

APPENDIX TO RATIO
FORMATIONIS FRANCISCANÆ

Safeguarding in Ongoing and Initial Formation



GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR FORMATION AND STUDIES
OFFICE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

1. Introduction

1.1 *Safeguarding as an expression of our Franciscan Charism*

As Friars Minor, we recognize the fundamental value of the dignity of each person and his or her rights as a being created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). For this reason, each one of us deserves to be treated with respect and care. Those of us who have made a commitment to a more radical following of Jesus Christ are called to be a prophetic memory in the Church. We stand for the Life and Dignity of all people, particularly the most vulnerable. Our commitment as Friars Minor is a concrete way of living our charism of minority expressed in safeguarding, by renouncing any kind of abuse of power over others¹.

2. Ongoing formation and training in safeguarding

- ☞ All friars should be familiar with the Policy and Procedures of the Entity, as well with the norms of the Civil Law (especially about the correct use of social media, e.g. passive and active consumption of Child pornography or any form of sexual violence online).
- ☞ Measures must be put into place to protect and empower all friars. Friars should be informed and sensitized to different forms of violence and sexual abuse in consecrated life and pastoral care, addressing topics such as:
 - ▶ Self-perception and biographical work.
 - ▶ Closeness and distance in relationships.
 - ▶ Bulling among the friars.
 - ▶ Sexuality and power.

¹ Cfr. Subject to every human creature for God's sake (EpFid II 47). Manual for the topic of safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults in Ongoing and Initial Formation, General Curia OFM 2023, p. 6.

- ▶ Abuse of spiritual authority and clericalism.
- ▶ Authenticity: a new approach to Leadership and authority.

There must be regular and mandatory further education and training in safeguarding for friars in Ongoing Formation. Training for those in initial formation is to be undertaken at the very beginning of their formation so that they became aware of and understand the code of conduct which forms part of the Safeguarding Policy of the Entity.

3. Balanced Healthy Relationships in initial Formation

Formation is a relational process. The initial Formation process presupposes a balance between closeness and distance in human relationships and a reflective approach to this. The assessment of closeness and distance can vary greatly. Formators, Ministers included, must pay attention to allowing and building up reciprocal trust which is the foundation of formative accompaniment (RFF 102). They are responsible for the appropriate handling of physical and emotional closeness even if the person in Formation is looking for a closer relationship.

3.1 Role of Superior versus Formator

The Minister or Custos as Ordinary must be aware of his responsibility in the initial Formation process. Therefore, he should show his support of and trust in the formators and at the same time keep a healthy distance from the friars in Formation.

3.2 Self-reflection of the formator

Formators demonstrate the ability and understanding of personal boundaries, especially in relation to friars in formation. The Formation Fraternity embraces fraternal trust and the ability to discern without ambiguity. Formators as helping professionals within the fraternity should, as best practice, seek supervision.

3.3 *Power*

In the earlier Rule Francis of Assisi reminds the friars to renounce any form of “power over” the other person (see: Earlier Rule, V,9-11).

Formators understand that the authority given to them in accompanying the friar in formation is first and foremost a help in discernment of one’s call.

- a.** Formative work in its various facets is understood in our context as a service to the friars in Formation, to the community of the Entity, the Order and to the Church. The power that is entrusted to the formation team emanates from three ‘directions’:
- ▶ Power from “within”: through the respective personality, training, age and Franciscan experience.
 - ▶ Power from “above”: through the mission, function, and appointment by the Entity.
 - ▶ Power from “below”: through acceptance and trust given by the friars in Formation.

Friars who take on ministry as Formators must be aware of their power and authority, especially when they are offering the Ministers elements of discernment for making decisions whether a friar in Formation will be admitted to simple or final Profession. Admission to profession of vows requires accountability and transparency throughout the process of Formation.

At the same time, it must be said that friars in initial Formation can abuse of their power as well, e.g. trying to make an alliance with the Minister against their formators. Therefore, it must be clear that not every kind of conflict or tension between the formators and the person in Formation is a form of abuse.

3.4 *Abuse of power*

- a. Physical, psychological, emotional and sexualised assaults and acts of violence as well as spiritual abuse by formators are always an abuse of power.
- b. Abuse of power is present:
 - ▶ When formators want to strengthen their own sense of power at the expense of the integral good of the friar.
 - ▶ When the self-interest of the formator prevails over the ministry of Formation.
 - ▶ When affective manipulation is used and dependence is exploited.
 - ▶ If forms of violence such as coercion, pressure, threats are used, e.g. to enforce something.
 - ▶ When rule violations by formators or persons in Formation go unchallenged.
 - ▶ If someone is humiliated in front of the community or the group of friars in Formation.
 - ▶ When responsibility is effectively denied, e.g. in relation to care, information.
 - ▶ And supervision.



IL MINISTRO GENERALE
DELL'ORDINE DEI FRATI MINORI

D E C R E T O

In conformità agli orientamenti delle *Costituzioni generali* e dei documenti della Chiesa, ottenuto il voto deliberativo del Definitorio generale nella sessione del 14 gennaio 2025, a norma degli Statuti generali (art. 78 §3), usando delle facoltà che ci competono per l'ufficio, con il presente decreto,


approviamo e promulghiamo

**L'APPENDICE DELLA *RATIO FORMATIONIS FRANCISCANÆ*:
TUTELA NELLA FORMAZIONE
PERMANENTE E INIZIALE**

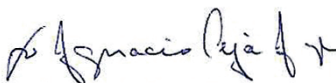
e stabiliamo che sia valida per tutto l'Ordine.

Dato in Roma, dalla Sede della Curia generale,
il 13 febbraio 2025.

Prot. 113743 (FS 133/24)


Fr. Darko Tepert, ofm
Segretario generale
per la Formazione e gli Studi




Fr. Ignacio Ceja Jiménez, ofm
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