

# PFA Tips

## Restraints and Seclusion at School

**R**estraint is physical force used to immobilize - or reduce the ability of - an individual, whereas seclusion is involuntary confinement of an individual alone in a room or area from which they are physically prevented from leaving. The regulations state that exclusion, restraint, and seclusion may be used only after less restrictive or alternative approaches have been considered and attempted or determined not to be feasible.

### P.O.S.I.T.I.V.E Tips for Parents

Restraint and seclusion practices vary by state, district, and classroom. If you're worried about your child's safety, remember to stay P.O.S.I.T.I.V.E. by using these tips:

#### P. Prepare

Prepare to address any safety concerns ahead of time by assessing and documenting any known meltdown triggers in the classroom or campus (noise, light, stressors, etc.)

#### O. Open the discussion

Open up the conversation to address your concerns about restraint and seclusion practices. Just by asking questions, you are more likely to prevent high-risk situations from ever occurring. Be polite, but direct. "What's your policy of restraint & seclusion practices?" Even as the school year advances, continue to ask questions: has my child ever been restrained, or secluded? Keep the conversation open and ongoing.

#### S. Submit

Submit letters to your child's school or in his/her IEP outlining any special safety requirements or requests. Include a "no restraint" letter stating that your child is never to be secluded, and should only be restrained as a last-resort measure in the face of imminent danger. Request immediate notification of any incidents, and be sure to note any medical contraindications (obesity, asthma, GI, heart issues, etc.) to restraint.

#### I. Inform

Inform teachers, aides, and substitute teachers about your child's meltdown

triggers, calming methods, and de-escalation techniques by creating a student profile sheet. This one-sheeter is a basic "do's and don'ts" guide, which can be as simple as stapling a photo of your child to a piece of paper that provides basic, yet critical, information. Be sure to include emergency contact numbers, and a reminder to call you instead of police in the event of a meltdown.

#### T. Team up

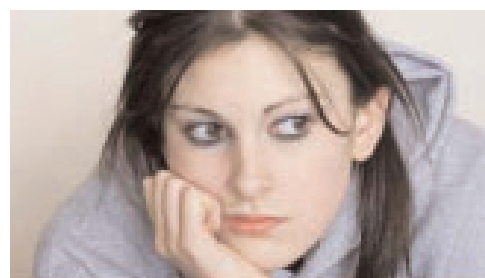
Rely on others by teaming up with a trusted teacher, parent volunteer, even student who can look out for your child. Keep an open dialogue with allies so you know and understand what's happening inside and outside of the classroom during your child's school day. Continue to ask about your child's mood, progress, social opportunities, peer interactions, and behaviors during non-classroom times, such as lunch and recess.

#### I. Invite

Invite feedback and recommendations from school staff, IEP team members, and therapists. While we tend to know our children best, behaviors may differ in the school setting. Ask teachers and aides for their input and listen intently to any concerns or ideas they may have. It's a team effort, and both parties should be able to develop, agree upon, and incorporate strategies into both settings for maximum consistency.

#### V. Volunteer

Donate your time in the classroom, during field trips or fundraisers, and in the school's PTO or PTA. Be an active participant and



supporter of your child's teachers, and the rest of the school staff. Also show your appreciation. It can be as simple as a handwritten note thanking your child's teachers, or bringing in treats to eat. The more positive participation you have within the school, the better the relationship will be among all of those caring for your child.

#### E. Educate

Educate your child about dangers, consequences, and ways to stay safe. While language deficits may make it difficult to gauge your child's understanding of the information presented, continue to speak it, write it, and show it through a picture system, social story or other preferred method. The ultimate goal is for your child to know and understand dangers, how to communicate abuse, and most of all, self-protection.

#### Ask your child what happened

Ask your child for his or her account of the events leading to, during, and after the restraints or seclusion. Speak with the child using his or her preferred method of communication. Take written notes of your child's explanation.

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## Restraints & Seclusion – cont.



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### Speak to the school administration

Request to speak to the school's principal or a building administrator for details of the incident. Ask what happened, what protocol was followed, who was involved, and request a written copy of the incident report.

### If necessary, call 911

If you arrive at school and you believe your child has been injured, call 911 and file a police report.

### Take pictures

Take pictures of any bruises, cuts, or markings on your child. If possible, take a picture of the restraints that were used, or photograph the seclusion room.

### See your pediatrician

If your child has sustained any markings or injuries due to the restraints or seclusion, take your child to your pediatrician to document the injuries.

### Call the Department of Social Services

If your child has been injured, or if a staff person has restrained your child in a way that does not comply with regulations, or has injured your child while doing a restraint, contact your local Department of Social Services. The school is also obligated to call DSS if there is suspected abuse. To

find your local department, visit <http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/social.html#local>.

### Notify your county school system's Director of Special Education

Call the Director of Special Education. Do not assume that the school will inform your county's central administration about the incident. Follow-up with a written email so that you have a record of the conversation. You may also want to copy your county school's Compliance Officer. To find the contact information for your county's Director, visit Pathfinders' online provider database, select County Public School Systems, choose your county, and locate the record labeled Special Education.

### Call Disability Rights Maryland (DRM)

Notify DRM immediately so they can begin an investigation. Services provided by DRM are free of charge. Make sure you convey that your child was restrained, tied, handcuffed, unable to move, placed in a room from which they could not leave, etc. DRM's Intake Department is open Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 5 PM. Call 410-727-6352 ext.0.

### Call the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

Call MSDE's Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services Family Support

Services at 800-535-0182. At any time you can call to request assistance from a Family Support Program Specialist.

Seek the help of a psychologist

If your child is feeling trauma or anxiety from the experience, consult with a psychologist. Do not be afraid to see a therapist yourself if you are having a hard time coping with your child's incident. You can find psychologists in our database at [www.pathfindersforautism.org/resources/services](http://www.pathfindersforautism.org/resources/services)

### Request in writing an IEP meeting

Review your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Be aware if restraints, exclusion, or seclusion are included in your child's behavior plan, which is a part of the IEP. If you need help understanding your IEP, you may contact MSDE's Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services Family Support Services at 800-535-0182.

The IEP team cannot propose to include restraint or seclusion on an IEP unless it has been used in an emergency situation and parents may refuse consent to including restraint or seclusion on an IEP. If parents refuse to consent, the school system will only be able to use restraint or seclusion in an emergency unless the school system takes the parent to a due process and wins the hearing on the issue of including restraint or seclusion in the IEP.

### Additional Resources

"Discipline of Students with Disabilities" from the Maryland State Department of Education

<http://www.ppm.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/MSDE-DisciplineManual-complete.pdf>

*Note: While the entire book is a comprehensive resource of discipline under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), pages 29-39 focus specifically on restraints, seclusion, and exclusion.*

"Restraint and Seclusion: Resource Document" from the U.S. Dept. of Education

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/seclusion/index.html>

APRAIS - The Alliance to Prevent Restraint, Aversive Interventions and Seclusion

<http://tash.org/advocacy-issues/coalitions-partnerships/aprais/>

Wrightslaw - Abuse, Restraints, and Seclusion in School

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/abuse.index.htm>

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