



Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)



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Special Issues — Hope and Healing

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Leaders of Religious Orders Launch Hope and Healing Program

Over 175 priests and brothers who head religious orders in the United States are participating this fall in the first steps of what the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) calls the "Instruments of Hope and Healing" program. The leaders are undertaking a stringent plan to ensure that their members and their organizations are safeguarding children and young people.

CMSM Executive Director Father Ted Keating said "It is critical at this juncture that we not only react to the crisis that has faced the priesthood in this country, but that we prevent any further harm to children and young people." About one-third of the priests in the United States belong to religious orders.

CMSM is coordinating the program to implement the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Norms approved by the Vatican specifically as they apply to religious priests. The congregations of religious brothers voluntarily decided to be part of the CMSM program at the 2002 Assembly of the Conference.

CMSM has engaged Christian Brothers Risk Management Services to develop training sessions and materials for the religious institutes and has formed an Advisory Council representative of its membership to set and oversee compliance standards for orders and their members.

The goal of the Hope and Healing program is to provide training for the men's religious orders and their members with respect to the reporting and the investigation of sexual abuse allegations, providing resources for prevention and response, and ultimately accrediting member religious orders and holding them accountable for being in compliance with nationally-accepted standards for child-serving organizations. Praesidium Religious Services, as a vendor of Christian Brothers Risk management Services, will be assisting the religious orders of the United States in their commitment to this goal. The Advisory Council is now working with Praesidium in drafting standards for developing a system of accreditation that is based on these national standards. The council will also provide a set of model policies that the orders can adapt to their own unique circumstances.

The 11-member Advisory Council includes those who work in parishes, schools, and health care institutions, as well as in missions around the world. They represent both large and small orders and the active and contemplative traditions.

The training is beginning at regional meetings held in six areas of the country this fall and will continue in spring 2004 in a developmental curriculum. In addition, two national workshops for leaders held in January and February 2004 will offer presentations on accreditation standards, supervision of at-risk members, and development and use of review boards. A follow-up session is scheduled for the day prior to the next national meeting of the leaders in August 2004.

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 16,000 religious priests and brothers in the United States.

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