



VIRGINIA QUICK START GUIDE

The **Handle With Care** program enables law enforcement to notify schools if they encounter a child at a traumatic scene or incident. Schools and mental healthcare leaders can then provide trauma-sensitive support to the child immediately upon their return to school.

The Problem: Childhood Trauma

- 1. Childhood trauma, or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), occurs when kids experience stressful events (such as witnessing domestic violence).**
2. 60% of U.S. children have been exposed to violence, crime, or abuse.
3. These children still have to go to class, often carrying a burden of stress/trauma that can interfere with their behavior and academic performance in schools. Unfortunately, schools are often not aware there has been an incident which involved the child.





A Solution: Handle With Care

1. When law enforcement officers encounter children at a scene, a notification is sent to the school.

Law enforcement officers are trained to send a confidential notification by email, text, or through the agency emergency communications center, to the school division or childcare agency with the child's name, age, and school or address, along with a message to "Handle With Care." No details about the traumatic incident are shared with the school.

2. Schools provide trauma-sensitive support for children.

A school will create a process to triage Handle With Care notifications. The process will involve notifying the appropriate teacher or counselor so they can be prepared to provide trauma-sensitive support.

3. Mental health providers partner for on-site therapy.

When appropriate and school interventions are not sufficient, mental healthcare professionals partner to provide therapy on site at the school or their agency (with consent from parents/guardians).

How Do We Start Handle With Care?

- Contact the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) to set up an informational meeting.
Contact: [Betsy Bell](mailto:betsy.bell@dcjs.virginia.gov) at betsy.bell@dcjs.virginia.gov, (804) 997-1658.
- Identify key stakeholders to be involved in the Handle With Care process.
- VCSCS will provide technical support and assistance in setting up the communication system processes and providing training and materials.

There is no cost to your agency or locality to implement Handle With Care with support from the DCJS Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety.
