



**Handle with Care is a program aimed at ensuring that children who are exposed to trauma receive appropriate interventions so they can succeed in school to the best of their abilities.**

## Rationale and history

Science has proven that exposure to violence and trauma during childhood can seriously undermine children's ability to focus, behave appropriately, and learn. Without the support of caring adults, childhood adversity can lead to school failure, truancy, suspension or expulsion, dropping out, or involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Handle with Care was developed in West Virginia in 2013 to help prevent and/or mitigate the impact of children's exposure to trauma or violence through school-community-first responder partnerships. Since then, it has been successfully adopted by states, counties, and cities across the U.S. The program was adopted in Clark County, Washington by the cities and school districts in Ridgefield and Battle Ground in 2018. It will launch in additional Clark County cities and school districts on Oct. 1, 2020.

## How are schools notified?

- When a minor is present during a law enforcement action, the law enforcement officer notes the minor's name, age, school, and grade level and emails **ONLY** this information to **Handlewithcare@ESD112.org** by the end of the business day. No additional information is relayed, just the simple message: "Handle with Care."
- ESD 112 forwards this information to the appropriate school district administration office by 8:30 am each school day.
- Every morning, assigned administrative staff at each district office check the Handle with Care email box and refer notices to district counseling services or other designated responders. Notification of additional school personnel is on a "need-to-know" basis. If a high school student participates in Running Start, the district will forward the notice to Clark College at **ClarkCARES@clark.edu**.

## How should schools respond?

1. Maintain confidentiality and share on need-to-know basis only.
2. Refrain from drawing undue attention or questioning the student, as this could further traumatize the child or impede any possible ongoing investigation.
3. Check to see if the student arrived at school and assist if needed.
4. Meet basic needs, such as clothing, hygiene, food, a place to rest/sleep/self-regulate.
5. Postpone testing and homework without penalty.
6. Observe the student's mood and behavior and provide supportive care as needed.
7. Refer to a school counselor or school nurse if further assessment for mental health support is indicated.

Questions? Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Handle with Care is a collaborative effort to support and protect children served by Clark County, the cities of Battle Ground, Camas, Vancouver, Ridgefield, Washougal, ESD 112, Battle Ground Public Schools, Clark College, Evergreen Public Schools, Ridgefield School District, and Vancouver Public Schools.