



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



To: Superintendents of Schools

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Deb Flis, Division Director, Early Care and Education/Quality Improvement, Office of Early Childhood (OEC)
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Date: January 6, 2025

Subject: Handle with Care Alert System

What is Handle with Care?

Handle with Care is an alert system initiated by first responders for students who are exposed to traumatic incidents, such as domestic violence, drug overdose, and other trauma-inducing experiences outside of school. The alert is sent to predetermined school official(s) following first responder or law enforcement's involvement in such community incident occurring the day or night before. The details of the event are not shared, just the student's name and the phrase "Handle with Care." The notification allows school officials and school staff with direct contact with the student to be made aware on a need-to-know basis, to respond with empathy upon arrival if their behavior is dysregulated and to determine whether there is a need for additional support.

Purpose

The primary goal of Handle with Care is to provide timely notifications to school staff that a child has experienced or witnessed a traumatic event that might impact their behavior upon arriving at school, during the school day, and possibly longer term.

Benefits

- Provides school staff and teams with an understanding of the child's emotional state upon arrival at school;
- Enables school staff to provide proactive support without requiring a student to relive the trauma by having to report it when they may not be ready to discuss it;
- Provides children with access to resources based on their individual needs;
- Builds a positive relationship between school officials and law enforcement; and
- Allows for long-term awareness and monitoring of a child exposed to trauma, as impacts are not always immediately apparent following exposure.

Next Steps

The CSDE, OEC and DESPP are working together to expand this program already operating in other states and a number of districts in Connecticut. **Please join us for a virtual meeting on January 28, 2025, from 9:00-10:00 at this link: [Handle With Care Alert System Informational Meeting](#)** for a discussion with Connecticut school leaders and law enforcement partners already implementing this program with success.