Washtenaw Handle with Care: Training for School Champions

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Handle with Care Implementation Team

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Trauma in Washtenaw County?
ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) – Stressful or traumatic events, including abuse and neglect. They may also include household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence or growing up with family members who have substance use disorders. A landmark study conducted by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente in the late 1990s found that ACEs are strongly related to the development and prevalence of a wide range of health problems throughout a person’s lifespan.*

*SAMHSA
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs include*:
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Mother treated violently
- Substance misuse within household
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member

*SAMHSA
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Michigan and Washtenaw County Adults 2013 Michigan BRFS

Verbally Abused As Child 49 35
Lived with someone with substance abuse 33 27
Parents were separated 24 27
Ever physically abused as a child 32 17
Adults in HH physically violent to one another 16 16
Lived with someone with mental illness 33 16

*Adreanne Waller, Washtenaw County Public Health

Washtenaw  Michigan
What does law enforcement see in our community?

- **Repeat calls to some of the same households**, often for incidents like domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental illness of a family member, an incarcerated family member, etc.

- Too often the same children who witnessed these events wind up in the **juvenile justice system** themselves.

- **Note**: Not all traumatic events involve violence or criminal activity, i.e. car crash with injury, medical emergency of a family member, house fire, etc.
Goals of Handle with Care

- To respond as a community when a student experiences or witnesses a potentially traumatic event out of school.
- To support that child or youth in school and help mitigate the child’s trauma but helping him or her to build resilience and safety at school.
- To connect students with accessible mental health services in the community if additional support is needed.
- Strengthen and improve relationships in the community.
What is Handle with Care?
Handle with Care

- First piloted in Charleston, WV in 2013
- Now in place throughout West Virginia, as well as Jackson and Eaton Counties in Michigan
- Bridges the communication gap between schools and law enforcement so that children who are exposed to potentially traumatic events receive appropriate interventions
- Interventions that will help give them the best chance of succeeding in school
How does HWC work?

1. Law enforcement identifies children at the scene of an incident and asks for their name and the name of their school.
2. The school district is notified before school starts the next day.
3. School staff handle the child with care and respond to him or her in a trauma sensitive way.
4. If needed, child is referred to CMH for additional support.
Law enforcement identifies children at the scene of an incident and asks for their name and the name of their school.

- Incidents that would initiate a Handle with Care notice could include: domestic violence, traffic accident with injuries, drug overdose, natural death, shooting, arrest of a loved one, child abuse or neglect, robbery, home invasion, house fire, a mental health breakdown of a household member, a search warrant or SWAT activity, to name just a few examples.

- It’s important to point out that not all of these incidents are violent or involve a crime. Please avoid making assumptions about why your student has received a Handle with Care notice.
The school district is notified before school starts the next day.

- Law enforcement will use a web portal to email a simple notice to the designated individuals at each school district to alert the school that the child was involved in a police incident the previous day and may have academic or behavioral difficulties in the coming days.

- The school district will forward the email to the child’s school building champion.

- The school building champion will deliver a Handle with Care notice to the child’s teacher(s) before school starts that day.

- The Handle with Care notice gives examples of internal and external distress reactions to look for that the child may exhibit.
More resources on Handle With Care & Trauma are available at www.washtenawisd.org/handlewithcare
First, an important note about **privacy**:

- Law enforcement will not provide any details of the incident to the school.
- It’s important to remember that not all incidents involve violence or a violent crime.
- We must all be vigilant that there is no stigma attached to a Handle with Care notice.
- Discussion of students who have received a Handle with Care notice should not leave your school building.
School staff will handle the child with care and respond to him or her in a trauma sensitive way.

- Schools are significant communities for children, and teachers are often their primary role models.
- Support can be as simple as...If the child looks really sleepy, maybe they’d like to take a nap in the office or perhaps that’s not a good day to ask them to take a test.

- A series of videos is available to view at [www.washtenawisd.org/HandleWithCare](http://www.washtenawisd.org/HandleWithCare)
What if school interventions are not enough?
Referrals for More Support

If a student is still struggling two weeks after the original event or if the student’s reaction prevents regular school activities for the student or for other students:

- Teacher should check the boxes on the original Handle with Care form
- Give the form to your school’s designated behavioral health contact

We have partnered with Washtenaw County Community Mental Health to accept referrals 24/7 at 734-544-3050

If the student is not eligible for CMH’s services, they’ll connect them to a provider who can work with that student.
Your Role: HWC Champion
Continue with regular class activity

School District's Central Office Designee(s) forwards HWC Email Alert to
[INSERT BUILDING CHAMPION DESIGNEE]
(example: School secretary, principal, assistant principal)

School Building Champion Designee fills out HWC Notification and delivers it to all teachers who will interact with the HWC student(s)

Teaching Staff & School Personnel Monitor Student: Awareness, Support, & Observation (see HWC Notification/Referral for behaviors checklist)

Does the student exhibit extreme change from their baseline behavior?

Teacher or other school personnel:
Fills out HWC Notification/Referral behaviors checklist.

Notify & send referral to
[INSERT DESIGNEE NAME FOR REFERRALS]
(example: School counselor, social worker, principal, behavioral intervention specialist, or nurse)

Does the student need additional mental health supports?

Teacher or other school personnel:
Fills out HWC Notification/Referral behaviors checklist.

Continue with regular class activity

[INSERT DESIGNEE NAME FOR REFERRALS]:
Meet with student & determine if additional or ongoing mental health supports are needed.
(Ask student or parent if student has a current mental health provider; if possible)

Does the student need additional mental health supports?

Yes, but we need community support

Call Community Mental Health Triage Line:
(734) 544-3050

Does the student need a crisis/trauma assessment?

Yes, the student needs IMMEDIATE crisis/trauma support

CALL 911 FOR IMMEDIATE EMERGENCIES

Otherwise, CMH forwards to school for assessment:
- Needs parent consent if <14 years old
- Does not need parent consent if >14 years old (but should still contact parents)
- Does not need parent consent if immediate risk of self-harm or other medical emergency
- Crisis team determines next steps, incl. therapy, based on student needs

No, the student does not need a crisis assessment, but additional services are needed

Yes,

Yes,

No

Continue with regular class activity

Does the student exhibit extreme change from their baseline behavior?

Teacher or other school personnel:
Fills out HWC Notification/Referral behaviors checklist.

Notify & send referral to
[INSERT DESIGNEE NAME FOR REFERRALS]
(example: School counselor, social worker, principal, behavioral intervention specialist, or nurse)

Does the student need additional mental health supports?

Yes, and the school can provide these supports

Yes, and the school can provide these supports

No

Continue with regular class activity

[INSERT DESIGNEE NAME FOR REFERRALS]:
Meet with student & determine if additional or ongoing mental health supports are needed.
(Ask student or parent if student has a current mental health provider; if possible)

Does the student need additional mental health supports?

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Does the student need additional mental health supports?
Your Role: HWC Champion

- Handle with Care website includes:
  - Videos—all school staff should watch the Overview, Early Childhood/Elementary OR Middle/High School, and Secondary Trauma.
    - Videos are short. Can view them at staff meetings and discuss scenarios.
  - Resources—documents and links to helpful information for educators to create trauma-informed schools
  - All Handle with Care documents

www.washtenawisd.org/HandleWithCare
Your Role: HWC Champion

Introductory Email

- **Email that you will send to all staff in your school building** letting them know what Handle with Care is and how they can get up to speed on it.

- All you have to do is send the email and answer questions that might arise.

- **We are happy to help if you have questions**
  - Shannon Novara, snovara@washtenawisd.org
  - Ashley Kryscynski, akryscynski@washtenawisd.org
  - Holly Heaviland, hheaviland@washtenawisd.org

- How else can we support you?
Trauma in Early Childhood and Elementary Years

Kate Rosenblum, PhD, IMH-E IV
Professor and Director, Zero to Thrive
Department of Psychiatry
Michigan Medicine
Young children are exposed to traumatic stressors at rates similar to those of older children.

Even by the preschool years (2-5) the majority (53%) of young children have experienced at least one severe stressor (Egger & Angold, 2004).

The most common traumatic stressors for young children include: accidents (#1), physical trauma, abuse, neglect, and exposure to domestic and community violence.
Stress reduces the ability to respond, learn, or figure things out, which can result in problems in school.

Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.

Increases stress hormones which affect the body’s ability to fight infection.

Interferes with coping, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.

Increases problems with learning and memory.

May cause lasting health problems.
Trauma related symptoms may include...

- Excessive distractibility
- Difficulty concentrating and learning
- Difficulty making and/or keeping friends
- Difficulty participating in group experiences
- Difficulty moving from one activity to another (transitions)
- Excessive screaming
- Destroying property
- Difficulty in calming self
- Difficulty sleeping
- Developmental regression
- Silent and/or withdrawn
- Hurting self or others
- Fearfulness, easily startled or checking out
When I’m feeling overwhelmed or stressed:

I can’t hear you.
I can’t think clearly.
I can’t respond to you.
I need your help to calm me and feel safe.
The good news: Resilience can bring back health and hope!

What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to return to being healthy and hopeful after bad things happen.

Even if children experience challenges, they can still be resilient!

Research shows that if caregivers provide a safe environment and help children build resilience, this can reduce the effects of trauma and stress.
Promoting Resilience in the Classroom

- Watch for changes in behavior
- Provide consistent, predictable pattern for the day
- Nurture
- Give child choices, opportunities to build a sense of control
- Respond — pay attention to, acknowledge and validate feelings
- Establish safety - help children feel ok about expressing emotions while maintaining expectations to keep behaviors safe— e.g., “It’s ok to be angry but I cannot let you hit.”
- Practice relaxation techniques during low stress times so child can use those strategies (e.g., count to ten, breathing, positive self-talk)
- Stay calm, present, and patient
What can help young children in the classroom?

- Find additional resources through the Washtenaw County Handle with Care website: www.washtenawisd.org/HandleWithCare

- When you are concerned, reach out within your HWC-involved school building and district to identify and access additional resources and support for your student
Self Care

➢ Nurture and grow your own resilience. Find and do things that help you to stay calm in times of stress. Reach out for help

➢ We are “stewards” of our own capacity to be helpful to others. Remember:

➢ "To keep a lamp burning we have to keep putting oil in it”– Mother Teresa.
Thank you!
Trauma in Middle and High School Years

Polly Gipson, Ph.D.
Clinical Assistant Professor and Director,
Trauma and Grief Clinic
Department of Psychiatry,
Child/Adolescent Section
Michigan Medicine
What are the Warning Signs of Traumatic Reactions in Youth?
Traumatic Reactions

Academic

Social

Emotional

Behavioral
Traumatic Reactions

Academic (Cognitive Processes Interference)
- Decreased attention/concentration
- Changes in academic performance
- Memory Difficulties
- Process and organize
Anxiety, fear, worry about safety

Irritability/moodiness

Emotional

Somatic complaints

Other Traumatic Stress Symptoms

Traumatic Reactions
Hyperarousal/impulsivity/hyperactivity

Explosive outbursts/hypervigilance

Detentions, suspensions, expulsions, absenteeism

Behavioral

Traumatic Reactions
Traumatic Reactions

Misinterpret cues

Misperceive threats

Withdrawal from others or activities

Social
Changes (Actions/Behaviors/Cognitions/Moods)

**Inside (internalizing)**
- Emotional withdrawal
- Feeling fear, helplessness, uncertainty, vulnerability, guilt, shame
- Increased levels of anxiety/insecurity
- Dissociation, feeling “outside of one’s body”

**Outside (externalizing)**
- Isolative behavior
- Difficulty with connectedness (peers)
- Difficulty with authority, redirection, feedback
- Risky, reckless, aggressive, or self-destructive behaviors (e.g., substance misuse)
- Avoidance of trauma reminders
- Repetitive thoughts/comments (traumatic event/details)
3 Basic Needs

- Safety
- Belonging
- Competence
It’s normal for us to feel threatened. But this can add fuel to their FIRE.

**STEPS**

- **SLOW DOWN, SOFTEN VOICE, FACIAL EXPRESSION, POSTURE**
- **TAKE A STEP BACK AND BREATHE**
- **MAKE AN EMPATHY STATEMENT**
- **PRACTICE SKILLS THAT SETTLE OR MOVE TO RELEASE ENERGY**
- **STAY CONNECTED TO STUDENT**

Retrieved from Downing et al. (2016). Trauma Training Facilitator’s Toolkit. Communities in School Central Texas
Grounding and Self-Regulation Example

Take “Time IN” To Find Your Ground
…Now Check Your Breath and Look Around!

Take “time in” to find your ground:
“Feel your…

❖ FEET (on the ground…)
❖ SEAT (in the chair……)
❖ BACK (against the back of the chair..)
❖ HANDS (wherever they might be resting…)

Check your Breath…

Now take some time to look around.
Find something that you like to look at, and makes you feel good!

Retrieved from Downing et al. (2016). Trauma Training Facilitator’s Toolkit. Communities in School Central Texas
### Types of Stress

**GREEN**
- **POSITIVE**: Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

**YELLOW**
- **TOLERABLE**: Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

**RED**
- **TOXIC**: Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

Source: Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

### How to Use The Color Wheel

This color wheel is meant to be a tool to help open communication about stress levels with youth/students. First and foremost, **think about your own stress level** and if you’re in the **red zone** or **yellow** with a high level of discomfort, please take care of yourself first! You’ll need to have some strategies that you can implement to help you get to green or tolerable **yellow** levels of stress before you can be effective helping others get there!

For a student or youth who seems out of sorts or seems to be struggling, use the color wheel illustration on the other side to explain in your own words what the three different stress levels are and ask him/her which level fits how they’re feeling right now.

- **Red is a danger zone** - something has the youth so upset that he or she really cannot focus on anything else, and strategies will need to be found to help the youth get to a more tolerable stress level right away.

- **The yellow zone** is a tolerable level of stress, but will still require that the youth receive some support and feel safe.

- **The green zone** is a low level of stress and the youth receives support and feels safe.
When to Refer a Student for Additional Supports/Services?
Working with Washtenaw County Community Mental Health
Help for Youth with Mental Health Needs

Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH) Crisis and Access Intake available 24/7 734-544-3050
Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH)

- Our role in supporting the Handle with Care initiative
- Who we are and when to call us
- What to expect if you do call
- How a WCCMH mental health crisis professional can help the school team triage a situation with a youth
- Safety/crisis planning, outreach, resources, connecting youth and families to community services, CMH services and how linking can occur for immediate mental health and substance use emergencies
How is Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH) Involved? Access/Crisis Department

- The **WCCMH Triage Team** - Answers phone 24/7 receives initial requests for services, schedules intake appointments, provides information and referral to community resources.

- The **CMH Crisis/Access team supervisors** will receive a group email alert by law enforcement when a Handle with Care incident occurs in our community links to immediate support for mental health and substance use emergencies.

- If the youth is already receiving **WCCMH services** their case manager/therapist team will be notified and reach out to the youth/family.

- School systems will reach out to WCCMH for assistance with **triage** related to **safety/crisis situations** and/or **youth that need additional assistance and ongoing support**.
Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH)
What questions might you have for us?
Shift your thinking...

What's wrong with you?

What happened to you?
Questions?

Contact:

► Shannon Novara at snovara@washtenawisd.org
   or 734-994-8100, ext. 2177

► Ashley Kryscynski at akryscynski@washtenawisd.org
   or 734-994-8100, ext. 1738

► Holly Heaviland at hheaviland@washtenawisd.org
   or 734-994-8100, ext. 1250
Thank you to our partners: