



FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.

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**Guidelines for the Prevention and Reduction of Restraint
in the Public School System**

- **The Council supports a policy where physical restraint in the school system shall be only used as a last resort when there is a demonstrable and imminent physical danger to the student or others, and implemented by trained staff.**
- **The Council opposes the use of seclusion, mechanical restraints and prone restraint entirely.**
- **The Council opposes restraint as a planned intervention in education plans for students with disabilities.**

Seclusion and restraint are highly dangerous interventions that have led to death, injury, and trauma in children. In 2009, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) collected at least 20 stories of children who died in restraint. Restraint should not be used when there is no emergency posing a danger to physical safety. Even then, restraint should not be used when less restrictive measures would resolve the issue.

Data from the U.S. Department of Education shows a disproportionate impact on students with disabilities. In addition, restraint and seclusion can re-traumatize children who have had prior abuses in their lives. The requirement of using restraint in situations of imminent danger and not as an educational tool sends clear direction to students, parents, teachers and school administrators that restraint cannot be used for discipline, addressing non-compliance or for convenience.

In 2010, Florida first addressed this issue by enacting a statute addressing restraint and seclusion incidents in the public school system. New requirements included parental notification provisions, reporting requirements and data collection. School districts are also now required to develop a plan for reducing the use of restraint and seclusion, and for reducing the use of prone restraint and mechanical restraint. The Council would like them to take this a step farther and prohibit all seclusion, prone restraint and mechanical restraint. The Council is encouraged that some school districts have adopted a ban on these methods and they have been successful.

Many districts have adopted improvements, but the fact remains, in Florida, the current situation is any trained staff can legally restrain or seclude any student with a disability for any reason and for any length of time. This is unacceptable. The State needs to extend the same best practices to its schools that hospitals, residential facilities, and nursing homes have in place.

The Council believes there are less dangerous ways to address behavioral concerns in schools. Restraint can be reduced and often avoided by implementing positive behavioral supports in schools. Florida's students and teachers benefit from initiatives to implement behavior management training which emphasizes positive behavior supports and includes crisis reduction and de-escalation techniques.