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## ***New Action Pack: Start a 'Handle With Care' Program So Police Can Notify Schools if Kids Exposed to Trauma!***

(SAN ANTONIO) — 60% of U.S. kids are exposed to violence, crime, or abuse. Latino children experience a [disproportionate burden of childhood trauma](#).

These kids still have to go to class or carry on while school is out for summer or due to a pandemic. They face a burden of stress and trauma that can interfere with their behavior and grades—and schools often aren't even aware there's an issue.

That's why the new "[Handle With Care Action Pack](#)," from the *Salud America!* health equity program at UT Health San Antonio in collaboration with the West Virginia Center for Children's Justice, aims to help police, school, and mental healthcare leaders start the Handle with Care program.

**In a Handle With Care program, police notify schools when they encounter children at a traumatic scene, so schools can provide support right away, virtually or in person.**

Sign up for the Action Pack: <https://salud.to/traumakids>.

"Communities across the country are realizing the value of starting a local Handle With Care program, where police give schools a heads-up when they come across kids at the scene of domestic violence, shootings, drug raids, etc.," said Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of *Salud America!* at UT Health San Antonio. "Schools prepare to give trauma-sensitive support and connect those kids and families to mental healthcare services as needed."

Ramirez said the Action Pack has five steps to help more communities start Handle With Care:

1. **Start the Conversation.** Use our model emails and talking points to engage decision-makers about the need for Handle With Care.
2. **Create a Group and a Vision.** Use our model materials to plan, invite people to, and conduct a virtual community meeting to plan your Handle With Care program.
3. **Create Your Notification Flow.** Use the model notification system to create your Handle With Care Notification Flow from police to schools. Most use email, text or police dispatch to send notifications with the child's name, age, school, and a simple message to "Handle With Care" (no confidential or police incident information is shared).
4. **Implement Your Program (with Training).** Use our sample materials to train police, school, and mental healthcare personnel to implement Handle With Care.
5. **Promote the Program.** Use our model news release and sharable social media materials to raise awareness of your Handle With Care program.

“The goal is to set schools up to better help children exposed to trauma focus, behave appropriately, and learn,” said Andrea Darr of the West Virginia Center for Children’s Justice, which formed the Handle With Care program.

Cities in over 45 U.S. states have started a local Handle With Care program.

For example, [San Antonio](#) implemented a Handle With Care program, teaming the San Antonio Police Department with the San Antonio, Northeast, and East Central school districts.

“Handle with Care was the perfect opportunity to learn if something is going on at home so we can better support kids in the school environment,” said Diana Centeno, a student support leader at San Antonio Independent School District.

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### **About *Salud America!***

*Salud America!* is a national Latino-focused organization that creates culturally relevant and research-based stories, videos, and tools to inspire people to start and support healthy changes to policies, systems, and environments where Latino children and families can equitably live, learn, work, and play. Latinos are a rising U.S. powerhouse, but they face barriers to be their healthiest and suffer high rates of obesity and other health disparities. *Salud America!* and its award-winning multimedia communications help our social and online network—more than 500,000 moms and dads, providers, researchers, and community and school leaders—push for healthy changes in schools and communities to build health equity for Latino and all kids. *Salud America!* is led by health disparities researcher Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez and supported by a passionate team of communicators at UT Health San Antonio, thanks to funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and others.

### **About Handle With Care**

In 2011, the West Virginia Children’s Justice Task Force, in collaboration with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the South District of West Virginia, formed a subcommittee to explore the problem of children’s exposure to trauma and violence and programing to mitigate the negative effects of trauma. They developed Handle With Care, and in 2013, piloted the program in one elementary school. Since then, cities in over 45 states have implemented the program.