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**SUPERINTENDENT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DISTRICT ATTORNEY AND YOLO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION  
LAUNCH PROGRAM TO HELP CHILDREN EXPOSED TO TRAUMA**

**(Woodland, CA)** - October 23, 2019 -- District Attorney Jeff Reisig and Yolo County Superintendent of Schools, Garth Lewis, announced the launching of FOCUS, a notification system designed to decrease the negative impacts on children who are exposed to violence and trauma. The goal of the FOCUS program is for children to succeed to the best of their ability, regardless of the environment in which they live.

Under FOCUS, law enforcement officers and other first responders who encounter a child in a traumatic situation collect the child's name, date of birth, and the name of the school that they attend to create a FOCUS notification. Traumatic events include domestic violence, child abuse, death in the family, witness to a crime, or loss of home due to a house fire. The first responder will then alert the child's school that the child has been exposed to violence or trauma so that the school can handle that child with additional specialized care. With this information, school officials can keep an eye on the child and provide assistance as necessary. The program is modeled after the Handle with Care program in West Virginia whose goal is to provide children with a more stable alternative in the aftermath of traumatic events.

Stanislaus County introduced their version of this program in California and provided Yolo County with a web based application for smart phones which, once installed, allows the first responder at the scene to immediately share this limited information electronically.

Both District Attorney Reisig and Superintendent Lewis are pleased with this partnership and continue to search for ways to protect children. Reisig stated "This notification system is just one more way we can ensure that adult events do not negatively impact the development of our children." Superintendent Garth Lewis commented, "As educators every bit of information we can receive that will help promote the best learning environment is welcomed."

Recently, Nadine Burke Harris, California's First Surgeon General, recommended that every child be screened for trauma before entering school in order to foster better mental health amongst K-12 students.

The program applies to K-12 students, does not allow disclosure of any confidential information, and has no costs associated with it. Currently, the partnership is between the Yolo County Office of Education and the seven local law enforcement agencies. The goal is to expand the program to private schools and all first responders.

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