

Addressing The Use of Seclusion and Physical Restraint in Schools 2011 Wisconsin Act 125 Requirements

Coverage

Applies to both special education and regular education students.

Applies to school staff, including independent contractors and their employees, and student teachers. Does not apply to law enforcement officers working in the school.

Definitions

Defines “**physical restraint**” as a restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to freely move his or her torso, arms, legs, or head.

Defines “**seclusion**” as the involuntary confinement of a student, apart from other students, in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented from leaving.

Seclusion

Prohibits use of seclusion in public schools, including charter schools, except when:

- A student’s behavior presents a clear, present and imminent risk to the physical safety of the student or to others, and it is the least restrictive intervention feasible;
- Constant supervision of the student is maintained;
- The student has adequate access to the bathroom, drinking water, required medications, and regularly scheduled meals; and
- Seclusion is used no longer than necessary to resolve the risk to the physical safety of the student or others.

A room may not be used for seclusion unless:

- The room or area is free of objects or fixtures that may cause injury,
- There are no locks on the door, including hold down type mechanisms that immediately release when pressure is removed, and
- Meets all applicable school building code requirements.

What is not considered seclusion?

Directing a disruptive student to temporarily separate himself or herself from the activity in the classroom to regain control is not considered seclusion unless the student is confined to an area from which she or he is prevented from leaving.

Directing a student to temporarily remain in the classroom to complete tasks while other students participate in activities outside of the classroom is not considered seclusion unless the student is confined to an area from which she or he is prevented from leaving.

Physical Restraint

Prohibits the use of physical restraint in public schools, including charter schools, except when:

- A student's behavior presents a clear, present and imminent risk to the physical safety of the student or to others, and it is the least restrictive intervention feasible;
- There are no medical contraindications to its use;
- The degree of force and duration used do not exceed what is necessary and reasonable to resolve the risk to the physical safety of the student or others; and
- No prohibited maneuver is used.

Prohibits maneuvers or techniques that:

- Do not give adequate attention and care to protecting the pupil's head;
- Cause chest compression by placing pressure or weight on the student's chest, lungs, sternum, diaphragm, back or abdomen,
- Place pressure or weight on the student's neck or throat, on an artery, or on the back of the student's head or neck, or that otherwise obstruct the student's circulation or breathing; and
- Constitute corporal punishment

The Act prohibits mechanical or chemical restraints. Supportive equipment that properly aligns a student's body, assists in maintaining balance, or assisting in mobility under the oversight of appropriate medical staff is not mechanical restraint.

What is not considered physical restraint?

Briefly touching a student's hand, arm, shoulder or back to calm, comfort, or redirect the pupil is not considered physical restraint.

Notification and Reporting Requirements

If seclusion and/or physical restraint is used on a student at school, the principal or designee must:

- As soon as possible, but no later than 1 business day after the incident, notify the student's parent of the incident and of the availability of the written report.
- Within 2 business days after the incident, after consulting with school staff present, prepare a written report describing the incident

Each year, by September 1, the principal or designee must submit to the school board a report:

- on the number of incidents of seclusion and physical restraint in the previous year,
- the total number of students involved in the incidents, and
- the total number of students with disabilities involved in the incidents.

Training Requirements

Except as discussed below, no school staff may use physical restraint unless he or she has received training that includes:

- Methods of preventing the need for physical restraint;
- Instruction in the identification and description of dangerous behavior indicating the need for physical restraint, and in methods of evaluating risk of harm to determine whether physical restraint is needed;
- Experience in administering and receiving various types of physical restraint;
- Instruction on the effects of physical restraint on the person restrained, methods of monitoring signs of physical distress, and techniques for determining when medical assistance may be needed;
- Instruction in documenting and reporting incidents of physical restraint; and
- Demonstration of proficiency in administering physical restraint.

Each school where physical restraint may be used must have at least one staff member who has received training.

The school must keep a record of the training received by the staff member(s) including information regarding how long the training is considered valid by the training program.

Unforeseen Emergency Exception:

School staff who have not received the prescribed training in physical restraint may use physical restraint on a student at school:

- only in an emergency, and
- only if school staff members who have received training are not immediately available.

Authority under other statutory provisions

Nothing in the Act affects the ability of school staff to remove a student from class under current law (section 118.164 (3) (b) of the Wisconsin Statutes).

Nothing in the Act affects the ability of school staff to use the exceptions to the prohibition on corporal punishment under current law (section 118.31 (3) of the Wisconsin Statutes).