

Dear Members and Friends of Riverlawn,

Child sexual abuse is a growing moral and legal problem in America, even in churches and church-related settings. If we are to encourage the spiritual development of our young people at Riverlawn, we must first take reasonable precautions to provide them with an environment in which they are protected from such abuse. While we have been fortunate at Riverlawn and have had no incidents or accusations it is necessary that we take every precaution to keep our children and our adults safe.

Accusations and actual incidents of child abuse, sexual misconduct or sexual harassment have far-reaching effects. Child abuse could scar a child for life and devastate a family. Ministries are tarnished by such incidents; some have been severely damaged by the legal and emotional fallout. Surely, you will agree that we need to take every reasonable precaution to prevent incidents of any kind from happening in our church.

Attorneys and our insurance provider, Brotherhood Mutual, have encouraged us to develop a child abuse prevention plan that includes screening of all employees and those volunteers who come into contact with children and youth. Such a program is the best way for us to protect our young people. It also demonstrates that we have taken reasonable measures to prevent any type of abuse should an allegation or incident occur.

Riverlawn's Session has accepted these recommendations and adopted a ***Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy*** and a ***Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy*** that includes screening of all officers, staff and volunteers working in the children and youth ministries of Riverlawn. These written policies will be available to all members of the congregation. We will also provide a brief summary of the policy highlights.

Because we are in the process of hiring new employees and will soon be inviting children in our community to attend VBS at Riverlawn we have decided to implement the requirement for background checks immediately. All officers, employees and anyone working with our children, whether in a paid position or as a volunteer - for instance: teachers, nursery workers, group leaders, Children's Church leaders, craft leaders, Wednesday Night volunteers, etc. - will be required to fill out an authorization form allowing a background check. It is a simple form that requires only basic information from the applicant. Your application information and results will be kept confidential. There is no charge to the individual for these background checks.

A copy of the authorization form will be available from the church office during the week and in the rear of the sanctuary on Sundays. Please fill out a form and return it to the Riverlawn office or to Jane Lothes, as soon as possible.

Some of you may find it difficult to talk about child abuse, thinking it couldn't happen here or be committed by someone you know. If you have questions about our new child abuse prevention plan, you can contact me, Jane Lothes at 304-545-2026 or janelothes@hotmail.com and I will be happy to discuss our program with you in greater detail.

We urge you to support our plans for protecting our children and the church from possible allegations or actual incidents of abuse. The problem is nationwide. We must do our part to ensure that it does not happen at Riverlawn—for the sake of our children, members and the ministry of our church.

Sincerely,

Jane Lothes

Clerk of Session