

AUCD Statement on Restraint & Seclusion Resource Document

SILVER SPRING, MD (May 15, 2012) — The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) applauds the U.S. Department of Education for issuing a resource document on the use of restraint and seclusion in schools. The document is an important step toward ensuring the safety of our nation's students and school personnel.

The dangers of restraint and seclusion are well documented. A 2009 report from the Government Accountability Office confirmed that children are injured, traumatized and even killed as a result of restraint and seclusion in schools. School personnel are frequently injured when implementing these techniques and the student's classmates can be traumatized by witnessing them. The use of these techniques is also widespread. National 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.

"The document issued today contains strong principles that states, school districts, parents and other stakeholders can use to develop policies and procedures on the use of restraint and seclusion," said Anthony A. Antosh, EdD, President of AUCD. "While it doesn't eliminate the need for federal legislation on this issue, the document is an important educational tool that, hopefully, will lead to improvements at the local level."

The document sets forth principles that advocates believe are essential to ensuring school safety, including implementing school-wide strategies to address problem behaviors and prevent the need for restraint and seclusion. AUCD's Executive Director, George Jesien, PhD, commented that "This document shows that the Department is listening to parents, professionals and advocates on this issue. Research from many of our University Centers has shown the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports to be not only an effective intervention for children with challenging behaviors, but also helpful in improving the overall school tone and atmosphere for all children. AUCD looks forward to next month's Senate hearing on this topic and working with Congress to move federal legislation forward."

Because the resource document issued today is not law, federal legislation is still needed to address the issue of restraint and seclusion. AUCD strongly supports legislation that would establish federal minimum standards to limit these practices in schools, the Keeping All Students Safe Act (H.R. 1381, S. 2020). The bills, introduced by Representative George Miller (D-CA) and Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), would prohibit the most dangerous types of restraint and limit the use of physical restraint and seclusion to emergencies involving a risk of physical harm to the student or others. They would ensure that school personnel receive training in positive methods of changing behavior and that parents are aware of any restraint or seclusion imposed upon their child.

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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.