



HANDLE WITH CARE STL
PROTECT • HEAL • THRIVE

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All schools and cities have children who experience childhood trauma.

Childhood trauma- such as physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, domestic violence, witnessing a crime, food insecurity, racism- and the resulting stress can have negative, lasting effects on a child's emotional, mental, and physical well-being.

Childhood trauma can:

- Interrupt normal brain/body development
- Interfere with ability to trust, organize, comprehend, remember, and produce work, which are critical in learning to read, write, engage in discussion, and do math problems.
- Increase risk for engagement in risky behavior
- Increase risk for involvement in the criminal justice system
- Increase risk for chronic mental and physical health problems

The first step to being trauma-sensitive is understanding how prevalent trauma is

Childhood trauma is widespread. Among the 17,000 adults surveyed in the 1990 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study, just over 50% reported having experiences at least one of 10 forms of childhood adversity. If we add those to the numerous other forms of childhood adversity, the number of children affected by adversity grows even larger.

Childhood trauma has ripple effects on the state's public health, education, law enforcement, family services, and juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Schools must focus on childhood trauma:

If subjected to prolonged, severe, unpredictable stress, a child in school may experience either hyperarousal or hypo arousal and may be in constant fight, flight, or freeze mode, causing fight, flight, or freeze mode, causing other higher order functions to become secondary in importance, making it difficult to learn.

It is important for teachers and all school staff to understand the short- and long-term impacts of traumatic stress and be able to identify children and utilize trauma-sensitive approaches to help children heal and build resilience.

Every child reacts to trauma differently, thus it is important not to judge the severity of the experience and provide support for all students.

You might think, "It's not my child," but your child is sitting next to a traumatized, struggling student and the teacher is spending all their time redirecting the behavior. No one is learning.





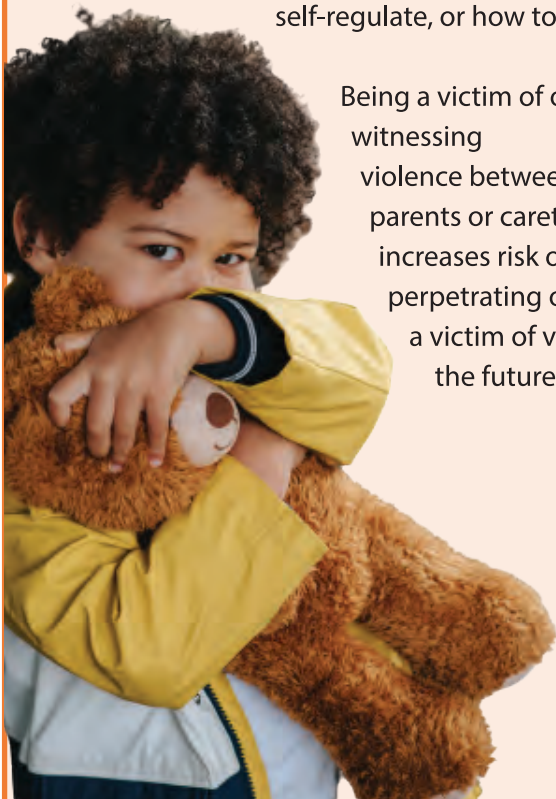
Police must focus on childhood trauma:

Law enforcement officials respond to traumatic scenes everyday where children are present.

Trauma in children turns off the learning switch and turns on risky behavior. Kids at risk tend to skip school, use drugs, become violent, commit crimes, and end up meeting law enforcement.

Police are ground zero for childhood trauma related to the opioid crisis, as drug-endangered children are having drug-endangered children. They have no sense of feeling safe in their own skin or environment. They don't know how to have healthy attachments to others. They don't know how to self-regulate, or how to act.

Being a victim of or witnessing violence between one's parents or caretakers increases risk of perpetrating or becoming a victim of violence in the future.



Mental health leaders must focus on childhood trauma:

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Children with histories of traumatic experiences are more likely to have chronic health conditions as they age such as anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, stroke, asthma, lupus, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, viral infections, and autoimmune diseases, which are exacerbated by risky behavior.

Building resilience and teaching healthy coping skills in schools will decrease the need to engage in risky behaviors associated with numerous chronic diseases.



The program has the following main components:

- When law enforcement identifies a student at the scene of a traumatic event (domestic violence, drug raid, shooting, fire, etc.), they will send a Handle with Care notice through a confidential web portal to the school district.
- Law enforcement will submit the student's name, school, date of birth – no information about the incident is shared – only that the student may have been exposed to trauma and they should be handled with care.
- The school district Handle with Care liaison sends the notification to the appropriate building staff. The school building will create a process to triage "Handle with Care" notifications.

Teachers and staff to observe the student's behavior and academic performance and be prepared to provide trauma-sensitive support as needed.

When school trauma-sensitive interventions are not sufficient, mental health professionals, who are trained in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavior therapy, can provide free therapy on site at school at a time that is least disruptive to the student's academic schedule (with consent from the parent or guardian).



For resources on how you can help children exposed to trauma, visit www.handlewithcarestl.com/parentresources