



United Way Supports Students' Mental Health and Success in School

When children experience trauma, it negatively impacts their ability to learn, form relationships and succeed in the classroom. Too often, trauma-impacted children and teens shut down, zone out, act out, or self-harm, and have worsened school attendance, behavior, academics and health outcomes.

The youth mental health epidemic is rising with more children reporting that they experienced traumatic events in and outside of home. Growing up with trauma, Chief Michelle Kott of the Bethlehem Area Police Department understands the deep impact of trauma and how it can negatively impact youth's mental and physical health.

"My trauma has stayed with me, and it's important that I'm out in the community letting others know that they are resilient and aren't alone."

To help children exposed to trauma, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley launched Pennsylvania's first Handle With Care program in the Safe 2 Say System. Through Handle With Care, law enforcement and first responders provide schools with an early alert that a student may have experienced something traumatic outside of school prompting staff to handle them with care. Staff assess the student's physical and emotional wellbeing and connects the child to any additional support services they might need.

Since its launch in 2020, over 1,000 students throughout the region received support through Handle With Care communication.

Direct your gift to United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley to help fund critical programs like Handle With Care to support students who have been exposed to trauma. [Give today.](#)