



**Handle with Care (HWC) is a program** designed for parents and caregivers to promote the mental health (social and emotional well-being) of children and families every day! Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada's Innovations Fund, it has been enthusiastically received across PEI, within the general population including all Aboriginal communities and Francophone groups. Handle with Care may be delivered in small groups or in 1:1 situations based on what is in the best interest of the person(s) taking the Program.

**Why Handle with Care?** The Program's focus is not only on building individual skills, but also on enhancing community capacity for collaborative, evidence-based approaches that build secure attachments, positive self-esteem, capacity for emotion expression and social relationships. The Program offers a new paradigm for positive everyday interactions, healthy emotional environments and stronger family-community connections. Strategies and program delivery are based on community input and a mutual support model aimed at building community capacity throughout the wider population, especially for those who may be at risk for mental health challenges.

**Who?** Our programs are open to all who wish to attend and we attract participants from across the economic and social spectrum, all of whom are at the table as parents or caregivers who desire to be the best they can be for the children they care for and interact with.

**What?** The Program consists of four **Building Blocks**; each building upon the other.

- Building Trust and Attachment
- Building and Enhancing Self-Esteem
- Expressing Emotions
- Building Relationships with Others

Each Building Block contains the same format:

- ✓ **Key Message:** the significance of the topic for the child and parent or other caregiver.
- ✓ **Research:** what we know about the topic and why it is important.
- ✓ **Self-Care:** caring for self enables one to care for others.
- ✓ **Activities:** stories, videos, discussions, crafts, games enhance understanding & skills development.
- ✓ **Bringing it home:** discussion as to how participants will integrate the messages into day-to-day living.
- ✓ **Bringing it together:** linking the importance of the key message to the experience.

We want our children, parents, and other caregivers to feel worthy and proud of who they are, as they are. It is for this reason that, woven through everything we do, is acceptance, caring, honor, respect, trust, understanding, encouragement and a steadfast belief that every parent wants what is best for their child and, therefore, will do whatever it takes to make that happen.

**Benefits:** *Children* grow in self-esteem and confidence; focus and learn better; develop healthy relationships and better mental and physical health.

*Parents* report a growing confidence in using new parenting skills; have shown greater self-esteem, self-worth and flourishing; all leading to better family relationships and increased community involvement.

Communities and other groups have worked together in support of the delivery of HWC programs.

**Our Goal for 2016-2018:** To ensure the sustainability of the Program in PEI, train additional facilitators and continue facilitator training and parent programs in our sister Atlantic Provinces. For further information, please do not hesitate to contact Alice Taylor at [tayloralice712@gmail.com](mailto:tayloralice712@gmail.com) or Eileen Conway-Martin at [econwaymartin@gmail.com](mailto:econwaymartin@gmail.com).