

# Position Statement Adopted by Fairfax County Special Education PTA November 30, 2020



## **RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION**

The 2015 National PTA Resolution on Restraint and Seclusion states, “all students need to be educated in environments which are supportive and free from abuse, assault, injury, trauma, and risk to life. The inappropriate use of restraint and seclusion methods by school personnel has resulted in the assault, injury, trauma and, in some cases, the death of children.” Nationwide investigative reporting has exposed widespread misuse of restraint & seclusion in public schools. While Fairfax County Public Schools’ (FCPS) Strategic Plan commits to a “responsive, caring, and inclusive culture where all feel valued, supported and hopeful,” the practices of take-down restraints and seclusion are antithetical to that goal. Fairfax County Special Education PTA (SEPTA), as a constituent organization of the National PTA, therefore takes the following position on the use of restraint and seclusion:

### **DEFINITIONS:**

1. **Seclusion** - “the involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented from leaving.”\*\*\*\*
2. **Restraint** - “mechanical restraint, physical restraint, or pharmacological restraint.”\*\*\*\*
3. **Physical restraint** - “a personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to move freely.”\*\*\*\*
4. **Prone/Supine restraints** - restraints that pin a person to the floor, either face down (prone), or face up (supine). Prone restraints are banned per the 2021 regulations governing the use of seclusion and restraint in public elementary and secondary schools in Virginia.\*\*\*\*
5. **Safe De-Escalation Spaces** - quiet, private areas in the visual and auditory range of staff in which students can take time to self-calm and re-regulate themselves.

### **BAN SECLUSION:\***

Seclusion is traumatic for all parties involved - the student being secluded, the students witnessing the seclusion, and the staff implementing the seclusion - which is counter to National PTA’s stance referenced above. Seclusion has a high potential to be abused because it takes the student out of view of other students and staff.

### **BAN PRONE AND SUPINE RESTRAINTS**

Prone restraints, in which a student is pinned to the floor face-down, are inherently dangerous and put the subject at risk of suffocation. Prone restraints have resulted in numerous deaths of both students and adults. Supine restraints, in which a student is pinned to the floor on their back, have also resulted in death and must be banned to ensure student safety.\*\*\*

### **CREATE SAFE DE-ESCALATION SPACES\***

Safe de-escalation spaces must be separate from any space used for punitive discipline. Such spaces may be furnished with sensory equipment such as weighted blankets, swings, soft mats, music, etc.

Safe spaces should be within the visual and auditory range of staff at all times, while allowing a quiet, calm space to de-escalate without demands from staff

### **PROVIDE A “CHAIN OF INTERVENTIONS” PRIOR TO RESTRAINTS**

SEPTA recognizes the need for staff to have training in interventions to help a student de-escalate, thus avoiding the need for restraint and seclusion. These interventions must be evidence based de-escalation practices that do not involve staff physically handling a student.(ie. verbal redirection, evacuation of peers from the setting leaving the student with supportive staff, use of Ukeru system,\*\* Ross Greene’s Collaborative and Proactive Solutions\*\*\*\*, etc.).

### **DATA REPORTING AND FOLLOW UP**

When an incident requiring restraint occurs, the parent/guardian must be contacted expediently, on the same day, by the school staff. If the staff implement restraint, the school must call an IEP meeting to include or review a functional behavior assessment to address the student’s unmet needs.

### **ADDRESSING EMOTIONAL NEEDS POST-RESTRAINT**

Restraints are traumatic for both students and staff. As such, both students and staff must be offered the opportunity to meet with a mental health professional, or student-preferred or trusted staff member, following any incident of restraint.

### **PARENT/GUARDIAN NOTIFICATION OF DISTRICT’S RESTRAINT & SECLUSION POLICY**

School districts must send a notice explaining the policies and procedures regarding restraint and seclusion home to the family of every student to be signed and returned by that student’s parent or guardian.

***Fairfax County SEPTA urges FCPS to act immediately in enacting these changes to the FCPS restraint and seclusion policy.*** A bold and progressive new policy based on the above recommendations will help to rebuild the public trust while affirming the dignity of all students.

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\* Please see the recommendations from the 2019-2020 Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) presented at a public meeting of the ACSD Policy & Regulation subcommittee on October 26, 2020. [Video Recording here.](#)

\*\* Ukeru Systems utilizes safety equipment, which can be purchased, and methods that are evidence-based. <https://www.ukerusystems.com/>. Use of Ukeru Systems is described in this April 2020 article by Jennifer Smith Richards and Jodi Cohen: [These schools did away with seclusion and restraint. They say Illinois can too.](#)

\*\*\* The dangers and associated death with supine restraint are covered in this 2011 report: [Equip for Equality -The-Lethal-Consequences-of-Restraint](#)  
61 restraint-related deaths were examined by Equip for Equality, IL and the National Disability Rights Network, with funding from the Department of Health and Human services. Equip for Equality’s current position is to ban seclusion, prone, and supine restraints. Standing and sitting restraints remain available. <https://www.equipforequality.org/>

\*\*\*\* [8VAC20-750 CHAPTER 750: REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE USE OF SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA](#)

\*\*\*\*\*Lives in the Balance - Ross Greene’s website for Collaborative & Proactive Solutions <https://www.livesinthebalance.org/>