



# Conference of Major Superiors of Men

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Media Release

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## **CMSM Board Accepts National Advisory Council Report on Child Protection Efforts by Religious Institutes**

COLUMBUS, OHIO (August 5, 2016). The National Board of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men ([CMSM](#)), whose leaders represent more than 17,000 Catholic religious brothers and priests in the United States, meeting in Columbus, Ohio, formally received and accepted the Report of the Conference's National Advisory Council for Child Protection (NAC), which the Board had mandated in 2014.

The National Advisory Council, composed of twelve professionals, co-chaired by Dr. Kathleen McChesney and Dr. Rolando Diaz, along with four experienced advisors and one liaison to the CMSM, reviewed the commitment of religious institutes of men to the principles of the USCCB's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. These experienced professionals contributed their services so that small working groups studied both response and prevention of abuse as well as practices associated with accountability and transparency.

Recognizing that such an advisory capacity ought to be on-going, the Council identified eight commendable actions and their results. These included the adoption and on-going development of Standards to measure compliance; the discovery of a means of external verification of compliance; establishment of safe environments through both checks on practices and training; the reduction in the number of incidents of abuse from a 17.8 annual average between the years of 1950-2002 to an annual average of 1.27 between the years of 2004-2014; the removal of offenders from public ministry; the offering of training programs for supervision of offenders who were permitted to remain in common life; guidance offered to member institutes regarding the fulfillment of Church-wide guidelines and norms; and, accountability and communication with the public.

The NAC also identified seven opportunities for improvement. These include the following: a goal of compliance of all institutes with the CMSM Standards to reach the 1,796 religious priests, deacons, and brothers who belong to institutes who had not yet achieved accreditation or have not undergone external compliance review; the development of an accurate listing of institutes in compliance; the development of a means to address the differences in quality, scope, and depth of psychological testing for candidates for religious life and seminaries; a need to address the concern that some candidates admitted may require a high level of psychological support during the process of formation; encouraging institutes to work for continuity in the role of Victim Assistance Coordinators as transitions occur in leadership; assisting the institutes in developing shared common guidelines for Review Boards; and, urging member institutes to establish and maintain effective communications between religious major superiors (religious ordinaries) and diocesan bishops (diocesan ordinaries) for the sake of handling allegations and responding in unity for the sake of the protection of minors.

Ten specific recommendations followed from these opportunities, including the continuation of the work of the National Advisory Council and the establishment of a new office at the CMSM for a “Child Protection Officer” to devote full time to further the specific recommendations offered. The National Board of CMSM accepted this report from the National Advisory Council and they have prioritized the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report.

Later, during the annual assembly which followed the Board meeting, CMSM members heard a great deal about this important aspect of the conference’s common commitment to make the Church and CMSM institutes places that offer safety for children. The members at the Assembly were reminded that this report mandated that the NAC examine the programs undertaken by religious institutes in response to the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/ Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*.

Men’s religious institutes rose to the occasion in 2002 with what has been regarded as a highly motivated and significant response to promoting the protection of children and young people. The CMSM implementation of the *Charter* and *Essential Norms* within religious institutes is contained in its *Instruments of Hope and Healing* Program. With sorrow and regret over the past failures of men in religious life to keep a protecting environment for children, the Conference intends to continue to work to change human and religious culture inattentive to indicators of potential harm and to adopt a positive rhetoric about response so that a message orienting all to proactive prevention may be known by all.

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**The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)** supports and offers resources for U.S. leaders of Catholic men’s religious institutes. CMSM promotes dialogue and collaboration on issues of religious life as well as peace and justice issues with major groups in church and society. There are more than 17,000 religious priests and brothers in the United States.

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