

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

SILVER SPRING, MD (February 12, 2014) — AUCD applauds Iowa Senator Tom Harkin, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, who announced that he will introduce legislation today to reduce the use of restraints and seclusion in schools. Representative George Miller (D-CA) introduced a similar bill (H.R. 1893) by the same name last July.

There is an urgent need for federal protection, including 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.

“Through the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, de-escalation techniques, conflict management, and other positive strategies, the use of dangerous and dehumanizing restraint and seclusion techniques can be virtually eliminated,” stated Daniel Crimmins, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Leadership in Disability at Georgia State University (Georgia UCEDD), who [testified at a Senate hearing on the issue in 2012](#). “Research by many of our University Centers has shown that school personnel need training in these positive strategies, which are much more effective at guiding behavior while also maintaining a safe and supportive educational environment.”

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.

Robert Bacon, Director of the Iowa University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, stated, “The disability community in Iowa, as well as nationwide, is grateful for Senator Harkin’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 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 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.

###