

Guidelines For The Use Of Seclusion In Special Schools

Aims

The aim of these guidelines are to provide guidance to EBD/SEBD special schools regarding the use of seclusion . The guidelines also aim to ensure best practice and provide transparency with regard to the use of seclusion at all times. Each school will make reference to the relationship of its policy on seclusion to its own founding ethos.

Definition

Seclusion as used in this document means:

Removing an out of control student from the general activity and isolating him/her in a separate supervised area/room for a period of time or until the student has regained control.

It does not include:

- In-school suspension
- Detention
- Student requested break

Guiding Principles

School personnel should only use seclusion:

- When less restrictive or alternative approaches have been considered and attempted, or considered and deemed inappropriate for the current situation
- In a humane, safe, and effective manner
- Without intent to harm or create undue discomfort (physical or emotional)
- Consistent with known medical or psychological limitations and the IEP (Individual Education Plan) for all students and IEPP (Individual Escalation Prevention Plan) where one is warranted.

Purposes of Seclusion

Seclusion is only warranted when a student's behaviour is so out of control or so dangerous that the student's behaviour in the current environment poses a risk of injury to the student or others.

Practice

The following practices must be adhered to :

- Staff members who use seclusion must have training in conflict prevention. We recommend the use of **Management of Actual or Potential Agression (M.A.P.A)** for use in this regard.
- Seclusion to control behaviour should only be used when and the student's actions pose a clear and imminent physical danger to him/her or others.
- Seclusion to control behaviour should only be used when less restrictive measures have not effectively de-escalated the risk of injury.
- The seclusion should only last as long as necessary to resolve the actual risk of danger or harm.
- Each of these three elements (points 3,4,5 described above), with the names of those staff

members involved and any other circumstances surrounding the use of seclusion is recorded. Staff members are required to fill out the “**Seclusion Time Recording Sheet**” and also are required to record details of the incident in an “**Incident Report Form**”. This data is used to report on and evaluate the use of seclusion in the school.

- Any student in seclusion must be continuously observed by an adult, both visually and aurally, for the entire period of the seclusion. Occasional checks are not acceptable. During observation:
- At the student request, the student is permitted to go to the restroom, providing the student is in a rational state. Two members of staff should accompany the student to the restroom.
- Any signs of medical distress should result in immediate action.
- The student should be permitted to drink water if requested
- We recognise that there are incidents of acting out behaviour which warrant staff members physically preventing students from leaving the Quiet Room. In very occasional circumstances, when there is a risk of injury to a child or staff member, the door is locked briefly. The Principal is informed prior to locking the door and the incident is recorded in the **Incident Report Form**
- The child should be allowed time and space to calm down and return to a rational state as per M.A.P.A training.
- Staff de-briefing occurs as soon as possible after every incident of the use of seclusion. The debriefing should focus on how the situation could have been handled in such a way to prevent the need for the use of seclusion and how a similar event could be handled in the future.

Seclusion Environment

The school’s seclusion environment:

- Must be of reasonable size, permitting students to sit or lie down.
- Must have adequate ventilation and lighting
- Must be free of any potential or predictable safety hazards such as electrical outlets, radiators, equipment and breakable glass
- Must permit direct continuous visual and auditory monitoring of the student
- There should be clear indications as to methods of communication to be employed to summon additional assistance if required
- Is inspected and risk assessed as part of the school’s Health and Safety Policy

Links to other School Policies

Each school’s *Seclusion Policy* should be linked to the following school policies:

- *Health and Safety Policy*
- *Code of Behaviour*
- *Physical Intervention Policy*

Communication with Parents

- The fact that seclusion might be used in school should be made known to all parents/guardians of prospective students to the school during the initial school visit.
- All parents must be given a copy of the school’s policy on seclusion.
- All parents must be informed by a class teacher, or the principal, after a serious incident of acting out behaviour where seclusion was necessary.
- Parental agreement to this policy should be sought and signed copies of parental permission should be kept on file for all children.

References

Because of a lack of guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills with regard to the use of seclusion and physical intervention in special school settings, the committee have adopted recommendations from the following sources when drafting these guidelines:

- *The Use of Seclusion in School Settings*, 2009, The Council for Children with Behavioural Disorders, USA. <http://casecec.org/pdf/seclusion/Approved,%20CCBD%20on%20Use%20of%20Seclusion,%207-8-09.pdf>
- *Best Practice Guidelines in the Use of Physical Restraints (Child Care Residential Units)*, 2006, Special Residential Units Services Board, Ireland.
- *Draft National Quality Standards for Residential and Foster Care Services for Children and Young People*, 2010, HIQA.
- *National Standards for Children's Residential Centres*, Department of Health and Children.