Handle With Care

A trauma-informed collaboration between Law Enforcement, Public and Private Schools, Mental Health Providers and Eastern Service Area Decategorization.
What is Handle With Care?

- Handle With Care (HWC) is a trauma-informed response model developed by the West Virginia Defending Childhood Initiative.
- The goal is to mitigate the negative affects experienced by children’s exposure to trauma, and to increase knowledge and awareness trauma, specifically among law enforcement and educators.
- Provides notice to educators when a student may have experienced a traumatic event.
The Problem

- A national survey found that 60% of American children have been exposed to violence, crime, or abuse in their homes, schools or communities – and that 40% were direct victims of two or more violent acts.

What is Childhood Trauma?

- A response to a stressful event
- Dramatically undermines your ability to cope
- Can lead to a cascade of social, emotional and academic difficulties
- Can lead to adoption of self medicating behaviors such as substance abuse, smoking and overeating
- Interferes with a child’s ability to learn
Exposure to Trauma can be:

- A single event
- A connected series of events
  - Resulting in chronic lasting stress/toxic stress
Sources of Trauma

Physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, witnessing their mother treated violently, having a parent with substance or mental health issues, living with an adult who had spent time in prison, chronic bullying, homelessness, community violence, undergoing multiple invasive medical procedures, living with a parent traumatized by recent combat, systems-induced trauma such as removal from home, multiple placements, separation from siblings, natural disasters
Prevalence of Trauma

- The ACE study found higher levels of traumatic experiences in the general population than previously imagined.

- Among the approximately 17,000 adults surveyed, almost 2/3 of participants reported at least one ACE 1 out of 5 reported three or more
What does trauma look like?

AVOIDANCE

NEGATIVE MOOD / COGNITION

AROUSAL / REACTIVITY
Trauma is . . .
Under-Reported and Under Diagnosed

Often misinterpreted & assigned as symptoms of disorders (depression, Bipolar Disorder, ADHD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Attachment Disorder, etc.)*

These diagnoses generally do not capture full extent of developmental impact of trauma.

*39% kids at pilot school have these diagnoses.
Resilience


- Built by closeness/support of family, friends and others, and early intervention.
Simplicity of a HWC Notice

Provides law enforcement with the ability to alert the school that this child was involved in a police incident last night and may have academic or behavioral problems today.

No details are given
Just 3 simple words
Handle with Care
HWC Process

- Responds to call, encounters a child(ren) or identifies children reside there but may not be present at the time of responding

- If a child(ren) physically present, shield the child(ren) from exposure to trauma whenever possible and safe for the officer, i.e. making arrests out of children’s sight or keeping children distracted while talking with their family member, caregiver, etc

- Completes form for HWC that is distributed to school district designees. Information includes name and date of birth only
District Identified Staff

• Receives HWC notice; confirms student enrollment in district

• Generates new notice and sends to students, teachers, principal and counselors as follows:
  • Subject line: HWC
  • Body of notice: student’s name
  • This is an alert to “observe and intervene if behavior warrants”

• Address disruptive or difficult behaviors with a trauma-informed approach
HWC Process (cont.)

Classroom Teacher(s)

- Observes child with HWC notice for behaviors indicating student is having difficulty emotionally or academically (this may happen a day or more after the HWC notice)
- Provide trauma sensitive support or interventions as needed
- Contact school counselor if additional support is necessary
School Counselor

- School counselors will meet with student and provide appropriate supports
- If necessary school counselor will contact parent to discuss behaviors and potential interventions
- School counselor will make referral for mental health services if indicated
POLICE VIDEO

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=59&v=ir2xA6XniSA
Law Enforcement

Who gets a HWC notice?

- Law enforcement encounter a child(ren) on scene, or where a child(ren) reside but may not be home:
  - Abuse, abandonment, neglect
  - Arson
  - Arrest warrant
  - Assault (physical, sexual)
  - Burglary, home invasion
  - Car accident
  - Domestic disturbance or order violation
  - Drug investigation/Meth manufacturing
  - Harassment
  - Homicide, death or suicide (or attempt), including investigation
  - Missing person
  - Runaway
  - Shots fired
  - Search warrant
Handle with Care Notice Options

- Email: handlewithcare@scottcountykids.com
- Form:
  - Use fillable form
  - Create interoffice electronic form
Handle with Care Notice

From Law Enforcement to the School

To: ____________________________
From: __________________________

Report Number: ________________
Incident Date: _________________

The child reference below was on the scene of a police action in the last 24 hours and could exhibit academic, emotional and/or behavioral problems as a result of exposure to a traumatic event. Please handle him/her with care.

Children’s Name: ___________________  DOB: ______________
Children’s Name: ___________________  DOB: ______________
Children’s Name: ___________________  DOB: ______________
Children’s Name: ___________________  DOB: ______________
Children’s Name: ___________________  DOB: ______________

Handle With Care Notice
School District Protocol

- Identify 2 district level employees to receive the HWC notice (must be willing to receive and respond to HWC notice 24/7).

- When notices arrive, identified district employees will immediately contact the principal and school counselor for each student in the following manner:
  - Generate a new notice to the student’s school principal, teachers and counselors
  - In subject line: HWC
  - In body put students name only, nothing else
Schools are Significant Communities for children

Teachers are their primary role models in these communities.

Teachers must be given the supports they need to address trauma’s impact on learning.

*Teachers should not be expected to fix everything on their own*
Primary Response (teacher)

- Purpose
- Sensitivity is key
- Appropriate response
- Please keep in mind, teachers are probably working with students DAILY who have not had an HWC alert. Using these responses is an appropriate and healthy way to assist a student.
School Interventions

Thumbs Up

Therapy Dogs

Officers visiting classroom
Individual Academic Interventions

- Rest
- Postpone testing
- IEP
- Retesting
Individual Behavioral Interventions
**Secondary Responses (counselor or therapist)**

### School-age Children

**(Taken from the National Center on DV Trauma)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you may observe:</th>
<th>How you can help (and support parents to help):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ Posttraumatic play*</td>
<td>♦ Listen to the child’s concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Thinking and talking about the trauma outside play</td>
<td>♦ Answer questions truthfully and simply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Being upset at reminders of the trauma and doing their best to avoid reminders</td>
<td>♦ Support the parent in letting the child stay close to her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Specific fears, often triggered by traumatic reminders</td>
<td>♦ Offer reassurance that you and the parent are working together to keep the family safe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Feeling guilty about the trauma and responsible for what happened</td>
<td>♦ Name the child’s feelings and encourage the child to find ways to express them through language, play, or drawing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Fantasies of revenge</td>
<td>♦ Help the child anticipate what will happen next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Fear of being overwhelmed by their feelings</td>
<td>♦ Give choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Impaired concentration and difficulty learning</td>
<td>♦ Expect to have to do these things again and again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Sleep disturbances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Headaches, stomach aches, or other physical symptoms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Concerns about their own safety and the safety of others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Aggressive behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Withdrawn behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Posttraumatic play is a kind of play that some Children engage in who have been exposed to Trauma. It is a repetitive reenactment of Traumatic experience or event.*
## Secondary Responses (counselor or therapist)

### Adolescents

*(Taken from the National Center on DV Trauma)*

<table>
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<th>What you may observe:</th>
<th>How you can help (and support parents to help):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ Detachment, shame, and guilt</td>
<td>♦ Provide an environment in which the teen can talk about concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Self-consciousness about their fears and intense feelings</td>
<td>♦ Give choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ “Acting out” and sensation-seeking behaviors that may include life-threatening reenactments</td>
<td>♦ Support parents in letting their teens stay close to them—even relatively independent teens may need extra support after a traumatic event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Abrupt shifts in relationships</td>
<td>♦ Help teens anticipate what will happen next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Desire for and plans to take revenge</td>
<td>♦ Answer questions honestly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Radical changes in attitude and changes in self-identity</td>
<td>♦ Help teens find ways to express their strong feelings: journaling, writing stories or poems, art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Premature entrance into adulthood or reluctance to leave home</td>
<td>♦ Expect to have to do these things again and again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Being upset at reminders of the trauma and doing their best to avoid reminders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Coping behaviors that may include self-endangering behaviors such as substance abuse and/or cutting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Building Tier 2/3
(Counselor/Therapist)

- Classroom teacher consults with school counselor or school-based mental health therapist
- Determine additional intervention needs
- Mental health referral
- If necessary, consult with others for intervention recommendations
What if school interventions are not enough?

School-based Therapy

Community-based Services
Who else may be involved?

- Depending on the situation, you may want to consult with others regarding the situation.
  - Parents
  - Counselors
  - School-based mental health therapists
  - Other staff
Handle with Care

- Does not excuse bad behavior
- Children are still accountable for their actions
- HWC seeks to provide students with tools and skills to appropriately respond in an acceptable manner
HWC In Summary

- Identifies the kids most at risk
- Provides teachers with a heads up
- Connects children with accessible mental health services if needed
- Strengthens and improves relationships in the community
HWC Moving Forward

- Determine district identified staff
  - Two designees to respond to HWC notices and provide notice to the student’s school
- Police training
  - Initial information regarding HWC policy
  - In-service days
- Determine committee members
  - Identify representatives from each agency
  - Schedule meetings
Questions about Handle With Care?

- Please contact:
  
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