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STANDARDS FOR SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT IN SCHOOLS

St. James-Assiniboia School Division is committed to inclusion for all people. All students have a right to appropriate educational programming in a safe, caring, and inclusive environment. A positive, whole-school approach to planning for safety and belonging is to be combined with a supportive response to meeting the safety needs of all people in our schools.

This policy is intended to minimize the use of seclusion and restraint. Seclusion and restraint are safety responses of last resort, to be employed only when a student poses an immediate risk of serious physical harm to self or others and all other prevention strategies, de-escalation measures, and less restrictive measures have been exhausted.

Minimizing the use of seclusion and restraint is consistent with the principle that all decisions by all school staff are guided by the best interest of the child. Minimizing the use of seclusion and restraint helps to protect the rights of students to be free from all forms of physical or mental violence, to be treated with dignity, and to be free from abuse, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Definition and Terminology

1. Seclusion

- a. Seclusion is the involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area where the student cannot freely exit or is physically prevented from leaving. This generally occurs in a room with a door that has a lock that is engaged, or if not engaged, the door is otherwise blocked or held shut. Seclusion is often used in association with physical restraint.
- b. Seclusion is a safety response used only in situations when a student's behaviour has escalated to the point where it poses an immediate risk of serious physical harm to self or other, and only after proactive strategies, de-escalation interventions, and less restrictive measures have been exhausted.
- c. Seclusion is one of the most intrusive interventions used in response to student behaviour. It has been shown to have a detrimental impact on students. Seclusion may put students at risk for physical injury, psychological trauma, damaged relationships, and increased challenging behaviour. Seclusion has a negative impact on school staff, students, parents/legal guardians, and the school climate.
- d. Seclusion is an intervention of last resort to prevent serious physical harm.
 - i. Seclusion is never used
 1. until all less intrusive, less restrictive interventions have been exhausted.

ADOPTED	REVIEWED	REVISED	PAGE
25/September/12		22/March/22	1 of 4
Motion 14-02-12		Motion 06-06-22	

2. as part of a student-specific plan to manage/change student behaviour.
 3. as a substitute for appropriate educational programming or effective behavioural intervention planning.
 4. as a punishment, a consequence, a disciplinary action, or a way to force compliance.
 5. to protect property at risk for damage when there is no immediate risk of serious physical harm to self or others.
 6. when a student is non-compliant, confrontational, or verbally aggressive but there is no immediate risk of serious physical harm to self or others.
- e. Seclusion is distinct from use of self-regulation spaces and from time out practices
- i. Seclusion is not to be confused with the use of self-regulation/sensory spaces. Self-regulation/sensory space is an umbrella term that encompasses a broad variety of therapeutic spaces (e.g., calming space, sensory modulation/integration room, multi-sensory room). A sensory space is used proactively to meet a student’s sensory needs and promote self-regulation. It is a therapeutic intervention that is written into a student-specific plan based on the recommendation of a specialist who monitors its use.
 - ii. Seclusion should also be distinguished from “time out” practices. Time out occurs when access to reinforcement is removed for a period of time following the occurrence of an identified problem behaviour in order to reduce or stop that behaviour. Time out may involve removing a student from sources of positive reinforcement as a consequence of specific undesired behaviour. It is one option along a continuum of behaviour interventions supporting behaviour change. “Time out” practices do not include involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area where the student cannot freely exit or is physically prevented from leaving.

2. Physical Restraint

- a. Physical restraint is an intervention that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to move their torso, arms, legs, or head. Physical restraint may never be imposed through any means other than body contact in forms prescribed in training methodologies identified by the division.
- b. Physical restraint is a safety response used only when a student poses an immediate risk of serious physical harm to self or others.
- c. Physical interventions should not exceed what are reasonable or proportionate under the circumstances and should be discontinued as soon as the immediate risk of serious physical harm to the student or others has ended.

ADOPTED	REVIEWED	REVISED	PAGE
25/September/12		22/March/22	2 of 4
Motion 14-02-12		Motion 06-06-22	

- d. Physical restraint is an intervention of last resort to prevent serious physical harm.
 - i. Physical restraint is never used
 - 1. until all less intrusive, less restrictive interventions have been exhausted.
 - 2. as part of a student-specific plan to manage/change student behaviour.
 - 3. as a substitute for appropriate educational programming or effective behavioural intervention planning.
 - 4. as a punishment, a consequence, a disciplinary action, or a way to force compliance.
 - 5. to protect property at risk for damage when there is no immediate risk of serious physical harm to self or others.
 - 6. when a student is non-compliant, confrontational, or verbally aggressive but there is no immediate risk of serious physical harm to self or others.

- e. Physical restraint is distinct from seclusion, physical guidance, and physical escort
 - i. Physical restraint is frequently associated with seclusion because it is often used to transport a student to an environment where they are secluded; however, they are separate procedures, and one may occur without the other.
 - ii. Physical restraint should not be confused with physical guidance. Physical guidance is the use of touch to prompt a student when teaching a skill, redirecting attention, or providing comfort.
 - iii. Physical escort is distinct from physical restraint. Physical escort is the temporary touching or holding of a student's hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, or back for the purpose of accompanying and inducing a student who is escalated to walk to a safe location. Physical escort does not include any acts intended to immobilize a student or reduce their ability to move any part of their body.

Prevention

All efforts to address challenging behaviours should be directed at preventing the use of seclusion and physical restraint. Prevention will be the key to how the Division arranges and operates schools and classrooms and develops interventions to support all students, including students with disabilities and those with a history of challenging behaviours. To that end, the Division is committed to providing ongoing professional development on the use of effective alternatives to restraint and seclusion, such as Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS), the Low Arousal approach, data-based functional assessment and decision making, and other evidence-based approaches and strategies that can be embedded in the Student Specific Plan (SSP).

For students whose behaviour needs cannot be met through a whole-school approach, the school's student support team will work with the student and their parents/legal guardians to develop a student-specific plan. Student specific plans will be based on

ADOPTED	REVIEWED	REVISED	PAGE
25/September/12		22/March/22	3 of 4
Motion 14-02-12		Motion 06-06-22	

assessments of the function of challenging behaviours. Student specific plans will include teaching of behavioural management skills and positive replacement behaviours, and any environmental adjustments needed to support positive behaviour and reduce the likelihood of crises or emergency situations. Staff working with students with individualized plans to meet behaviour needs should be trained in de-escalation strategies intended to prevent challenging behaviours from escalating to crises.

Every student and staff member has the right to a safe environment. Training and on-going support in the use of Nonviolent Crises Intervention, de-escalation, and co-regulation techniques will be provided. Any instance of seclusion and physical restraint will be viewed as a prevention failure and trigger a debrief of the event with review and enhancement of the prevention strategies delineated in the SSP. School-team members will consult with the divisional support team or divisional staff to make informed adjustments to prevent future crises. With appropriate, evidence-based adaptations to support students' behavioural needs, the school environment functions as a protective factor, fostering success for all students.

References:

Safe and Caring Schools: A Policy Directive Enhancing Proactive Supports to Minimize the Use of Seclusion.

Behind Closed Doors: Restraint and Seclusion of Students with Disabilities in Manitoba Schools.

Standards for Seclusion and Physical Restraint in Alberta Schools

ADOPTED	REVIEWED	REVISED	PAGE
25/September/12		22/March/22	4 of 4
Motion 14-02-12		Motion 06-06-22	