

Restraint and Seclusion: Alternatives Course Guide



Purpose

Physical restraint is dangerous and should be used only in emergencies. Although the intention is to protect or prevent harm, physical restraints can cause serious medical problems, including injury or death by starving the body and brain of oxygen. The proper use of physical restraint requires special training.

Very little empirical research supports the use of restraint and seclusion. School staff members report that they often use restraint only for emergencies, or in the case when a physically aggressive student is threatening harm to themselves or others. The goal of this course is to provide school staff members with an overview of alternatives to restraint and seclusion, and strategies to address adverse behavior in the classroom.

Summary

The Danger of Restraint and Seclusion

School staff must sometimes rely on restrictive behavioral interventions when working with students who demonstrate inappropriate and aggressive behaviors. Unfortunately, there are many dangers associated with using restraint and seclusion procedures, and little empirical evidence to support their use. Additionally, public awareness has increased regarding these dangers.

Restraint means that a specially trained person controls the behavior of another, often by using holds or otherwise preventing free movement. In schools, it is a means for regaining behavioral control of a student in order to prevent injury to that person or others. There are three kinds of restraints: mechanical, chemical and physical, or ambulatory.

Physical, or ambulatory, restraint is the use of one's own body to restrict another person's movement. More than one person may be needed to physically restrain another. This is the type of restraint applicable in schools. Physical restraint is dangerous and should be used only in emergencies. Although the intention is to protect or prevent harm, physical restraints can cause serious medical problems, including injury or death by starving the body and brain of oxygen. The proper use of physical restraint requires special training.

Important Key Points

Despite the risks and lack of evidence, most school staff members are not aware of other options or effective alternatives to restraining students. Remember these important points regarding the alternatives to restraint and seclusion for your students who struggle with behavioral issues:

- There are many myths about the use of restraint and seclusion, including the myth that restraint and seclusion are therapeutic and improve behavior
- When you know and understand the conflict cycle, you can help your students who struggle with emotional/behavioral outbursts before they reach the point when restraint or seclusion might be considered.
- It's important to try to prevent a child from having a behavioral crisis. Recognizing certain "triggers" may help you stop a student meltdown before it happens.
- Using alternatives to restraint and seclusion require all school staff to be proactive in implementing standards for proper intervention.
- There is evidence for training school staff members in crisis intervention, the result being that restraint and seclusion can be avoided.
- Students can be taught to self-manage or monitor their own behaviors and avoid escalating conflicts that result in restraint and seclusion procedures.

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Next Steps

Understand Key Terms

restraint – a means for a specially trained person to regain behavioral control of a student in order to prevent injury to that person or others by controlling the behavior of another, often by using holds or otherwise preventing free movement.

seclusion – placing a person in a room or location alone and preventing that person from leaving

timeouts – a technique that can be used to change behavior without resorting to seclusion, implemented to reduce inappropriate behaviors by denying a student access to most types of reinforcement.

antecedent – an event that occurs before and triggers a behavior.

self-management – the monitoring, evaluation and reinforcement of one's own behavior and a behavioral goal for which all students should strive

Explore Resources

CEC's Position on Physical Restraint and Seclusion:
www.cec.sped.org

Position Summaries on the Use of Restraint and Seclusion in School Settings:
www.ccbd.net

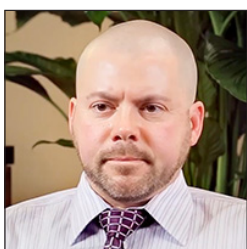
Crisis Prevention Institute:
www.crisisprevention.com

Take Related Courses

Learn more with other Exceptional Child courses, including:

- BIP Overview
- EBD: Overview
- Federal Laws in Special Education
- School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports
- Restraint and Seclusion: Overview

About the Author



"When you know the signs of behavior that's starting to escalate, it's easier to intervene before it gets out of hand."

Michael Rozalski, Ph.D., is a professor at State University of New York and a former special education teacher. In alternative settings, including wilderness programs, prisons and in "regular" public schools, he taught students with learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders. Dr. Rozalski is involved in local public schools and has published numerous book chapters and articles on legal issues and working with students with behavior disorders.

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