

School Administrator Report Misleading: Obscures Dangers of Restraint & Seclusion AUCD Statement on Restraint & Seclusion Report; Data

SILVER SPRING, MD (March 13, 2012) — The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) expressed serious concerns about a recent report from the American Association of School Administrators that promotes the use of restraint and seclusion as tools to protect students and school personnel. The report, which relies on a survey of an undisclosed portion of AASA’s members, is misleading and obscures the very real dangers of restraint and seclusion use.

These dangers are well-documented. A 2009 report from the Government Accountability Office confirmed what the disability community has known for decades: that children are injured, traumatized and even killed as a result of restraint and seclusion in schools. Contrary to the AASA’s assertions, the use of these dangerous techniques is also widespread. In fact, data released by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights shows that tens of thousands of school-aged children were secluded or restrained during the 2009-2010 school year. And because these results are based on a voluntary survey, the actual numbers are likely higher. Unlike the AASA’s report, the Department’s data is a representative sample covering approximately 85 percent of the nation’s students.

“The idea that the use of restraint and seclusion is not a national problem is simply false,” said Anthony A. Antosh, President of AUCD. “The recent stories about ‘scream rooms’ in Connecticut and a Kentucky child stuffed in a duffel bag are just two of the many examples found in numerous reports. School personnel across the country need training in methods to appropriately address behavior problems without placing themselves and their students at risk.”

Students are not the only victims of restraint and seclusion; school personnel are frequently injured when implementing restraints, creating extra costs for schools in the form of workers’ compensation claims and lost employee time. AUCD’s Executive Director, George Jesien, commented that “any organization concerned with the safety of school personnel should support national standards that help prevent dangerous behavior problems and promote a positive and safe school climate.”

AUCD strongly supports legislation that would establish such standards, the Keeping All Students Safe Act (S. 2020, H.R. 1381). The bills, introduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Representative George Miller (D-CA), would allow the use of physical restraint in emergency situations like those outlined in AASA's report while ensuring that personnel receive proper training, that parents are aware of any restraint or seclusion imposed upon their children and that the most dangerous types of restraint and seclusion are eliminated.

The dangerous practices occurring in our nation's schools are simply unacceptable. AUCD believes that all children have a right to be free from abusive practices and have access to a safe and effective educational climate. AUCD urges Congress to act quickly to protect all students in all schools, and pass the Keeping All Students Safe Act immediately.

Additional Resources:

GAO Report: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09719t.pdf>

For Civil Rights Data, visit <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/> or view the [summary](#).

For documented instances of restraint and seclusion in schools, see the National Disability Rights Network report [*School Is Not Supposed to Hurt*](#)

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The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), located in Silver Spring, MD, promotes and supports a national network of interdisciplinary centers on disabilities. The members of AUCD represent every U.S. state and territory. AUCD and its members work to advance policy and practice through research, education, leadership, and services for and with individuals with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and communities. For more information, visit AUCD's website: www.aucd.org.