



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Berrien County law enforcement and schools support students exposed to trauma through Handle with Care program

BERRIEN SPRINGS- The Berrien County Sheriff's Office, Michigan State Police and local law enforcement are partnering again this year with Berrien RESA to offer the Handle with Care program. The program promotes a partnership between law enforcement and area schools to better ensure that children who are exposed to traumatic events in their home or community receive appropriate interventions. The ultimate goal is to help children be safe and achieve success in school at their highest levels, despite any traumatic circumstances they may be experiencing.

"The Handle with Care program provides a direct communication link between law enforcement and the school community," said Sheriff L. Paul Bailey. "For those children who experience traumatic events that require a police response – like losing a loved one or witnessing domestic violence – they may need additional support when they return to school. The Handle with Care program makes that connection, allowing school staff to secure additional services that will help the student to do well in school while also coping with trauma."

The Handle with Care program involves police officers sending a confidential notification to the child's school alerting staff to "handle the student with care." There are no details of the incident released. Only a three-word message, "Handle with Care" along with the students' name, age, and school are provided. School staff will know to be sensitive to the child's need due to their circumstances.

"Especially now, with families dealing with the stress of COVID-19, educating children remotely, possible job loss and additional financial pressures, the potential for increased traumatic incidents is high," said Berrien RESA Superintendent Eric Hoppstock. "Communication between schools and local law enforcement is critical to the educational success of students. Through this program, schools can become part of the support team, providing resources to help children excel both emotionally and in the classroom."

This program was adopted from the West Virginia State Police which initiated Handle with Care in 2013. Since the launch, multiple law enforcement agencies, schools, and states have implemented the program. More info on the program can be found about the national program at <http://www.handlewithcarewv.org/> and the Michigan Handle with Care program for local resources at https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971_4911_69588_96877---,00.html

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