Thank you for making Rolling Hills a safe place for kids.

“Children are a gift from the Lord. They are a reward from Him.”

PSALMS 127:3

Jesus taught us, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me”. Matthew 18:5

Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and volunteers, who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. Because of our commitment to our youngest members, we have created this booklet to spread awareness of abuse and how we can protect our children, our future.
Why Do We Need to Worry About Abuse?

Child abuse is very much a part of our society. Churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse have occurred in churches. Frequently, children know their abuser. It may be a family member, but it can also be a person in a position of trust like a child care worker, camp counselor, a teacher or a member of clergy. Victims and abusers come from all social, economic and racial groups. It can happen anywhere and at any time.

What is Child Abuse? (We Won’t Let It Happen Here!)

There are many different definitions of what is and is not child abuse. Some lists include “neglect” under child abuse. The primary importance of knowing what is child abuse or neglect lies in knowing when a report to Child Protective Services is necessary. The following is a list of the way the different types of abuse and neglect are sometimes defined.

**Abuse** is generally considered an act that causes physical and/or emotional damage to a child. There are generally three types of abuse delineated in the law.

**Physical Abuse** involves a person (older and larger) deliberately and intentionally causing bodily harm to a child. Examples include hitting a child with fists or objects, shaking a child (especially an infant), kicking, throwing, scalding, choking, burning, or otherwise causing injuries. The critical aspects of the definition are injury to a child and the injury being non-accidental.

**Sexual Abuse** generally is considered to be sexual contact between an adult and a child. Sexual abuse is not limited to intercourse, but generally includes fondling. It may also include an ongoing pattern of sexual talk or exposure to sexual material inappropriate for the child’s age. Involving a child in the making of pornographic material or in prostitution is also considered sexual abuse.

When volunteering with our youth please remember the following:

1. Whenever possible, at least two unrelated adults/volunteers will be in the room when minors are present.
2. Doors should remain open, especially if one of the adults needs to leave the room.
3. Maintain positive, appropriate interactions.
4. Speaking to a minor or minors one-on-one should be done in a public setting where paid staff or volunteers are in sight of other people.
5. Contact between employees/volunteers and youth should be limited to organization sanctioned activities and programs.
6. Preschool and younger children should be accompanied to the restroom and the paid staff or volunteer should wait outside the facility to take the child back to the class. Whenever possible the escort should be the same sex as the child.
7. Employees and volunteers should not have any one-on-one, private contact with children through social media, email, and text messages.
8. Actively interact with the youth to maintain adequate supervision.

No “second chances” will be given when it comes to our children.
“Appropriate, positive interactions among youth and between employees/volunteers and youth are essential in supporting positive youth development, making youth feel valued and providing the caring connections that serve as protective factors for youth.” (CDC 2007)

The following is a few examples of appropriate/inappropriate behaviors.

**Verbal Communication**

**Appropriate:**
- Praise
- Positive reinforcement for good work/behavior

**Inappropriate**
- Sexually provocative or degrading comments
- Risqué jokes

**Physical behavior**

**Appropriate:**
- Pats on the back or shoulder
- Side hugs

**Inappropriate/harmful:**
- Patting the buttocks
- Intimate/romantic/sexual contact
- Corporal punishment
- Touching anywhere a bathing suit would cover
- Showing pornography or involving youth in pornographic activities

*Emotional Abuse* or psychological maltreatment is more elusive, especially in state laws. It is generally considered to be a pattern of behavior that promotes emotional harm to a child. It may include terrifying or humiliating punishments (killing a child’s pet, making a child wear a sign that says he or she is a bed-wetter, locking a child in a dark place), isolating a child from others, convincing a child that he or she is bad or incompetent, exploiting a child (for example, using them to commit crimes because of the reduced likelihood that the child will be punished by the law) or repeatedly insulting and humiliating a child.

*Neglect* is the failure of parents or other caregivers to provide for the basic needs of a child. Neglect can involve educational neglect, in which parents do not ensure that the child goes to school or learns in some other way the basic material required by state law. Medical neglect involves parental failure to obtain needed medical care for their children. Physical neglect can be the failure of parents to provide for basic needs of food, clothing appropriate to the weather and shelter. Exposing a child to dangerous situations (letting a young child play near a busy highway) can also be considered neglectful behavior. Emotional neglect includes the failure of a parent to provide the love, nurture, and availability that children need to feel competent, self-confident and loved.

**Who are the Abusers?**

People who abuse children cannot be easily characterized or identified. They come from all socioeconomic levels, all races, ethnicities, and genders, which is why suspected abuse should never be ruled out on the basis of parental status.
Impact of Abuse in the Lives of Children

Child abuse and neglect harms children, adolescents, adult survivors and society. It impacts child and adolescent development and can have long-term consequences for adults with a history of abuse. Its impact may vary by the type, nature and circumstances of the abuse, characteristics of the child such as the child’s age, special needs and relationship to the abuser, family factors, and support and treatment available to the child, adolescent, or adult survivor over time. The harmful impact of abuse in the lives of children and adults varies widely and may be short and long term, intermittent and recurring.

How to Recognize the Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child

Not too many years ago, checklists describing “Behavioral Indicators of Child Abuse” were frequently distributed to parents, teachers, staff in child care centers and others staffing programs for children. This is no longer the case, rather, it is widely believed such checklists can be misinterpreted and misused with the actual causes of changes in a child’s behavior frequently misdiagnosed or ignored. However, this does not mean that changes in a child’s behavior, particularly when dramatic, should not be explored to try to determine the cause of the behavior. It is also important that concern about suspected abuse or neglect of a child, and the basis for the suspicion, be reported to proper authorities. A report does not require certainty. After a report is made to the proper authorities, they will investigate the matter and decide whether the report is founded.

When a Child Discloses Abuse or Neglect

When a child discloses that he or she has been abused, church policy on handling reports of abuse and sexual misconduct should be followed. It is important that you remain calm in both your tone and your body language, listen to the child, and convey to the child your concern. **It is not your job to interview the child about the alleged abuse, others will do that.** It will be important for you to prepare a written description of what you have been told, using the child’s words. Don’t make promises you can’t keep, like telling the child you will not tell anyone else about the abuse.

Where appropriate, let them know that you will have to report the abuse to child protection officials who can help them. Follow church policy in making the report to authorities. It may be that there is a designated person to make the reports. If the abuse occurred on church property or if church personnel or volunteers (staff, elders, deacons, teachers, pre-school staff) are involved, a report to the Presbytery Sexual Misconduct Response Coordination Team must also be made.

**Report any concerns to Rolling Hills Pastors or Paid staff.**

To prevent child abuse at Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church we will complete the following:

- Educate volunteers and staff on abuse
- Complete a background screening on volunteers and staff every three years
- Maintain a covenant agreement for volunteers and staff
- Monitor volunteer and youth interactions for appropriate behavior and interactions.