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**DISTRICT ATTORNEY JIM MARTIN PRAISES THE UNITED WAY, RESILIENT
LEHIGH VALLEY, SCHOOL OFFICIALS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ON THE
FIRST YEAR OF HANDLE WITH CARE PROGRAM**

District Attorney Jim Martin provide an update on the Handle With Care program that has law enforcement notify schools regarding a child's exposure to traumatic events.

Handle With Care is aimed at ensuring that school-aged children who are exposed to trauma receive the proper support and resources to help that student to address trauma before it takes a toll in the form of academic, emotional and/or behavioral issues.

On Wednesday morning, law enforcement officials, representatives from the District Attorney's office, educators and officials with the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley and Resilient Lehigh Valley met to review the first year of the Handle With Care program.

There were more than 200 referrals from law enforcement for the past school year through the Handle With Care program in both Lehigh and Northampton counties.

A number of those referrals came from Whitehall Township Police who have used Mark43, a new records management system launched last year for law enforcement agencies, to help streamline the process of making a Handle With Care referral.

The success of the pilot year of the Handle With Care program shows the cooperation between police departments and school officials to help children with anything from an extra meal at school to pairing them with resources like counseling, Martin said.

The partnership with United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, Resilient Lehigh Valley, area school officials and local law enforcement has proven to be an invaluable aid to students dealing with trauma.

“Often law enforcement is aware of an event that school officials do not know has occurred. Thus, this simple message, without releasing details in order to protect the child’s and its family’s privacy, suggesting to school officials that they ‘handle with care’ a specific child, can be very helpful to a child dealing with trauma,” Martin said.

“Law enforcement and education officials agree that the best way for students to survive in overcoming trauma is to address it before it takes a toll,” he said.