

Washtenaw Handle with Care: Training for School Champions

January 18, 2018



Handle with Care Implementation Team

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Trauma in Washtenaw County?



Adverse Childhood Experiences

ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) – Stressful or traumatic events, including abuse and neglect. They may also include household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence or growing up with family members who have substance use disorders. A landmark study conducted by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente in the late 1990s found that **ACEs are strongly related to the development and prevalence of a wide range of health problems throughout a person's lifespan.***

*SAMHSA



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)



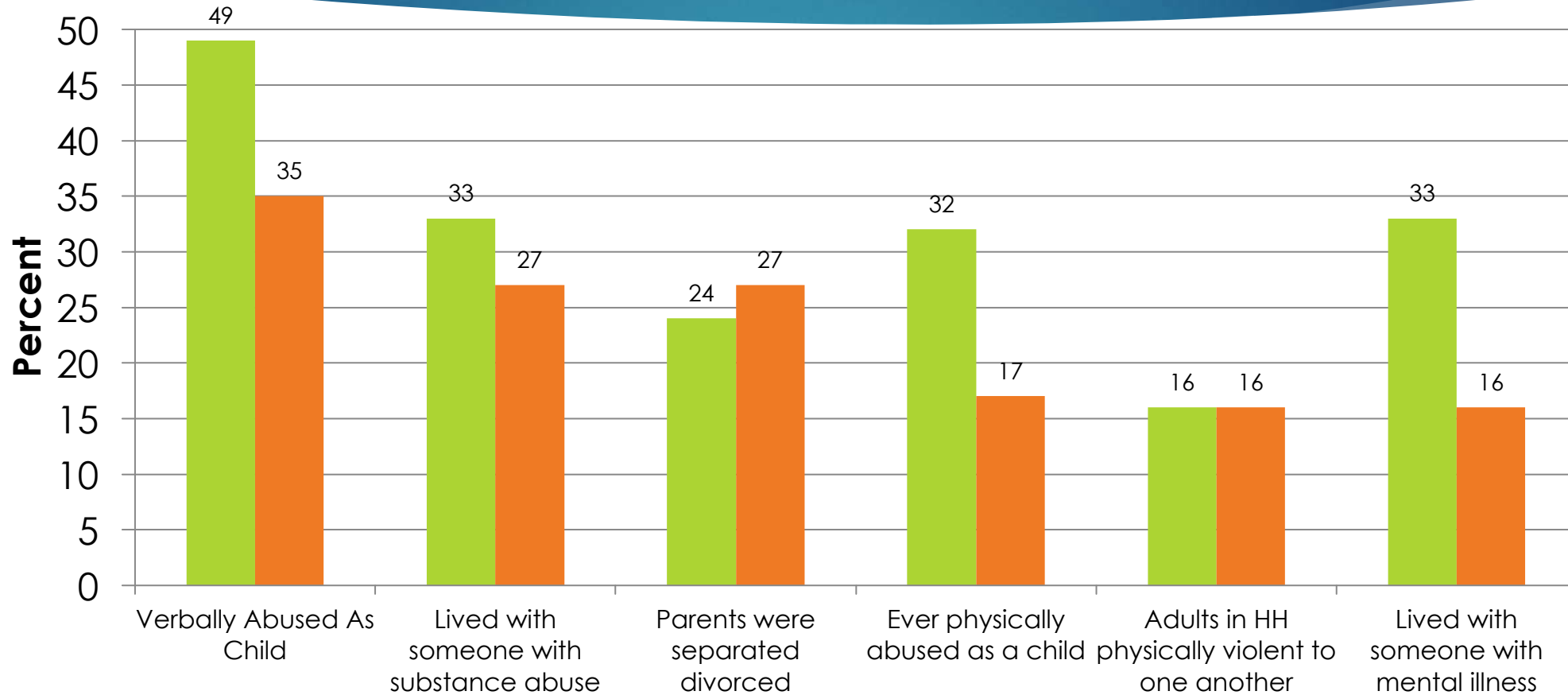
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- ▶ ACEs include*:
 - ▶ Physical abuse
 - ▶ Sexual abuse
 - ▶ Emotional abuse
 - ▶ Physical neglect
 - ▶ Emotional neglect
 - ▶ Mother treated violently
 - ▶ Substance misuse within household
 - ▶ Household mental illness
 - ▶ Parental separation or divorce
 - ▶ Incarcerated household member

*SAMHSA



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Michigan and Washtenaw County Adults 2013 Michigan BRFSS



What does law enforcement see in our community?

- **Repeat calls to some of the same households**, often for incidents like domestic violence, substance use disorder, mental illness of a family member, an incarcerated family member, etc.
- Too often the same children who witnessed these events wind up in the **juvenile justice system** themselves.
- **Note: Not all traumatic events involve violence or criminal activity**, i.e. car crash with injury, medical emergency of a family member, house fire, etc.



Goals of Handle with Care

- ▶ To **respond as a community** when a student experiences or witnesses a potentially traumatic event out of school
- ▶ To **support that child or youth in school** and help mitigate the child's trauma but helping him or her to build **resilience and safety** at school
- ▶ To **connect students** with accessible mental health services in the community if additional support is needed
- ▶ **Strengthen and improve relationships** in the community



What is Handle with Care?



Handle with Care

- ▶ First piloted in Charleston, WV in 2013
- ▶ Now in place throughout West Virginia, as well as Jackson and Eaton Counties in Michigan
- ▶ **Bridges the communication gap between schools and law enforcement so that children who are exposed to potentially traumatic events receive appropriate interventions**
- ▶ Interventions that will help give them the best chance of succeeding in school



How does HWC work?

1. **Law enforcement identifies children at the scene of an incident** and asks for their name and the name of their school.
2. The **school district is notified** before school starts the next day.
3. School staff **handle the child with care** and respond to him or her in a trauma sensitive way.
4. *If needed,* **child is referred to CMH** for additional support.



Notification Process

- ▶ **Law enforcement identifies children at the scene of an incident and asks for their name and the name of their school.**
 - ▶ **Incidents that would initiate a Handle with Care notice could include:** domestic violence, traffic accident with injuries, drug overdose, natural death, shooting, arrest of a loved one, child abuse or neglect, robbery, home invasion, house fire, a mental health breakdown of a household member, a search warrant or SWAT activity, to name just a few examples.
 - ▶ **It's important to point out that not all of these incidents are violent or involve a crime. Please avoid making assumptions about why your student has received a Handle with Care notice.**



Notification Process

- ▶ **The school district is notified before school starts the next day.**
 - ▶ **Law enforcement will use a web portal to email a simple notice to the designated individuals at each school district** to alert the school that the child was involved in a police incident the previous day and may have academic or behavioral difficulties in the coming days.
 - ▶ **The school district will forward the email to the child's school building champion.**
 - ▶ The school building **champion will deliver a Handle with Care notice to the child's teacher(s)** before school starts that day.
 - ▶ The Handle with Care notice gives examples of internal and external distress reactions to look for that the child *may* exhibit.





Handle With Care Notification

Student Name: _____

HWC Notice Date: _____

Please be alert to potential reactions by the Handle With Care student. Reactions may include:

Internal Distress:

- Regression of previously mastered stages of development (i.e. toileting accidents)
- Decline in participation or loss of interest
- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety
- Hyperarousal (i.e. easily startled)
- Increased distress (i.e. unusually whiny, irritable, moody)
- Discomfort with feelings (i.e. recognizing troubling thoughts)
- Distrust of others, including peers and adults
- Separation anxiety or extra clingy with teacher or other trusted adults
- Avoidance
- Emotional numbing (seeming to have no feelings about event)
- Re-experiencing or recreating trauma (i.e. reliving or drawing memories)
- Repetitive thoughts/comments about death or dying
- New fears (i.e. fear of dark, animals, monsters)
- Morbid thoughts, questions or drawings
- Change in appetite

External Distress:

- Unpredictable or impulsive behavior
- Angry outbursts or aggression
- Over- or under-reacting to physical contact, bright lights, sudden movements or loud sounds
- Defiance or difficulty with authority
- Irritability with friends, teachers or events
- Headaches or stomachaches
- Lack of energy or fatigue
- Increased risk or signs of substance abuse
- Increased activity level
- Difficulty concentrating or lack of attention
- Physical harm to others or to self
- Increased absenteeism
- Slipping schoolwork
- Withdrawal from usual activities or suspiciousness

Other(s):

HWC REFERRAL FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

I would like to refer this student to: **[INSERT NAME(S) OF DESIGNEE(S) FOR YOUR SCHOOL BUILDING]**

Because this student has:

- Exhibited changes that prohibit regular school activities for the student and/or for other students (*please check all above that apply*)
- Exhibited changes for more than 2 weeks after the HWC Notice (*please check all above that apply*)

Referring Staff: _____ Date of Referral: _____

More resources on Handle With Care & Trauma are available at www.washtenawisd.org/handlewithcare

Trauma Sensitive Schools

- ▶ First, an important note about **privacy**:
 - ▶ Law enforcement will not provide any details of the incident to the school.
 - ▶ **It's important to remember that not all incidents involve violence or a violent crime.**
 - ▶ **We must all be vigilant that there is no stigma attached to a Handle with Care notice.**
 - ▶ Discussion of students who have received a Handle with Care notice should not leave your school building.



Trauma Sensitive Schools

- ▶ **School staff will handle the child with care and respond to him or her in a trauma sensitive way.**
 - ▶ Schools are significant communities for children, and teachers are often their primary role models.
 - ▶ Support can be as simple as...If the child looks really sleepy, maybe they'd like to take a nap in the office or perhaps that's not a good day to ask them to take a test.
 - ▶ **A series of videos is available to view at www.washtenawisd.org/HandleWithCare**



What if school interventions are not enough?



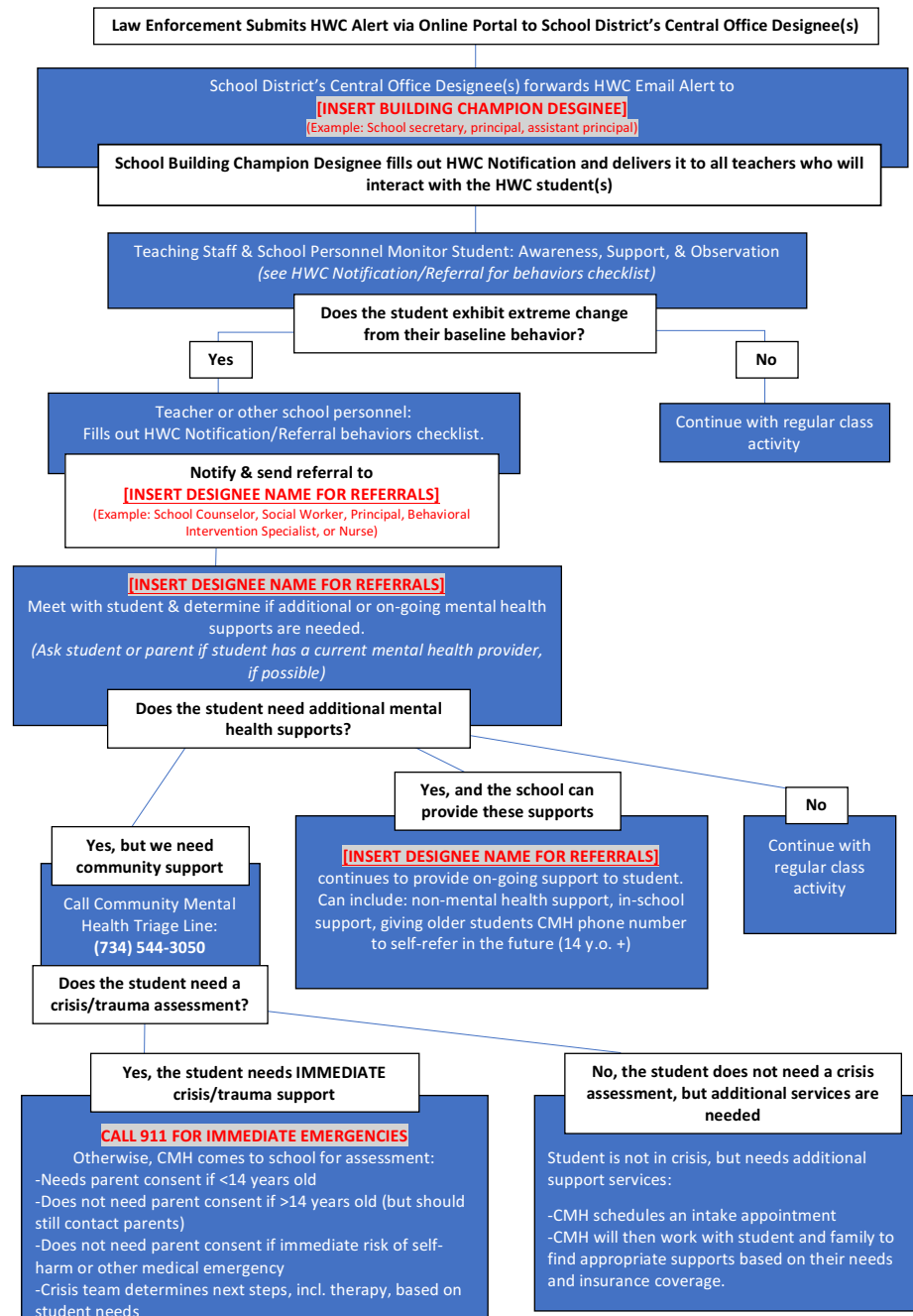
Referrals for More Support

- ▶ If a student is still struggling **two weeks** after the original event or if the student's reaction **prevents regular school activities** for the student or for other students:
 - ▶ Teacher should check the boxes on the original Handle with Care form
 - ▶ Give the form to your school's designated behavioral health contact
- ▶ We have partnered with **Washtenaw County Community Mental Health** to accept referrals **24/7 at 734-544-3050**
- ▶ If the student is **not eligible** for CMH's services, they'll connect them to a provider who can work with that student.



Your Role: HWC Champion





Your Role: HWC Champion

- ▶ **Handle with Care website includes:**
 - ▶ **Videos**—all school staff should watch the **Overview, Early Childhood/Elementary OR Middle/High School, and Secondary Trauma.**
 - ▶ Videos are short. Can view them at staff meetings and discuss scenarios.
 - ▶ **Resources**—documents and links to helpful information for educators to create trauma-informed schools
 - ▶ **All Handle with Care documents**

www.washtenawisd.org/HandleWithCare



Your Role: HWC Champion

- ▶ **Introductory Email**
 - ▶ **Email that you will send to all staff in your school building** letting them know what Handle with Care is and how they can get up to speed on it.
 - ▶ All you have to do is send the email and answer questions that might arise.
 - ▶ **We are happy to help if you have questions**
 - ▶ Shannon Novara, snovara@washtenawisd.org
 - ▶ Ashley Kryscynski, akryscynski@washtenawisd.org
 - ▶ Holly Heaviland, hheaviland@washtenawisd.org
- ▶ **How else can we support you?**



Trauma in Early Childhood and Elementary Years

Kate Rosenblum, PhD, IMH-E IV
Professor and Director, Zero to Thrive
Department of Psychiatry
Michigan Medicine



Childhood Trauma is Prevalent

- ▶ Young children are exposed to traumatic stressors at rates similar to those of older children.
- ▶ Even by the preschool years (2-5) the majority (53%) of young children have experienced at least one severe stressor (Egger & Angold, 2004).
- ▶ The most common traumatic stressors for young children include: accidents (#1), physical trauma, abuse, neglect, and exposure to domestic and community violence.



Stress reduces the ability to respond, learn, or figure things out, which can result in problems in school.



Interferes with coping, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.



Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.



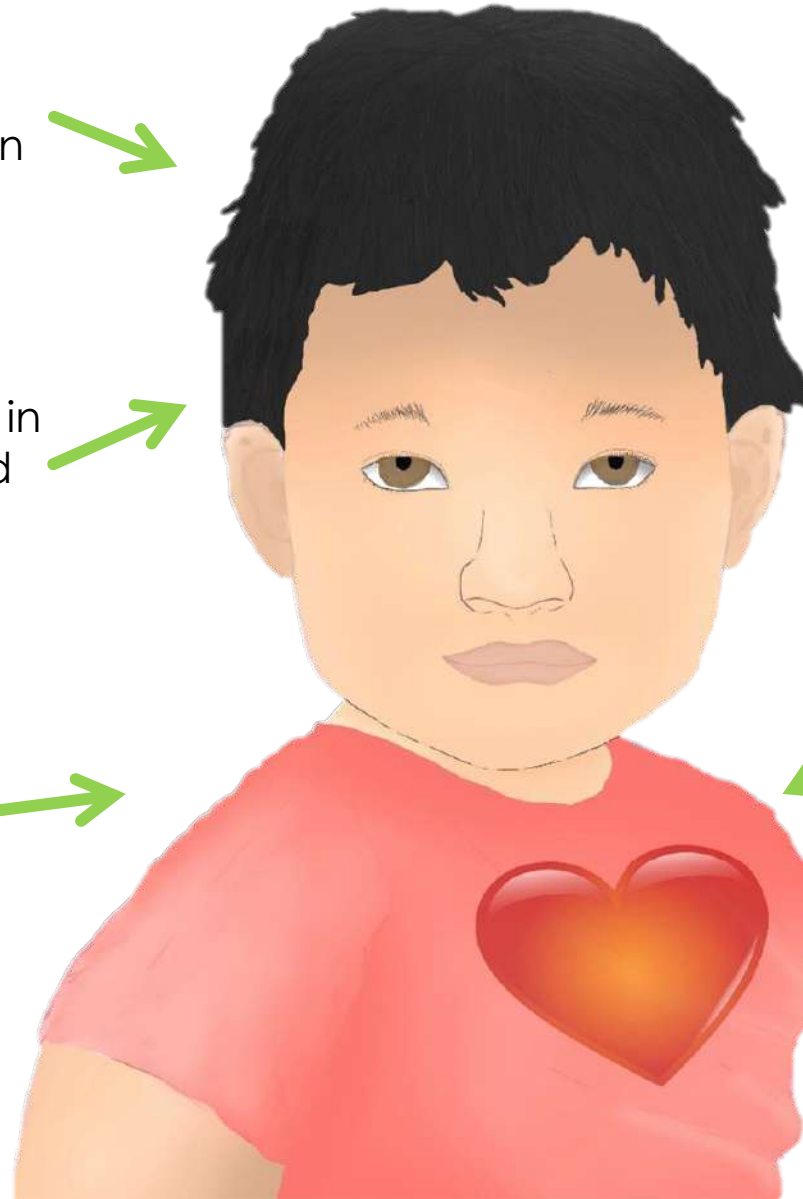
Increases problems with learning and memory.



Increases stress hormones which affect the body's ability to fight infection.



May cause lasting health problems.



Trauma related symptoms may include...

- ▶ Excessive distractibility
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating and learning
- ▶ Difficulty making and/or keeping friends
- ▶ Difficulty participating in group experiences
- ▶ Difficulty moving from one activity to another (transitions)
- ▶ Excessive screaming
- ▶ Destroying property
- ▶ Difficulty in calming self
- ▶ Difficulty sleeping
- ▶ Developmental regression
- ▶ Silent and/or withdrawn
- ▶ Hurting self or others
- ▶ Fearfulness, easily startled or checking out





**When I'm feeling overwhelmed
or stressed:**

I can't hear you.

I can't think clearly.

I can't respond to you.

*I need your help to calm me and
feel safe.*

The good news: Resilience can bring back health and hope!



What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to return to being healthy and hopeful after bad things happen.

Even if children experience challenges, they can still be resilient!

Research shows that if caregivers provide a safe environment and help children build resilience, this can reduce the effects of trauma and stress.



Promoting Resilience in the Classroom



- ▶ Watch for changes in behavior
- ▶ Provide consistent, predictable pattern for the day
- ▶ Nurture
- ▶ Give child choices, opportunities to build a sense of control
- ▶ Respond -- pay attention to, acknowledge and validate feelings
- ▶ Establish safety- help children feel ok about expressing emotions while maintaining expectations to keep behaviors safe– e.g., “It’s ok to be angry but I cannot let you hit.”
- ▶ Practice relaxation techniques during low stress times so child can use those strategies (e.g., count to ten, breathing, positive self-talk)
- ▶ Stay calm, present, and patient



What can help young children in the classroom?



- ▶ Find additional resources through the Washtenaw County Handle with Care website:
www.washtenawisd.org/HandleWithCare
- ▶ When you are concerned, reach out within your HWC-involved school building and district to identify and access additional resources and support for your student



Self Care



- Nurture and grow your own resilience. Find and do things that help you to stay calm in times of stress. Reach out for help
- We are “stewards” of our own capacity to be helpful to others. Remember:
 - **”To keep a lamp burning we have to keep putting oil in it”– Mother Teresa.**





Thank you!



Trauma in Middle and High School Years

Polly Gipson, Ph.D.
Clinical Assistant Professor and Director,
Trauma and Grief Clinic
Department of Psychiatry,
Child/Adolescent Section
Michigan Medicine



What are the Warning Signs of Traumatic Reactions in Youth?





Academic



Social



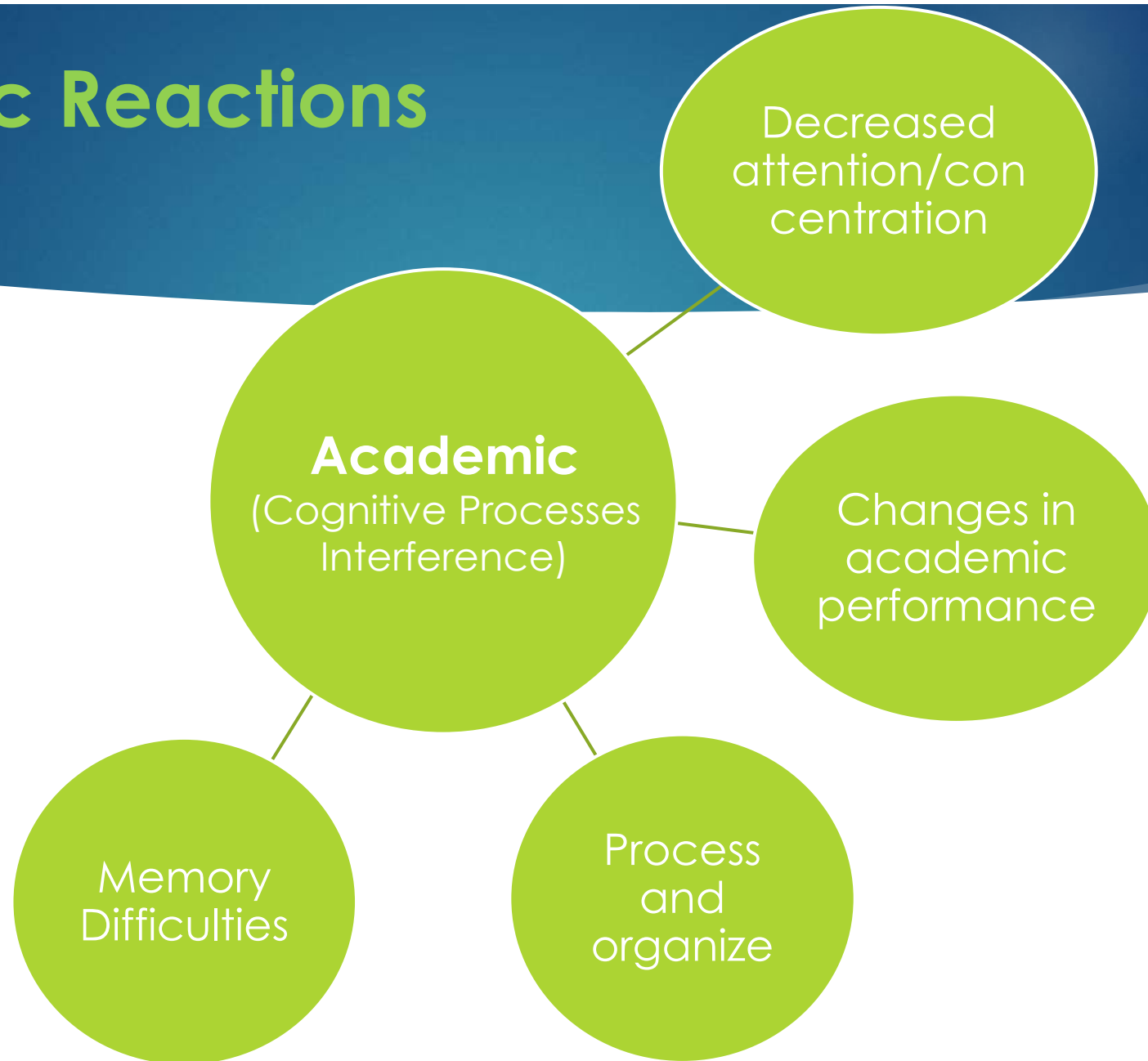
Emotional



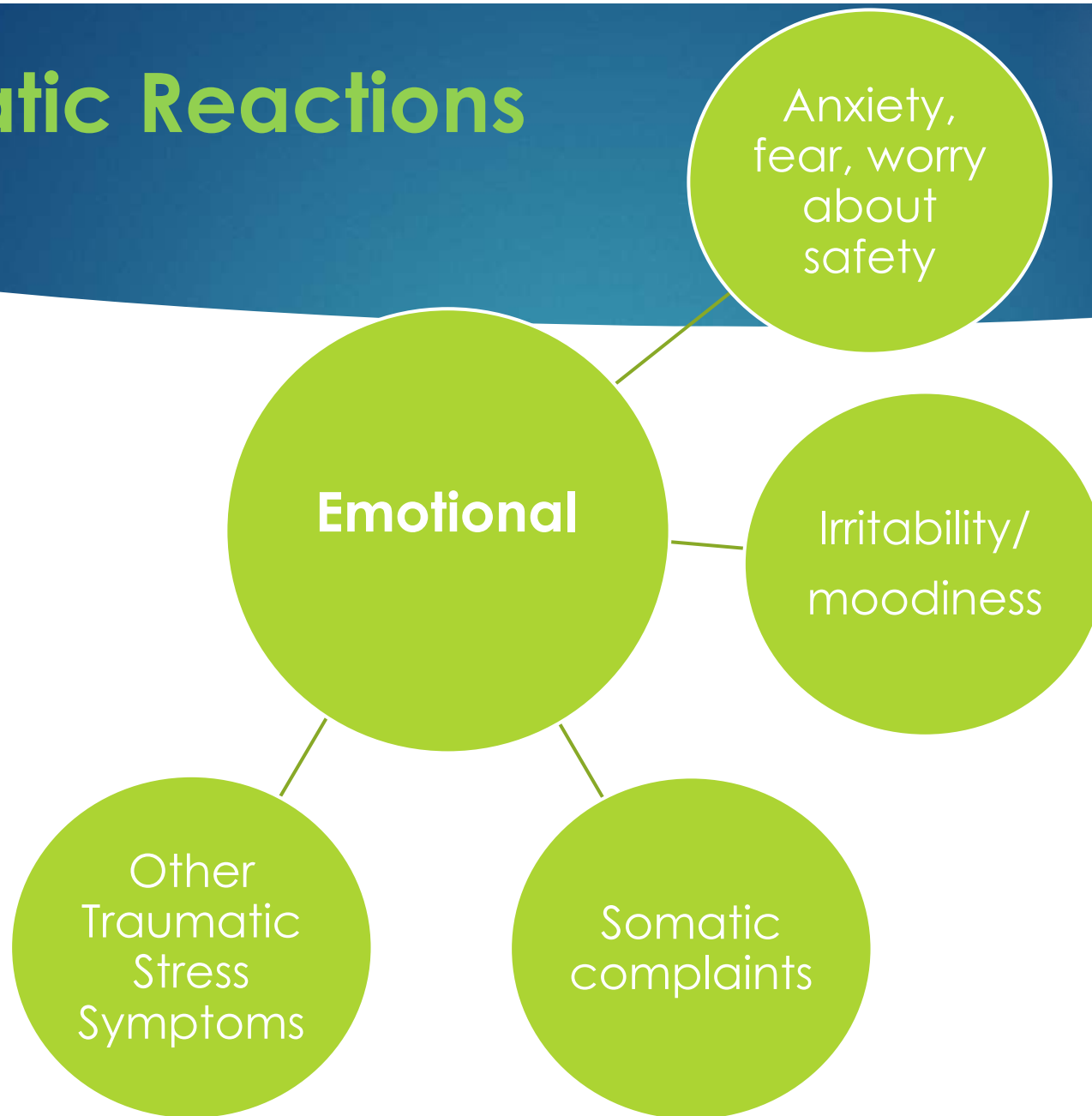
Behavioral



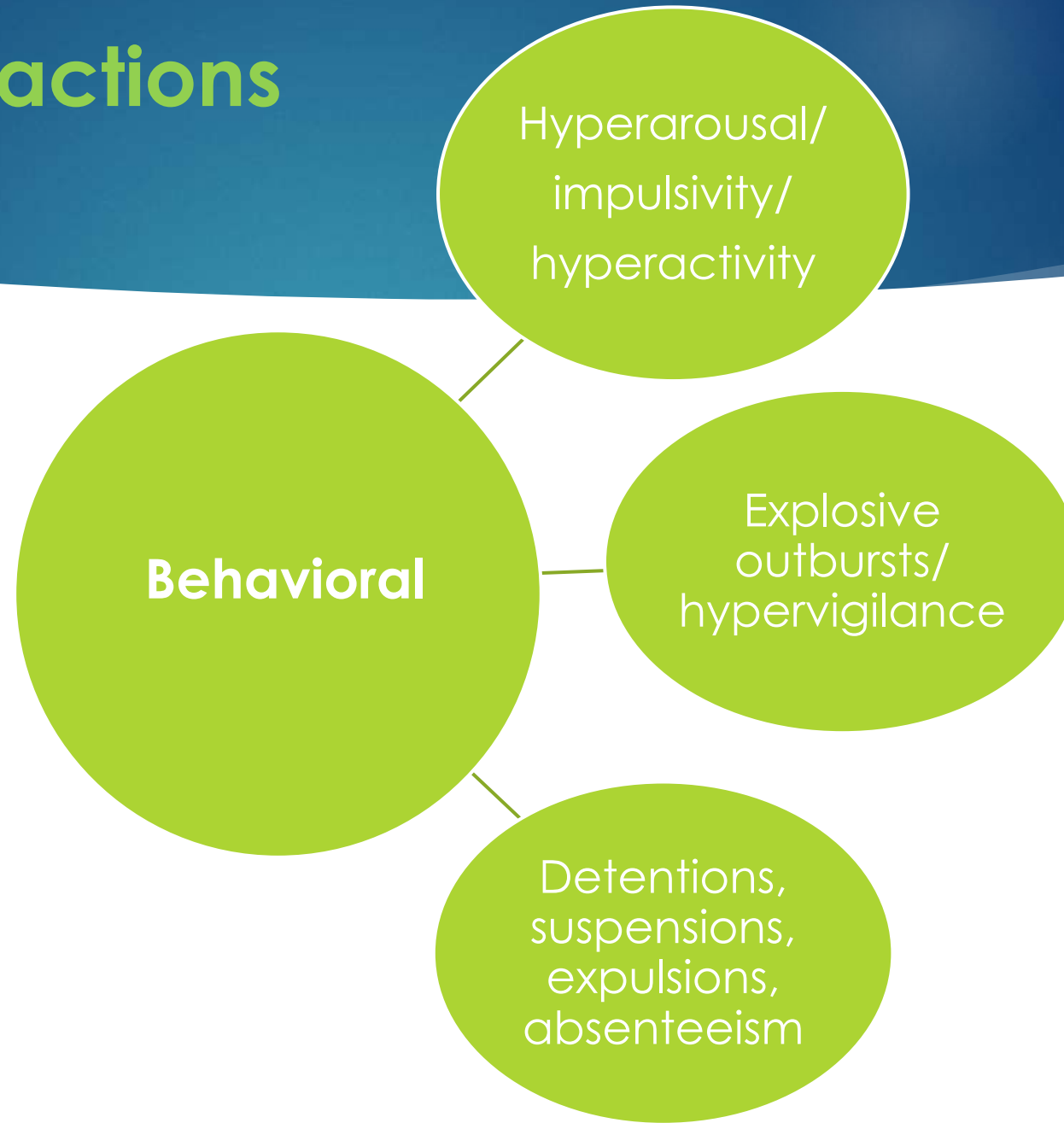
Traumatic Reactions



Traumatic Reactions



Traumatic Reactions



Traumatic Reactions



Changes (Actions/Behaviors/Cognitions/Moods)

Inside (internalizing)

- ▶ Emotional withdrawal
- ▶ Feeling fear, helplessness, uncertainty, vulnerability, guilt, shame
- ▶ Increased levels of anxiety/insecurity
- ▶ Dissociation, feeling “outside of one’s body”



Outside (externalizing)

- ▶ Isolative behavior
- ▶ Difficulty with connectedness (peers)
- ▶ Difficulty with authority, redirection, feedback
- ▶ Risky, reckless, aggressive, or self-destructive behaviors (e.g., substance misuse)
- ▶ Avoidance of trauma reminders
- ▶ Repetitive thoughts/comments (traumatic event/details)



3 Basic Needs

- **Safety**
- **Belonging**
- **Competence**





It's **normal**
for us to feel
threatened.
But this can
add **fuel to**
their FIRE.

S T E P S

**SLOW DOWN, SOFTEN VOICE,
FACIAL EXPRESSION, POSTURE**

TAKE A STEP BACK AND BREATHE

MAKE AN EMPATHY STATEMENT

**PRACTICE SKILLS THAT SETTLE OR
MOVE TO RELEASE ENERGY**

STAY CONNECTED TO STUDENT

Grounding and Self-Regulation Example

Take “Time IN” To Find Your Ground ...Now Check Your Breath and Look Around!

Take “time in” to find your ground:
“Feel your...

- ❖ FEET (on the ground...)
- ❖ SEAT (in the chair.....)
- ❖ BACK (against the back of the chair..)
- ❖ HANDS (wherever they might be resting...)

Check your Breath...

Now take some time to look around.
Find something that you like to look at, and makes you feel good!





YOLO RESILIENCE NETWORK
Building ACEs awareness. Building community.

Types of Stress



GREEN

POSITIVE

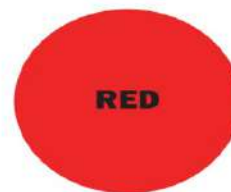
Brief increases in heart rate,
mild elevations in stress
hormone levels.



YELLOW

TOLERABLE

Serious, temporary stress
responses, buffered by
supportive relationships.



RED

TOXIC

Prolonged activation of stress
response systems in the absence
of protective relationships.

Source: Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

How to Use The Color Wheel

This **color wheel** is meant to be a tool to help open communication about stress levels with youth/students. First and foremost, *think about your own stress level* and if you're in the **red zone** or **yellow** with a high level of discomfort, please take care of yourself first! You'll need to have some strategies that you can implement to help you get to **green** or tolerable **yellow** levels of stress before you can be effective helping others get there!

For a student or youth who seems out of sorts or seems to be struggling, use the **color wheel** illustration on the other side to explain in your own words what the three different stress level are and ask him/her which level fits how they're feeling right now.

Red is a danger zone - something has the youth so upset that he or she really cannot focus on anything else, and strategies will need to be found to help the youth get to a more tolerable stress level right away.

The yellow zone is a tolerable level of stress, but will still require that the youth receive some support and feel safe.

The green zone is a low level of stress and the youth receives support and feels safe.

When to Refer a Student for Additional Supports/Services?



Working with Washtenaw County Community Mental Health



Help for Youth with Mental Health Needs

**Washtenaw County Community
Mental Health (CMH)
Crisis and Access Intake available
24/7
734-544-3050**



Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH)

- ▶ Our role in supporting the **Handle with Care** initiative
- ▶ **Who we are and when to call us**
- ▶ What to **expect** if you do call
- ▶ How a WCCMH mental health crisis professional can **help the school team triage a situation with a youth**
- ▶ **Safety/crisis planning**, outreach, resources, connecting youth and families to community services, CMH services and how linking can occur for **immediate mental health and substance use emergencies**



How is Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH) Involved? Access/Crisis Department

- ▶ The **WCCMH Triage Team**-Answers phone 24/7 receives initial requests for services, schedules intake appointments, provides information and referral to community resources
- ▶ The **CMH Crisis/Access team supervisors** will receive a group email alert by law enforcement when a Handle with Care incident occurs in our community links to immediate support for mental health and substance use emergencies
- ▶ If the youth is **already receiving WCCMH services** their case manager/therapist team will be notified and reach out to the youth/family
- ▶ School systems will reach out to WCCMH for assistance with **triage** related to **safety/crisis situations** and/or **youth that need additional assistance and ongoing support**



Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (CMH)



**What questions might you have
for us?**



Shift your thinking...

What's
wrong with
you?



What
happened
to you?



Questions?

Contact:

- ▶ Shannon Novara at snovara@washtenawisd.org
or 734-994-8100, ext. 2177
- ▶ Ashley Kryscynski at akryscynski@washtenawisd.org
or 734-994-8100, ext. 1738
- ▶ Holly Heaviland at hheaviland@washtenawisd.org
or 734-994-8100, ext. 1250



Thank you to our partners:

