

Major Step Forward in Improving Safety of Children in Schools with New Legislation to Restrict the Use of Restraints and Seclusion

SILVER SPRING, MD (December 9, 2009) — AUCD applauds Representatives George Miller (D-CA), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) who announced that they will introduce bipartisan legislation today, December 9, to reduce the use of restraints and seclusion in schools. Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT) also announced that he will introduce a companion bill in the Senate today.

There is an urgent need for Federal protection, an allocation of resources and assistance to States to develop plans to reduce the use of these dangerous techniques. Currently, no federal guidelines exist regarding the use of restraints and seclusion. Risk of injury and harm is significantly increased when seclusion and restraints are implemented by staff who are not sufficiently trained.

“School personnel need training in the use of evidence-based techniques in crisis reduction and de-escalation and the use of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports,” stated Tamar Heller, AUCD President and Director of the Institute on Disability and Human Development (the Illinois UCEDD). “Research by many of our University Centers has shown Positive Behavioral Supports as an effective intervention for children with disruptive or challenging behaviors across a broad age range and spectrum of behaviors.”

Evidence shows a disproportionate use of these techniques on students with disabilities, violating their right to nondiscrimination in accessing education. A majority of problem behaviors that are used to justify seclusion and restraint could be prevented with early identification and intensive early intervention. The need for seclusion and restraint procedures is, in part, a result of insufficient investment in prevention efforts.

Mary Elizabeth Bruder, Director of the Connecticut University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, stated, “The disability community in Connecticut, as well as nationwide, is grateful for Senator Dodd’s continuing leadership on issues critical to the wellbeing of children in our schools, especially those children receiving special education. He truly recognizes the importance of evidence-based practices in schools for children with disabilities.”

AUCD looks forward to reviewing the bill and working with the House and Senate to do whatever it takes to move this long-overdue legislation quickly through Congress.

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

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