For Immediate Release:
July 23, 2026

Pickerington Implements Handle With Care Program into School System for the 26-27 School Year

PICKERINGTON, OH- This school year, Pickerington Local School District is adopting a support program for students with trauma called Handle With Care.

Handle With Care (HWC) is a national program that is utilized by first responders to alert school systems that a child in their building has experienced a traumatic incident and should be "handled with care" that day. Only certain school staff are notified of the situation a student is in and no specific event details are ever shared. The identified student then receives support that maintains their academic and personal integrity.

"This new addition strengthens our partnership with other school districts, first responders, and community through the positive impact Handle With Care has on our children," says Sarah Fortner, Deputy Director of Protective Services for Fairfield County Job and Family Services. She continues, "Bringing HWC to Pickerington Local School District is our biggest achievement to date."

Fairfield County Job and Family Services assumed ownership of Handle With Care in Fairfield County at the request of Hon. Terre L. Vandervoort. After implementing HWC, Pickerington schools will join the many other school districts in Fairfield County that have the program, along with the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office and the Lancaster Police Department.

The National Handle With Care program was created in 2012 by the West Virginia Children's Justice Task Force in partnership with the U.S. Attorney's Office as part of the Defending Childhood Initiative. Its primary goal is to ensure that children who experience trauma, such as domestic violence, arrests, overdoses, or other adverse events, receive appropriate support in schools without having to recount or relive the incident. The program has since expanded to over 500 school districts across 30 states in the U.S.

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Founded in 1800 (three years before Ohio became a State), Fairfield County was the 8th county formed in the Northwest Territory. Today, more than 900 employees serve, connect, and protect the more than 158,000 citizens of Fairfield County, providing high-quality services and outstanding customer service at exceptional value to taxpayers. Fairfield County fosters economic and fiscal sustainability and works to enhance the County's reputation as a high performing, learning, and caring organization. For more information about the county, its services and employment opportunities, please visit https://www.co.fairfield.oh.us/

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