

Schools: Seclusion and Restraint, Evidence Based Alternatives to Support Students' Education and School Behavior, School Rights

Statement on Seclusion and Restraint - The Autism Society of North Carolina believes that students should have a good environment for learning and be safe in their schools.

Seclusion and Restraint practices, including chemical restraint, which have been banned in therapeutic settings in North Carolina, do not promote positive relationships among school staff, students and families; can result in emotional and physical harm as well as loss of learning time; and can be dangerous to both students and school staff. There are positive, evidence-based practices that can create a positive learning environment and de-escalate situations with students.

ASNC supports banning seclusion and restraint practices. There are many alternate strategies available which can be used to prevent harm to the student and others. Examples include:

- Prone restraint should be completely banned from use.
- Therapeutic holds should only be used with parental permission and staff training.
- Time outs, cooling off strategies, safe sensory areas can be used in lieu of seclusion.
- Schools should have adequate staffing, class size ratios, and supportive services to support positive behavior in all students.
- Schools should have adequate resources to train and support all school staff in using positive behavior interventions and supports with all students, and receive training on keeping students with disabilities safe, based on their individualized plans.
- Schools and families should be engaged in the process of understanding student behavior, collecting data on interventions to improve both school-wide and individual behavior programs, and in monitoring the outcomes.
- Schools should involve parents and professionals in developing appropriate individualized strategies.
- Parents should be informed of all interventions used with their child.

Evidence Based Practices That Promote Positive Behavior

Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) or Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) programs are based on the idea that “much of human behavior is learned, comes under the control of environmental factors, and can be changed.” PBS is not a new idea; it is backed with extensive research and theory in numerous settings. Whole School Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (the approach used in NC) is a systematic approach that establishes and reinforces clear behavioral expectations. Universal interventions are used with the entire school (clear consistent rules, skills instruction, systematic reinforcement, and parent and community involvement, for example). More problematic behaviors get additional instruction, reinforcement, and classroom coaching. Functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention planning are used for more intensive individual interventions. NC’s program includes:

- It is a team-based system involving the entire school staff using a systems approach.
- The school staff must adopt a common approach to discipline that is proactive, instructional, and outcome-based.

- The data about the school is used to guide decision making.
- The school team looks at the entire school campus and the whole school day.
- The goal is to help educate all students, even students with challenging behaviors.
- There is an emphasis on continuous, data-based improvement, individualized to each school.
- PBIS is also an instructional approach that focuses on skill building rather than punishment.
- Systematically teaching and implementing behavioral interventions for the most difficult students is also a key component, and should be based on data collection, appropriate assessments, and individualized plans that use evidence-based approaches to that student's unique needs.

Disability Determinations, Individualized Education Plans, and Functional Behavior Assessments

Students who have been determined to have a disability by the school system have a right to individualized services that support their learning, communication, and positive behaviors in school with things like 504 and IEPs. Schools are required to support students whose misbehavior is caused by their disability: including a manifestation determination and Functional Behavior Assessments which can help to keep a student in school, learning, and can address strategies for positive behavior. Students with disabilities in school have rights related to seclusion and restraint in schools as well.

ASNC has toolkits, webinars, and peer-to-peer support for families who want to understand more about the students' rights, have a more positive relationship with their school, and who may be having school related problems. Learn more on our "[Succeeding in School](#)" webpage.

*A Note on **Corporal Punishment in North Carolina** - While corporal punishment for students in North Carolina is still legal, no Local Education Authority is currently using corporal punishment. Nearly all local school boards have banned the practice. The use of corporal punishment for students with disabilities has been effectively banned because state law allows caregivers to opt out of the practice if it is being used in a local school district. ASNC feels it is important to extend a formal statewide ban to all children and promote better ways of learning good behavior in school.*