



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

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Guidelines for the Use, Prevention and Reduction of Restraint and Seclusion in the Public School System

The Council strongly supports the development and implementation of statutory authority that will provide for the safety of students with developmental disabilities while simultaneously offering school personnel clear and unambiguous regulations on the use of restraint and seclusion.

These three main principles will help to ensure that the school environment is safe for everyone:

- **First, physical restraint and monitored seclusion should be used only as a last resort and when there is a demonstrable and imminent physical danger to the student or others.**
- **Second, the statute should include a requirement that all instances of restraint must be reported to the parent(s) of a child who has been restrained as soon as possible, and to the Department of Education (DOE) and an outside independent agency annually.**
- **Finally, the statute should contain prohibitions against any form of prone restraint.**

The use of restraints or seclusion on children has had extremely negative and tragic consequences. Injuries, trauma, and even death are well documented consequences of the use of restraints or seclusion. Parents of children with developmental disabilities have pushed to gain more access to mainstream schools and classrooms for their sons and daughters. Unfortunately, many public schools are using takedowns, isolation rooms, restraining chairs with straps and worse, which are precisely the sort of practices families hoped to avoid by steering clear of restrictive settings.

As schools transition students with disabilities out of segregated settings into regular education classrooms it is critical that teachers and staff are trained and prepared to provide the necessary supports. Research demonstrates that lack of teacher training can lead to inappropriate staff responses to problem behavior, thereby increasing the chances that student behavior will escalate and become severe.

Research and practice have demonstrated the practical use and benefits of functional behavioral assessment and positive behavioral supports for helping address behavior issues in children with disabilities. Unfortunately, even with this information, we continue to see over and over that the use of restraints or seclusion has been the response of first choice in far too many situations.

Policies should stress the importance of employing non-physical techniques. They should emphasize prevention, positive behavioral intervention strategies, and de-escalation techniques to help students manage their own conduct. These practices teach children to build social relationships and skills they need to progress to adulthood. They also create an environment that values healthy relationships and conflict resolution skills.