



We can start **Handle With Care** to support kids exposed to trauma!



The “Handle With Care” program enables first responders to notify schools if they encounter a child at a traumatic scene, so schools and mental healthcare leaders can provide trauma-sensitive support right away.



✓ **The Problem: Childhood Trauma**

- **Childhood trauma, or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), occurs when kids experience stressful events (such as witnessing domestic violence).**
- 60% of U.S. children have been exposed to violence, crime, or abuse.
- These kids still have to go to class, carrying a burden of stress/trauma that can interfere with their behavior/grades in schools that aren’t even aware there’s an issue.

✓ **A Solution: Handle With Care**



1. First Responders encounter kids at scene, send notice to schools.

Police and first responders are trained to send a confidential notification to the school or childcare agency with: the child’s name, age, and school, and a message to “Handle With Care.” Nothing about the traumatic incident is shared with the school.



2. Schools prep trauma-sensitive support for kids.

A school will create a process to triage “Handle With Care” notifications. The process will involve notifying the appropriate teacher or counselor to observe the student’s behavior/learning and be prepared to provide trauma-sensitive support.



3. Mental health providers partner for additional support

When school interventions are not sufficient, community-based mental healthcare professionals partner to provide additional support to the students and their families, such as counseling and therapy, as necessary.

A person from each of the school, police or other first responder, and mental healthcare disciplines is expected to participate in regular Handle With Care meetings to assess academic achievements, trancies, disciplinary reports, and treatment outcomes.

✓ **How Do We Start Handle With Care?**

The Plymouth County District Attorney's Office has all the resources necessary to start a Handle With Care program in your community. They can guide communities to unite police and first responders, schools, mental healthcare, and other stakeholders to create a Handle With Care program, using examples and materials from the West Virginia Center for Children’s Justice, which launched Handle With Care in 2013, and *Salud America!* in San Antonio, Texas.



For more information, visit the website:
<https://hwc.plymouthda.com>