

HB 2089 by Representative White

SB 2268 by Senator Walley

WHAT THE BILL DOES?

This bills simply adds a new section to protect the information contain in Handle With Care Program notifications by making them confidential.

Handle With Care Program notifications are an alert or a “heads up” from a law enforcement agency to a school/school system referencing a child’s possible exposure to an adverse childhood experience or trauma.

While student records and information are confidential, not all juvenile records are confidential and this bill confirms that Handle With Care notification will be confidential as transmitted from the law enforcement agency to the school/school system.

WHAT THE HANDLE WITH CARE PROGRAMS DO?

LAW ENFORCEMENT:

“Handle With Care” notification gives law enforcement the opportunity to provide the school with a “heads up” when a child has been identified at the scene of a traumatic event. It could be a horrible traffic accident, a domestic violence situation, a shooting in the neighborhood, witnessing a malicious wounding, a house fire, a drug raid at the home, etc.

Law enforcement is trained to identify children at the scene, find out where they go to school and send the school a confidential communication that simply says . . . “Handle With Care” with limited identifying information regarding the affected student. That’s it. No other details.

SCHOOLS:

The schools/school systems train teachers on the impact of trauma on learning and incorporate many interventions to mitigate the negative impact of trauma for identified students. The school keeps an eye on the student and can address any outbursts or issues in the classroom instead of treating such behavior from a discipline prospective. Schools are on the lookout for a student that may be tired, hungry, moody, dirty, etc. from the adverse or traumatic experience.

GOAL AND BENEFITS:

“Handle With Care” programs promotes school-community partnerships aimed at ensuring that children who are exposed to a level of trauma in their home, school, or community receive appropriate interventions to help them achieve academically at their highest levels despite whatever traumatic circumstances they may have experienced.

The ultimate goal of HWC is to help students to succeed in school. Regardless of the source of trauma, the common thread for effective intervention is the school. Research shows that trauma can undermine a children’s ability to learn, form relationships, and function appropriately in the

classroom. HWC programs support children exposed to trauma and violence through improved communication and collaboration between law enforcement, schools, and mental health providers where available, and connects families, schools, and communities to mental health services where available. Truly a benefit to the child, family, school and community.

LEGISLATION:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 10-7-504, is amended by adding the following as a new subsection:

Records generated as a result of a Handle With Care Program notification, which is an alert provided to a school system regarding a child's potential exposure to an adverse childhood experience, are confidential, not open or available for public inspection, and must not be released. This subsection () is repealed on July 1, 2027.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring **it**.

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