



FEDERATION OF FAMILIES **for** **CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH**

INAPPROPRIATE USE OF RESTRAINT, SECLUSION, AND AVERSIVE PRACTICES

ISSUE: All children and youth should grow up safe from the use of restraint, seclusion, and aversive practices to respond to or control their behavior, and be free from the fear that these practices will be used on themselves, their siblings or their friends.

BACKGROUND: Children and youth are subject to the unregulated, inhuman, degrading, and dangerous use of restraint, seclusion, and aversive practices in classrooms, day treatment centers, and residential facilities on a daily basis. There is no evidence that these practices afford any educational or therapeutic benefit. There is evidence that they can cause severe physical harm and emotional trauma. Yet their use is routine in far too many facilities. Frequently personnel administering these procedures have no training and are not required to document their use. Children and youth need protection from such cruel and unusual punishment. A national coalition concerned with this issue has developed a vision and mission statement and is planning a national strategy to eliminate these practices.

FFCMH POSITION: The Federation recognizes that seclusion, restraint, and aversive practices are not treatment and that their use indicates the failure to provide appropriate services and supports for which there is an evidence base. The Federation further recognizes that tolerance of restraint, seclusion, and aversive practices causes serious physical and psychological harm, results in the dehumanization of all involved, and prevents the development of respectful and supportive relationships between children and adults.

ACTION REQUIRED: Congress and state legislatures must enact legislation to prohibit the incorporation of seclusion, restraint, or aversive practices into the education, habilitation, or other service delivery plans for children and youth with disabilities including children with emotional, behavioral, or mental health disorders.

Congress and state legislatures must enact legislation containing protections that will:

- keep children and youth safe from restraint, seclusion, and aversive practices.
- ensure that children enjoy equal rights and protections across all settings, including correctional facilities, in which they receive education, health and mental health care and therapy, residential or foster care, and other services.

National Steering Group to Address Restraint, Seclusion and Abuse of Children and Youth

VISION

All children should grow up safe from the use of restraint, seclusion, and aversive practices to respond to or control their behavior, and free from the fear that these practices will be used on themselves, their siblings or their friends.

MISSION

To seek statutory and regulatory bans on the use of seclusion, aversive practices, and nonemergency restraint to respond to or control the behavior of children and youth.

To prohibit the incorporation of these practices into the education, habilitation, or other service delivery plans provided to children and youth with disabilities.

To promote nationwide consistency in the protections, monitoring, and reporting that will keep children and youth safe from restraint, seclusion, and aversive practices, ensuring that children enjoy equal rights and protections across all settings in which they receive education, health services, mental health services, correctional services, residential or foster care, and all other services.

To educate our constituencies, providers, policy makers, and the public at large to understand that restraint is not treatment but represents failure to provide appropriate services and supports, that there is no evidence to justify the use of seclusion and aversive practices under any circumstances, and that tolerance of restraint, seclusion, and aversive practices:

- causes serious physical and psychological harm;
- results in the dehumanization of all involved;
- prevents the development of respectful and supportive relationships between children and adults; and
- leads to the segregation and exclusion of children from their communities.

To carry out this mission on behalf of all children and youth, with or without disabilities, regardless of diagnostic label or degree of disability, so that no child is left behind.

COALITION MEMBERS

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**National Association of Protection and Advocacy
Services**

The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Down Syndrome Congress

Family Alliance

Down Syndrome Society

**National Association of Councils for
Developmental Disabilities**

Children's Defense Fund

**Federation of Families for Children's Mental
Health**