**Guidelines for Sisters Living alone or with one other person**

***Preamble:***

1. Guidelines are not meant to define the spirit of our vowed life together or to rigidly answer all possible questions. However, in moments of crisis or decision making, these approved guidelines will help in arriving at a decision that benefits both the individual and the society as a whole.
2. These guidelines are meant to raise consciousness about areas of concern rising from the living situation of those who are alone or with one other person.
3. These guidelines will be used by those in this living situation and a member of the Provincial leadership in order to discern the appropriate course of action through a prayerful, yet realistic conversation.

**Guidelines**

1. General Notions:
   * Our constitutions speak about living in community. Present day ministries and other concerns sometimes demand that Sisters live alone or with one other person; often these living situations are geographically separated from community houses. Rather than focus on physical presence, we believe that community relationships can be maintained in various ways. Physical presence may or may not foster community; psychological presence is always necessary and strengthens the bonds of intimacy, community and the mission of the society.
   * Granted that each sister strives to promote the mission of the Society through her ministry and through some form of presence to other members of the Society, special needs and demands on the total Society do arise when Sisters are living alone or with one other person.
   * The Provincial Leadership in conversation with the individual sisters will be motivated by the following principles.
     1. ongoing respect for the individual sister and her needs
     2. each person ages in a unique way
     3. on-going conversation/relationship with leadership is critical
     4. when possible a discernment process would be the usual approach to decision making
     5. Chronological age may not always be the sole indicator
     6. Geographic proximity may not be a significant factor if other connectedness is maintained.
2. Sisters living alone:

The sister and the Provincial leadership need to address the following questions:

Is the sister …

* Able to independently maintain routine housekeeping chores?
* Able to maintain her nutritional status by preparing her meals and doing her own food shopping?
* Safe in the environment or is she experiencing recurring falls in the house/apartment?
* Able to handle a car safely and/or manage her transportation needs?
* Able to manage her finances: i.e. Pay the bills on time, submit her budget reports, maintain her checking account, etc.?
* Showing evidence of increased isolation, depression or reclusiveness that is not consistent with her previous temperament?
* Able to participate regularly in the Eucharist
* Able to safely manage medication and /or health care needs?

1. Sisters living with another person

All of the above questions in B apply as well as the following questions need to be addressed by Province leadership:

* Is the second person able to provide the necessary support as the other person is unable to manage or becomes frail?
* Is there a need to provide an opportunity to meet with both persons to identify the effect of the strain of one person carrying the entire responsibility for the living situation?
* If one sister becomes seriously ill, how would she be supported in this setting?
* If both are frail, should there be an immediate intervention by a member of the Province Leadership or Director of Health Services to discuss options?

If any of the above questions cannot be satisfactorily answered, then an alternate living situation needs to be explored and steps taken to implement the transition.

It should also be noted that no later than age 77 it is recommended that every sister have a Geriatric Assessment so that cognitive and healthcare issues can be identified early and treatment initiated as early as possible if there is evidence of a significant change in either ability.