



Fort Worth Police Department

Handle with Care

Information Guide



What is Handle with Care?

The Fort Worth Police Department Handle with Care program is modeled after the West Virginia Defending Childhood Initiative and is a multiagency collaborative effort to increase knowledge and awareness when a student has experienced a traumatic event. Over 65 US cities have implemented Handle with Care programs. Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, FWPD will partner with the Education Service Center (ESC) Region 11 and the Fort Worth Independent School District to establish a notification system when a student is involved or witnessed a traumatic event. The system was designed to notify school administrators that a student may be experiencing some level of trauma and to simply be aware. This program allows FWPD Officers to become more proactive in identifying students who are involved with potentially traumatic events that may lead to academic, behavioral, or attendance-related issues in order to connect the student and family with appropriate interventions. When ESC Region 11 receives notifications for children enrolled in schools outside of Fort Worth ISD, they will still make notifications to the schools so these children can also receive support. The FWPD is excited about this partnership with ESC Region 11 and Fort Worth ISD and will work towards expanding this program into other partnering ISDs and private schools in the future.

How are Schools Contacted?

When a FWPD officer comes in contact with a school-aged child during any incident which may be traumatic, the officer will complete a Handle with Care form before finishing the call for service. The form contains basic information regarding the child's identity and the school they are enrolled in. The form is immediately sent to ESC Region 11 that will confirm the child's enrollment and then forward a notification to an administrator at the child's school. This notification only gives the child's name and asks that they be handled with care. No other details will be provided. The school will then be able to use this information to address any issues that may arise and be alerted to the potential that the student may need support in the coming days.

How are student and family privacy protected?

The notification to the school only includes the student's name, age, and school, along with these three words: "Handle with Care." No details of the incident are released to schools.

How does Handle with Care help children?

Through the Handle with Care program, schools get a heads-up from police to provide trauma sensitive support and connect students and families to mental health services to mitigate negative affects experienced by children's exposure to trauma. Handle with Care sets schools up to be proactive, rather than reactive, with informed, caring personnel ready to share their calm, rather than join the student's chaos. This can reduce disciplinary action and absenteeism, and build resilience, self-respect and confidence. Because children respond to trauma differently, the Handle with Care program ensures all children with notifications are treated with care and without judgement.