

HANDLE WITH CARE



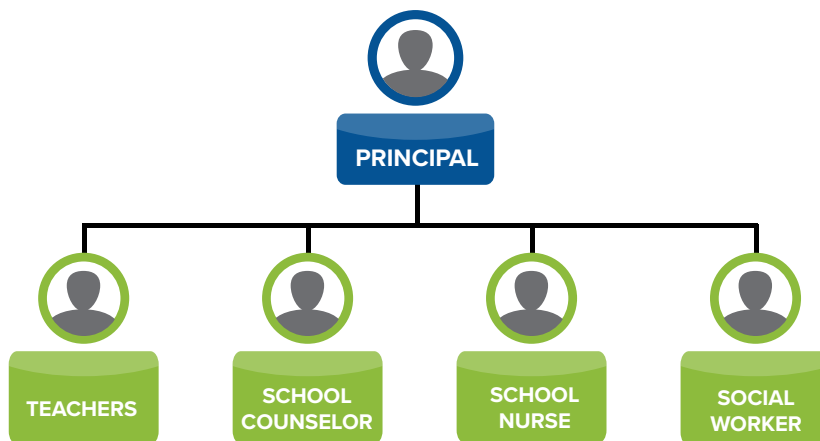
Protect • Heal • Thrive

To: School Principals

CC: School Counselors, School Nurse, and School Social Workers

Subject: **CONFIDENTIAL - HANDLE WITH CARE NOTICE**

You are receiving this Handle with Care Notice because one or more of your students was exposed to a potentially traumatic event resulting in a First Responder incident. **Please share this notice with the student(s) teacher of record or staff who work closely with him/her, so they are aware and prepared to handle with student(s) with care through supportive adult relationships, trauma-informed supports at school and referrals to the school counselor or social worker when needed.** Be sure to use caution and sensitivity when sharing and do not forward this email outside the school.



While an informal check-in (or check-on; see attached script) is recommended with the student, do not ask the student or family directly about the incident. There is no need to approach the student specifically on the matter – all check-ins should be informal/non-specific. **This alert is to provide another layer of information for OBSERVATION ONLY unless the student presents an identifying need for additional support or self-identifies and asks for support.** Do not question the student about the incident or pry as that could retraumatize the student. Do not call the student's parents/caregivers or do a home visit.

Examples of Trauma-Informed Responses may include (but are not limited to):

- Monitoring the student's well-being and behavior
- Access to basic needs such as rest, food, water, and clean clothes.
- Supportive check-ins (check-ons)
- Positive empowering interactions with adults
- Access to calming or stress reduction activities & materials.
- Extra breaks or time/help with homework
- Postpone testing or re-testing
- Referral to school counselor or social worker as appropriate

The school was **NOT provided with details about the nature of the event, and this notice does not imply the student, or their family instigated the incident or were directly involved.*

Handle with Care Script for Informal Student Check-Ins (or Check-Ins)

PURPOSE: This is an optional resource for teachers and school staff to use to guide informal therapeutic check-ins with students upon receiving a Handle with Care Notification. Interactions during check-ins should be informal, safe, confidential, and nurturing. **It is very important to NOT ask the child directly or specifically about the incident or police involvement.** If you feel that more intensive supports are needed or the student would benefit from discussing specifics about the incident (such as a trauma narrative) or counseling, please make a referral to the school counselor or social worker as appropriate. You can also refer to the attached Common Trauma Symptoms in Students and Helpful Strategies for Educators

CHILD'S TEACHER

Let the student know you are just checking in on them.

- Ask "How are you doing?" or "How have you been lately?"
- Ask "How have things been going for you at school?"
- Ask "How have things been going for you at home?"

Let the student know you are there for them and care about them.

- Say "I care about you, and how you and all of my students are doing, not just academically, but also overall/outside of school."

Check in on the students' feelings/emotions.

- Ask "How have you been feeling lately?"
(The child may need to be prompted with some feeling words.)

Check to see if there is anything you can help the student or their family with.

- Ask "Is there anything that you need?" or "How can I help?"
- Ask "Is there anything that your family needs?"
- Ask "Do you need any help with your schoolwork or assignments?"
- Validate the feelings they shared (e.g., "I see how you feel," or "I care how you feel".)

Remind them you are a safe place and there for them whenever needed, even during "non class time."

- Say "I just want you to know that I'm here for you and you can come talk to me anytime."
- "Remember you can always e-mail me or get in touch with me (and list alternate ways to contact you) too."

SCHOOL COUNSELOR/SOCIAL WORKER/ SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

- If the student is not familiar with you, introduce yourself and let them know what you do.
- Let them know that you often check on students to see how they are doing.
- Follow the suggested steps/check-in script for "Child's Teacher" to the left.
- If appropriate/relevant, ask if the student wants/feels they need anyone else to talk to or additional services (e.g., case management, counseling, help with resources.)

Trauma-sensitive practices benefit all students experiencing trauma – those we know about through a Handle with Care notice and those who are never identified but are experiencing trauma.

If the student needs immediate crisis/trauma support, do not leave the child alone. Verbally contact your Principal and School Counselor, Psychologist or Social Worker for immediate attention.

For more information, go to:



HandleWithCareWV.org

*Special thanks to Dr. Mary Crnabori in Metro Nashville Public Schools in Tennessee for creating this document.