knowledge received during the Extra Sacramental Internal Forum

### **What is meant by the Internal Forum in this context ?**

The internal forum describes the place where an individual's conscience is formed and where they develop their personal relationship with God. When those thoughts, feelings, or struggles are shared externally, for example in spiritual direction, growth counselling, formation or through another mechanism, there must be agreement about how that information is used. For the most part that information is retained between the two parties, but at the outset, the limits to confidentiality must be made explicit. Disclosures of child abuse from the internal forum shared in these settings must be reported to the statutory authorities.

This should be distinguished from the sacramental forum of sharing within the sacrament of reconciliation. Separate Guidance deals with responding to allegations in relation to the seal of confession.

### **Explaining the limits of confidentiality in the extra sacramental forum:**

The person who facilitates the opportunity for exploring the internal forum must advise prior to the ministry beginning:

- That there are limits of confidentiality, these must be explained to the person who wishes to share issues within the internal forum so that there is absolute clarity that the following cannot be kept confidential:
  - Abuse as a child where the perpetrator still has contact with children or adults at risk of harm.
  - A person who may have committed abuse or fearful that they have the propensity to harm.
  - A person currently experiencing abuse, witnessing it or indirectly involved.
  - A person who may view or download indecent images of children or extreme abuse.

The obligation on the person facilitating the ministry is not to investigate but to keep a written record and to report allegations, suspicions, knowledge and concerns to the relevant statutory authorities and/or the province leader.

- The person providing the spiritual direction or growth counselling should sign an agreement with the person receiving the ministry which outlines the limits of confidentiality and the requirement to report. This form should be retained in line with relevant data protection and retention procedures.
- If an allegation is made during the ministry, the person responsible for the ministry should explain clearly the steps that they must now take and report the allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge.