



## Restraint and Seclusion

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### Rationale:

To assist Victorian government schools to reduce and/or eliminate restraint and seclusion of students. It provides information and advice to help staff to:

- Prevent the occurrence of behaviours of concern.
- Use effective, ethical and evidence-based responses where a student may be at risk of restraint or seclusion.

### Aim:

To ensure schools and their staff are informed and compliant with rules explicit to student restraint and student seclusion. To ensure student restraint and seclusion is only used when certain conditions are met and appropriate standards and procedures are followed.

### Definitions:

#### 1. Restraint

Physical restraint means the use of physical force to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of a student's body or part of their body. Students are not free to move away when they are being physically restrained.

**Please note:** Prone restraint (holding a student face down) and supine restraint (holding a student face up) is not permitted within Victorian government schools. All restraint or seclusion incidents must trigger a review of the student's *Behaviour Support Plan (BSP)*.

#### 2. Seclusion

Seclusion is the solitary confinement of a student in a room or area (e.g. a garden) from which their exit is prevented by a barrier or another person.

### Implementation:

Regulation 25 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 provides that:

*"A member of staff of a Government school may take any reasonable action that is immediately required to restrain a student of the school from acts or behaviour that is dangerous to the member of staff, the student, or any other person."*

- **When physical restraint or seclusion MAY be used-**

School staff **may only** use physical restraint on a student when there is an imminent threat of physical harm or danger to the student or others; and where such action (i.e. to physically restrain or seclude) would be considered reasonable in all the circumstances and there is no less restrictive means of responding in the circumstances.

As with physical restraint, seclusion should only be used when it is immediately required to protect the safety of the student or any other person, as permitted by Regulation 25.

The decision about whether to use physical restraint or seclusion rests with the professional judgment of the staff member/s involved, who will need to take into account both their duty of care to their students, their right to protect themselves from harm and obligations under the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

- **When physical restraint or seclusion SHOULD NOT be used-**

Physical restraint and seclusion should not be used unless immediately required to protect the safety of the student or any other person.

Restraint and seclusion must not be included in a Behaviour Support Plan or be used as a routine behaviour management technique, to punish or discipline a student or to respond to:

- A student's refusal to comply with a direction, unless that refusal to comply creates an imminent risk to the safety of the student or another person.
- A student leaving the classroom/school without permission, unless that conduct causes an imminent risk to the safety of the student or another person.
- Verbal threats of harm from a student, except where there is a reasonable belief that the threat will be immediately enacted.
- Property destruction caused by the student unless that destruction is placing any person at immediate risk of harm.

Any restraint which covers the student's mouth or nose, in any way restricts breathing, takes the student to the ground into the prone or supine position, involves the hyperextension of joints, or application of pressure to the neck, chest or joints, must not be used.

#### **Mechanical and chemical restraint-**

Mechanical restraints should never be used in schools to restrict a student's freedom of movement, unless the device is for a therapeutic purpose with written evidence of the prescription / recommendation, or if required to travel safely in a vehicle.

Medication primarily used to control or subdue behaviour, and which is not being used to treat an underlying physical or mental illness or a physical condition should never be used in schools.

#### **During Restraint-**

If applying physical restraint in the limited circumstances set out above, staff must:

- Use the minimum force required to avoid the dangerous behaviour or risk of harm.
- Only restrain the student for the minimum duration required and stop restraining the student once the danger has passed.

Staff should ensure the type of restraint used is consistent with a student's individual needs and circumstances, including:

- The age/size of the student.
- Gender of the student.
- Any impairment of the student e.g. physical, intellectual, neurological, behavioural, sensory (visual or hearing), or communication.
- Any mental or psychological conditions of the student, including any experience of trauma.
- Any other medical conditions of the student.
- The likely response of the student.
- The environment in which the restraint is taking place.

Staff should monitor the student for any indicators or distress. Staff should talk to the student throughout the incident, making it clear to the student why the physical restraint is being applied. Staff should also calmly explain that the physical restraint will stop once it is no longer necessary to protect the student and/or others.

## **Actions after restraint has been used-**

The follow up actions that must be undertaken after a student has been physically restrained or secluded.

### **A: Reporting of the physical restraint/ seclusion**

The staff member(s) involved in the incident must immediately notify the Principal of the incident. A staff member should contact the student's parents and provide them with details of the incident asap.

The incident may need to be reported to:

- The Security Services Unit (previously known as the Emergency Management Unit).
- Edusafe
- WorkSafe

### **B: Providing supports for those involved**

Following the use of restraint on a student, appropriate supports must be offered to the following people:

- The student who has been restrained or secluded and their parents/guardians. This may include participation in decisions involving the student's behaviour management, Student Support Group meetings, the development of a student Behaviour Support Plan, and involvement of Student Support Services.
- Other students and staff members who were involved in or witnessed the incident. This may include a debriefing in relation to the incident, and counselling support.

### **C: Maintain records of the incident**

A written record of the incident and the physical restraint or seclusion used must be made by the principal as soon as practicable. This record should be added to a student's file on CASES 21 or SOCS as appropriate. The record should detail:

- The name of the student/s and staff member/s involved.
- Date, time and location of the incident.
- Names of witnesses (staff and other students).
- What exactly happened (a brief factual account).
- Any action taken to de-escalate the situation.
- Why physical intervention was used (if applicable).
- The nature of any physical intervention used.
- How long the physical intervention lasted.
- Names of witnesses (staff and other students).
- The student's response and the outcome of the incident.
- Any injuries or damage to property.
- Immediate post incident actions, such as first aid or contact with emergency services.
- Details of contact with the student's parent/carer.
- Details of any post-incident support provided or organised.

The principal should also arrange for all staff who were involved/present at the incident to prepare a statement / record of their involvement or observations of the incident.

### **D: Plan for the future**

Post-incident, the school should consider the preventative and de-escalation strategies that might reduce the likelihood of an incident happening again. For example – reviewing and amending the student's Behaviour Support Plan and consider the training needs of staff working closely with the student/s involved in the incident.

**Related policies:**

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)

**References:**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/Pages/restraint.aspx>

**Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

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<b>Approved by Kambrya College School Council</b>	May 2018
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<b>Next Review Date</b>	May 2021