North Central & North Quabbin
Massachusetts
HWC Collaborative
Handle With Care

- Is a trauma-sensitive community response to support children exposed to trauma and violence through improved communication and collaboration between law enforcement, schools/child care agencies and mental health providers.

- Identified children receive appropriate interventions so they can succeed in school to the best of their ability.

- Research shows that trauma can undermine children’s ability to learn, form relationships and function appropriately in the classroom.
## Brief History of Handle With Care

**Who Created HWC?**

In 2012 Handle with Care was created in a subcommittee of the West Virginia Children’s Justice Task Force in Partnership with the US Attorneys Office for the Southern District of West Virginia as part of a Defending Childhood Initiative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Office of Juvenile Justice &amp; Delinquency Survey</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>The Attorney General Eric Holder launched the DCI</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>WV CITF &amp; U.S. Attorney’s Office formed a committee</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Developed the HWC Program</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Piloted the HWC Program</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>WV State Police launched HWC statewide</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>HWC Stakeholder meeting in all 55 counties</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>HWC in over 40 states</td>
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**HWC in Other States**

- Handle with care MI
- Handle with care MD
- Handle with care MA
- Handle with care FL
- Handle with care OH
- Handle with care DE
- Handle with care OK
- Handle with care MN
- TN Handle with care
Students may experience trauma or violence as a result of their exposure at home or in the community, including emergencies and/or accidents with responder presence. These interactions are known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These students have increased risk for negative outcomes such as poor academic performance, dropping out of school, and delinquency.
School the Next Day

**THE STUDENT**

* I don’t have my homework.
* I forgot to study for this test!
* I’m so tired... hungry...
* My stomach aches.
* I’m worried about my mom/dad.
* Just staring off into space.
* Short tempered or acting out.

**THE TEACHERS & STAFF**

* Pay attention!
* Why didn’t you study for this test?!
* Why can’t you stay awake, pay attention!
* No snacking allowed in class.
* Detention for “bad” behaviors or forced separation from classmates.
* What’s wrong with you?
Results of Misunderstanding

ADULTS CAN:

• Unintentionally distance themselves from students.
• Misunderstand traumatic symptoms as character flaws.
• Misperceive students as lazy.
• Impose punitive responses.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS:

• Decreased motivation and engagement in learning
• Poor grades and MCAS scores
• Poor relationships
• Truancy and dropping out
• Suspension/expulsion
• Juvenile justice system
Improved cross-agency communication among first responder organizations and schools can help increase supports for students experiencing trauma.

Increased use of trauma sensitive strategies by educators and school leaders will improve educational & life outcomes for students experiencing trauma resulting from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

All children should feel safe to learn.

Success in school = success in life!
The Handle With Care continuum:

If local law enforcement, emergency management services, and the fire departments notify school staff when a student is present at the scene of any incident, and

If school staff have training and resources to recognize and support symptom of trauma in students they serve,

Then they can identify students who need interventions and provide appropriate supports or refer them to mental health services,

Thus, improving students’ behavioral, social-emotional, and academic outcomes.

Law Enforcement * School * Community

Building relationships to help children thrive.
Before HWC
First responders would file a mandated report for children that met the reporting criteria.

If children did not meet the victimization criteria, they were not identified or provided additional services.

Introducing Handle With Care (HWC)
HWC is a school-community response to help ensure that children exposed to trauma in their home, school, or community receive appropriate support to help them achieve emotionally and academically.

Now with HWC Intervention:
- All children at the scene are identified.
- The school is provided a HWC notification.
- Trauma informed practices are heightened at the school.
- Flagged student(s) are simply handled with care.
When does the HWC notice get sent?

The first responder will issue the HWC notice for:

• A child that was exposed to crime, violence, accident, or abuse.

• If they think “Should I send a Handle With Care notice?” we encourage that they SHOULD!

• Send one on every child, it’s not our place to judge what is traumatizing to a child.
When a child is exposed to violence or trauma and returns to school it is important for them to feel safe and supported.

The “Handle With Care” Snapshot:
If a law enforcement officer encounters a child during a call, that child’s name and three words, HANDLE WITH CARE, are forwarded to the school before the next day. The school implements individual, class, and whole school trauma-sensitive curricula so that identified children are “Handled With Care”. If a child needs more intervention, on-site mental healthcare is available at the school.
What Happens At School?

SCHOOLS WILL IMPLEMENT TIC Practices:

HWC will provide a safe zone for whatever extra care the child may need at school from:

▪ a space to shower/nap,
▪ or the chance to retake/postpone a test
▪ experience general kindness, to accessing therapeutic sessions.

WHAT NOT TO DO AT SCHOOL?

We do not ask the student about their experience.

Our role is not to interview, quiz, or to gain information from the student.

Only implement interventions that will mitigate the negative effects of trauma on these children.
Handle With Care (HWC) Notice

• **It is only 3 words: Handle With Care**
  • *No details are ever given.*
  • It does not violate confidentiality, no details are ever given. Only 3 words!
• Notice arrives to school before the next day.
• Need to know basis, only.
• Does not stay in child’s permanent record.
• May include other childcare service agencies.
• Does not set expectation for school staff to approach the student.
• Only heightens whole-school approach around Trauma Informed Care (TIC) protocols.
Original HWC Team, from left to right:
Mike Ellis, Original HWC Coordinator; Richard Braks, Chief of Police, Gardner; Selena Johnson, HWC Heywood Healthcare; Mark Pellegrino, Superintendent of Gardner Public Schools & Lt Nicholas Maroni, HWC Project Manager

"Between 2019 - 2021 HWC has helped Gardner Police Department and Gardner Public Schools to support over 150 youth that have experienced a traumatic event."

-Renee Eldredge, previous CHW& School-Based Care Coordinator, GHS
The Importance of Trauma Sensitive Schools & Agencies

Schools provide possibilities for traumatized children to forge relationships with caring adults, and learn in a supportive, predictable, and safe environment.

A respectful and safe environment where children can build positive relationships with adults & peers, learn to manage their emotions, behavioral responses, and find academic success.
LOCAL STATISTICS

HWC Referrals 2021-2022: 72 students as of June 2022

HWC Data:
19-20 school year - 83 students
20-21 school year - 79 students

- Sample of data for the 2021-22 school year for GPS & NRSD.
- Expecting totals to grow as we continue to onboard districts and finesse the law enforcement flagging & notification tool.

"HWC is viewed at Narragansett, by all staff, as paramount to the work they are doing with students everyday."

-Ashely Niggl, NRSD Assistant Pupil Personnel Director
HWC in summary

* Identifies kids most at risk
* Provides educators with a *heads up*
* Connects children with accessible mental health services if needed
* Strengthens and improves relationships in the community
* Improving academic, social-emotional and behavioral outcomes for kids

**NEXT STEPS:**

* HWC notification to early education centers
* HWC identification by other 1st responders and/or hospitals
* Continued training on ACEs and TIC with any/all HWC partners
* Facilitate collaboration and communication between HWC partners
Handle With Care of the North Central and North Quabbin region is a collaborative initiative that continues to deepen trauma sensitive and response practices within and across our local communities.

For additional information contact HWC’s Collaborative Liaison, Renee’ Eldredge renee.eldredge@Heywood.org

Program Leads:
Lt. Nicholas Maroni, Gardner PD nmaroni@gardner-ma.gov
Selena Johnson, Heywood Healthcare

HWC Collaborative Partnership of North Central & North Quabbin - MASS

Ashburnham-Westminster Schools  Ashburnham/Westminster Police
Athol-Royalston Schools  Athol Police Department
Gardner Public Schools  Gardner Police Department
Mahar Regional Schools  Orange / Petersham Police
Heywood Healthcare  Mount Wachusett Community
Narragansett Regional School Phillipston / Templeton Police
North Quabbin Community Coalition  MOC Early Education Program
Winchendon Public Schools  Winchendon Police Department
Worcester County DA, Joseph Early’s Office  Royalston Police Department
Resources used to pull materials:

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- LUK Trauma for Schools overview
- Edward Jacoubs, MSW – Incorporating ACES
- DA Early’s Safe School Summit 11/19/21
- Handle With Care West Virginia