



DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVISORY



Office of the Child Advocate & Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

New State Law Limits Use of Restraint and Seclusion Of Children in Schools

New Law to Benefit Children. In 2015, the Connecticut legislature passed new legislation that places significant limits on the use of restraint and seclusion in Connecticut schools. The Office of the Child Advocate and the Office of Protection and Advocacy, both charged with advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities, applauded the bi-partisan reform bill that will reduce and prevent reliance on unnecessary and harmful interventions for children.

The new law contains several key elements, including:

1. Expands protection from non-emergency restraint and seclusion to *all children*, regardless of disability;
2. Limits the use of seclusion to emergency situations where a child presents a risk to himself or others, thereby eliminating the broad “IEP *exception*” to the state’s limit on seclusion;
3. Prohibits dangerous face-down restraints;
4. Requires monitoring of a student in seclusion and requires all seclusion spaces to be equipped with a window that allows the student a clear line of sight;
5. Mandates a reconvening of a student’s educational team, including the parent, after a child has been repeatedly restrained or secluded within 20 school days;
6. Increases training requirements to support districts’ efforts to reduce restraint and seclusion and prevent emergencies through positive behavioral supports and crisis prevention strategies.

For more on the new Connecticut law, see the Connecticut General Assembly Website: https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&which_year=2015&bill_num=927.

New Law Conforms to Best Practices. Experts around the country agree that restraint and seclusion are non-therapeutic interventions that can worsen behaviors they are used to address.

Restraint and seclusion are not behavior management responses and can lead to trauma and injury for both youth and staff.

There are Effective Strategies to Reduce Restraint and Seclusion. Evidence-based strategies and curriculum exist to support teachers and providers' work with children and adults and reduce the need for restraint and seclusion altogether. These strategies include Positive Behavioral Supports and The Six Core Strategies, for example.

For more on effective strategies to eliminate restraint and seclusion see the following:

- The United States Department of Education website resource center on restraint and seclusion: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/seclusion/index.html>
- The Child Welfare League of America: <http://www.cwla.org/reducing-restraint-and-seclusion/>
- The Department of Health and Human Services, Six Core Strategies: <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=278>
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Website: <http://www.pbis.org/>

If you have questions about the new law and the rights of children, please contact the Office of the Child Advocate at 860 566 2106 or the Office of Protection and Advocacy at 1 800 842 7303.