

Parent ABC's

Preventing Restraint & Seclusion
in the Classroom

TASH Human Rights Committee

August 2016



Making Back-to-School plans? Plan NOW to keep your child safe from the use of dangerous restraint and seclusion in the classroom! Review these Parent ABC's to start the school year right:

Assure that your child's IEP specifies positive approaches only! Is there any mention in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) of "when" or "how" restraints or seclusion are permitted to be used on your child? You should never be asked for, and never give, permission to use these dangerous techniques. Remember: restraint and seclusion should be viewed as vanishingly rare, worst-case responses to a truly unforeseeable and imminently dangerous emergency. Circumstances that we can foresee and plan for in an IEP are by definition not emergencies. Challenging behavior on the part of a student is a symptom of a problem, not the problem itself. It is a communication to which we must listen carefully and respond safely. Such behavior requires a functional behavior assessment (FBA) leading to positive behavior supports (PBS), not a program of suppression by physical force. School staff should also be trained in Trauma-Informed Practices, which are practical tools for de-escalating and avoiding the unintentional "fight or flight" responses to which the nervous systems of developing children can be prone. Remember too that restraint and seclusion may be lurking in your child's IEP under names that sound harmless, such as "restrictive procedures," "hands-on support," "calming room," or "alone time." If you come to believe that your child is being harmed through the use of restraint or seclusion, the fact that you gave permission will make it very difficult for you to intervene, halt their use through due process, or seek relief through the courts. Instead of negatives and worst-case scenarios, your child's IEP should list and explain all the positive behavior supports that work for your child, just as the federal right-to-education law intends.

Back up your child's positive IEP content with a "No Restraint Letter." Many parents have used this letter, designed by the Respect ABILITY Law Center, to assure their wishes are known to the school. The letter can be found at the end of the publication *Shouldn't School Be Safe?* (see below). It asks for full disclosure of any past or present use of restraint, seclusion or other aversive punishers on your child, and that usage cease (or never begin). Upload it, fill in the blanks (or customize and change any language as needed), print it out, add your signature, and tell the school that it should be placed in your child's file.

Create an easy-to-use Parent Report to help school staff better understand and serve your child – starting from the first days of school. This may include your child's medical conditions and needs, likes and dislikes, talents and skills, triggers that escalate his or her challenging behavior, de-escalation methods, sensory regulation and communication strategies and needs, how to support his or her social skills, and instructions on avoiding restraint and seclusion. Your child's profile should also note any medical conditions that contraindicate (rule out) the use of restraint and seclusion, such as asthma, obesity, certain gastrointestinal disorders, heart and pulmonary disorders, etc. You may wish to include emergency contact information and a photo of your child. If possible, seek your child's input on what should go into his/her Parent Report. Ask that this Report be attached to the IEP along with all other reports (e.g., psychological, speech/language) considered by the IEP team. You may wish to circulate the Parent Report to all school staff who interact with your child, including those who may not be sufficiently aware of the contents of your child's IEP (e.g., substitute teachers, school librarian, school bus driver, and all staff new to your child).

"Extra Credit": To help with these ABC's, you may want to do a little homework.

- Learn more about how to recognize and prevent the use of restraint and seclusion on your child by downloading [Shouldn't School Be Safe?](#), a free Parent Guide.
- Find out whether your state has any useful regulations on the use of restraint and seclusion in the schools by checking [How Safe is the Schoolhouse? An Analysis of State Seclusion and Restraint Laws and Policies](#).

- View the [*Restraint and Seclusion: Resource Document*](#) to learn about the positive, evidence-based goals and expectations that the U.S. Department of Education holds for ALL students and schools.
- Familiarize yourself with the benefits of “[Trauma-Informed Practice \(or Care\)](#)” as an evidence-based, non-punishment-based approach to supporting students who have been stressed beyond their capacity to cope.
- Join the STOP HURTING KIDS CAMPAIGN to end restraint and seclusion abuse in schools! Just go online at <http://stophurtingkids.com/resources/>