

Use of Restraints and Seclusion

Purpose

The Pittsfield School District is committed to maintaining a safe and supportive environment for all students and staff.

The use of restraint or seclusion is strictly limited to situations involving a substantial and imminent risk of serious bodily harm.

These interventions are crisis responses, never disciplinary or routine measures, and shall always protect the student's safety, dignity, and rights.

Definitions

Restraint means any bodily physical restriction, mechanical device, or apparatus that immobilizes or restricts the freedom of movement of the torso, head, arms, or legs. It includes mechanical restraint, physical restraint, and medication restraint used to control behavior in an emergency or any involuntary medication. Restraint applies only to actions taken by school or facility staff or contractors acting under school authority.

Medication restraint – Giving medication involuntarily for the immediate control of a student's behavior.

Mechanical restraint – Using any physical device or material to restrict a student's movement or the normal function of part of their body.

Physical restraint – Using a manual method to restrict a student's freedom of movement or normal access to their body.

Prone restraint – Prohibited. Intentionally placing a child face-down and applying physical force to keep the child in that position.

Brief contact while transitioning a student from a prone position to a safer posture is not considered prone restraint.

Exceptions to "restraint." The following do not constitute restraint:

- Brief touching or holding to calm, comfort, encourage, or guide a child, provided the child's freedom of movement is not restricted.
- Temporarily holding a hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, or back to induce the child to stand and walk to safety.
- Orthopedic or medical supports used for treatment or balance.
- Seat belts or other passenger restraints used during transportation.
- Reasonable physical force used in self-defense or to protect another person, consistent with RSA 627:4.

Dangerous restraint techniques – The following practices are strictly prohibited:

- Prone or any restraint that obstructs breathing or blood circulation.
- Pressure on the chest, lungs, sternum, diaphragm, back, or abdomen.
- Pushing into the mouth, nose, or eyes or covering the face.
- Use of painful, noxious, or toxic stimuli to obtain compliance.
- Any action that humiliates, ridicules, or endangers a child.

Seclusion means the involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area from which the student is unable to exit—whether by lock, physical barrier, or a reasonable belief that leaving would result in restraint—or confinement with an adult who uses their physical presence to prevent egress.

Seclusion does not include voluntary separation for self-regulation, brief removal to regain control, or separation where the student is free to leave.

Training Requirements

In accordance with RSA 126-U:5 and 126-U:5-a, the Superintendent shall ensure that:

- Each school building maintains personnel trained and certified in safe restraint and seclusion techniques.
- At least one trained staff member in each building is authorized to assess the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of any student restrained longer than 30 minutes.
- All employees, designated volunteers, and contracted personnel required to undergo background checks receive general training on this policy, legal limitations, and de-escalation and crisis-prevention strategies.

Personnel who have not completed approved training may not use restraint or seclusion.

Use of Restraint

Restraint may be used only:

- To ensure the immediate physical safety of the student or others when there is a substantial and imminent risk of serious bodily harm; and
- By personnel trained in its safe application.

Restraint shall never be used for discipline, punishment, or staff convenience.

No restraint may exceed 15 minutes without supervisory approval.

No restraint may exceed 30 minutes unless a trained and authorized employee conducts and documents an assessment of the student's well-being.

Assessments must be repeated and documented every 30 minutes while restraint continues.

Restraint must cease immediately if the student exhibits distress such as difficulty breathing, choking, loss of consciousness, or other signs of physical compromise.

Use of Seclusion

Seclusion may be used only:

By personnel trained in its safe use;

- When a student’s behavior poses a substantial and imminent risk of physical harm; and
- After other de-escalation strategies have been attempted or reasonably deemed ineffective.

Seclusion shall never be used as punishment, coercion, or in a manner that humiliates or traumatizes a student.

Room and Safety Standards:

- The room must be appropriate in size for the student’s age and developmental level and have comparable heating, lighting, and ventilation as other rooms in the building.
- It must be free of unsafe objects and equipped so doors automatically unlock in an emergency (medical event, fire, or lockdown).
- Each instance of seclusion must be continuously and directly visually and auditorily monitored by trained staff.

No separate seclusion shall be established or maintained in the school district.

Co-Regulator Requirement:

A “co-regulator” shall be designated to support the student’s return to self-regulation and transition to a less restrictive setting.

When possible, this person should be a trusted adult chosen by the student, a counselor or clinician trained in trauma-informed practices, or a staff member not directly involved in the incident.

Prohibition of Dangerous Techniques

All dangerous restraint techniques are prohibited.

Mechanical restraints are prohibited except during transportation when absolutely necessary for safety and documented in writing.

Medication restraints are prohibited.

Reporting and Parental Notification

Whenever restraint or seclusion is used:

1. Immediate verbal report – The employee involved shall inform the Principal or supervising administrator as soon as the student is safe.
2. Parent notification – The Principal or designee shall make reasonable efforts to contact the parent/guardian as soon as practicable, but no later than the end of the school day.
3. Written report – Within five business days, a written notification (DOE/DHHS form) shall be submitted to the Superintendent describing the incident.
4. Parent mailing – Within two business days of receipt, the Superintendent or designee shall send a copy of the written report to the parent/guardian by first-class mail or electronic means.
5. Administrative review – The Superintendent shall review each incident for compliance with this policy, RSA 126-U, and Ed 1200.

Complaints and Investigations

Any individual may file a complaint with the Superintendent alleging a violation of this policy or RSA 126-U.

The Superintendent shall promptly investigate and issue written findings and conclusions.

No person shall be subjected to retaliation or harassment for filing a complaint or cooperating in an investigation.

Students with IEPs or 504 Plans

When restraint or seclusion is used for the first time on a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan, the IEP or 504 team shall review and, if necessary, revise the plan to reduce or eliminate future use.

Additional reviews shall occur upon parental request if multiple incidents occur.

Record Retention

All reports and related documentation shall be retained for the duration of the student's enrollment plus three years, unless a longer period is required by DOE or DHHS regulations.

Dissemination

This policy shall be provided to parents/guardians upon student enrollment and annually thereafter.

It shall be printed in student handbooks and posted on the District website.

Legal References Disclaimer: *These references are not intended to be considered part of this policy, nor should they be taken as a comprehensive statement of the legal basis for the Board to enact this policy, nor as a complete recitation of related legal authority. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.*

NH Statute	Description
RSA 126-U	Limiting the Use of Child Restraint Practices
RSA 169-B	Delinquent Children
RSA 169-C:29-39	Reporting Law
RSA 186-C	Special Education
NH Dept. of Ed Regulation	Description
N.H. Code Admin. Rules Ed 1200 (Chapter)	Restraint and Seclusion for Children
N.H. Code Admin. Rules Ed 1202.02 Report	Restraint and Seclusion for Children, Duty to Report
Federal Statutes	Description
20 U.S.C. § 1400-1417	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
29 U.S.C. 794	Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)
42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.	Title II of The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990