



# Handle With Care

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Handle With Care?

Handle With Care (HWC) is part of the Drug Endangered Children initiative mandated under Senate Bill 80. Handle with Care requires law enforcement to alert school personnel when a child is exposed to a traumatic event during a first responder call. The intent is to notify schools when a student has experienced trauma in case extra support is warranted. School personnel are simply asked to keep a caring eye on the student or provide appropriate trauma-sensitive interventions immediately, if needed.

Handle With Care requires:

1. Police to send notification to schools.
2. Schools to receive notifications and prepare trauma-sensitive support.
3. Teachers provide trauma sensitive environments.
4. School counselors, social workers, mental healthcare providers to partner with schools for on-site assistance and off-site services

The goal is to set schools up to better help children exposed to trauma so they can learn.

**In 2019, the Nevada Legislature passed SB80 mandating Handle with Care across Nevada. Effective January 1, 2020 all counties across the state are implementing it in accordance with SB80. (BDR-34-502 6/2/19)**

### What's Expected of Police in Handle With Care?

**Send a confidential notification.** When police identify a child at the scene of a traumatic event, they will send a confidential Handle With Care notification to the school district, through designated law enforcement system.

The confidential notification, which is documented in the police report, contains only three pieces of information:

- the child’s name,
- date of birth
- and school

The Handle With Care Notification form also includes the following statement:

**“The child referenced 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.”** Nothing about the specific traumatic incident is shared with the school.

Situations which may warrant a Handle with Care alert include, but are not limited to:

1. Domestic violence in the presence of the child;
2. Death of a member of the family or household of the child;
3. Arrest of a parent or guardian of the child in the presence of the child;
4. Child abuse or neglect.
5. Accident, fire, drug incident, or other exposure deemed traumatic by a member of law enforcement or emergency personnel.

## What’s Expected of Schools in Handle With Care?

**Receive notification and prepare process for trauma-sensitive support.** Each school district in Nevada has created a process to triage “Handle With Care” notifications from police. The process for WCSD involves the District counseling department serving as the hub for all police HWC notifications. When an alert is received at the district level it is forwarded to the appropriate school and assigned counselor. The information is then forwarded to the student’s teachers and any other staff involved with the supporting the student. The notice also includes; a letter to teachers explaining the Handle with Care program and its objectives, trauma sensitive interventions and resources, as well as, ideas of how to support the student. All staff is asked to do is observe the student’s behavior and academic performance and be prepared to provide trauma-sensitive support as needed. For example, if the student acts out, a teacher might send the child to the counselor or nurse instead of the Principal. Classroom interventions include giving the student extra time on tests, reteach lessons, reschedule assignments/assessments, etc. If a student continues behavioral/emotional/academic issues in the classroom, teachers may refer the student to the counselor for any further support or interventions.



## How is the student and family’s privacy protected?

As stated earlier, the notification to the school only includes the student’s name, date of birth and school, along with these three words: “Handle With Care.”

**Even though calls for service are open public records, no details of the incident are released to schools.**

## How does Handle With Care help kids?

Relationships with stable, caring adults buffer the harmful effects of trauma. When all school personnel—administrators, teachers, counselors, nurses, cafeteria staff, custodial staff, bus drivers, etc.—understand the impact trauma has on a child and are equipped with trauma-sensitive approaches, they can help students feel safe, which is critical to help them focus, behave appropriately, and learn. Through the Handle With Care program, schools get a heads-up from police to provide trauma sensitive support and connect students and families to mental health services. This helps to mitigate negative affects experienced by children’s exposure to trauma.

Handle With Care sets schools up to be proactive, rather than reactive. This can reduce disciplinary action and absenteeism, build resilience, self-respect and confidence.

## What is childhood trauma?

**Children facing trauma face higher referrals for behavioral problems, special education and diagnosis for ADHD, as well as absenteeism, suspension or expulsion, dropping out, or criminal activity.** Childhood trauma, often called Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), is an event that can have negative, lasting effects on a child’s mental and physical well-being. Trauma causes stress, which is anything that disrupts the physiologic or emotional balance of a child. Childhood trauma and the resulting stress can interrupt normal brain and body development; undermine a child’s focus and ability to learn in school; increase risk for engagement in negative coping behaviors and involvement in the criminal justice system; and increase risk for chronic mental and physical health problems. Trauma can impair a child’s brain development, socioemotional and behavioral development, academic learning and achievement, and overall health and well-being.

When responding to the stress of trauma, a child’s normal developmental process is interrupted. The body responds to stress in a “fight, flight or freeze” mode. Repeated or chronic activation of stress hormones bypass the thinking part of the brain and activate the survival part of the brain. The thinking part of the brain goes “offline” and the emotional part of the brain remains “activated.”



Trauma can impair focus, complex thought and learning, resulting in lower grades, more suspensions and expulsions, and school failure. Children with trauma are 2.5 times more likely to have repeated a grade in school. Trauma triggers can re-occur for years or the entire lifetime, increasing risk for engagement in unhealthy coping behaviors, such as substance abuse, early sexual activity, domestic violence, and involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice system. For more information please visit these valuable resources on trauma sensitive and support: [www.traumaawareschools.org](http://www.traumaawareschools.org) and [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)



## What if I have more questions about WCSD Handle With Care?

For additional questions or issues, please contact:

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Join Together Northern Nevada  
Drug Endangered Children Project  
775-324-7557  
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*Thank you to Salud America for developing tools and generously letting school districts use them for Handle With Care support.*