



TASH



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For Immediate Release

Department of Education Issues ‘15 Principles,’ Stops Short on Restraint, Seclusion

WASHINGTON (May 16, 2012) – The U.S. Department of Education issued [15 principles](#) regarding the use of restraint and seclusion in schools. The principles, which were posted to the Department’s website as a resource document on Tuesday, represent the most formal position taken by federal authorities to date, although the principles are not enforceable and stop short of what the Department could have done on the matter.

The Alliance to Prevent Restraint, Aversive Interventions and Seclusion, the leading advocacy effort to eliminate abusive practices in schools, applauds the Department for taking a public stance on this issue. Since its formation in 2004, [APRAIS](#) has petitioned the Department of Education and Congress to establish policies that prevent such practices that put children in harm’s way and discourage positive learning environments.

APRAIS thanks the Department for linking the use of restraint and seclusion with lasting, serious consequences, urging a limitation of their use to emergency situations, recognizing these practices should never be used as discipline or educational interventions, and stressing the lack of evidence that such techniques are effective in responding to challenging behaviors. APRAIS specifically appreciates the firm stance the Department has taken against the use of prone, chemical and mechanical restraints, which are dangerous and abusive practices that have resulted in severe injury, trauma and death.

Although the values put forth in the Department’s principles are encouraging, APRAIS firmly believes that more should be done to prevent the continued abuse of children in our schools. The Department released figures earlier this year that indicated nearly 39,000 students in a survey representing 85 percent of the nation’s students were physically restrained by an adult during the 2009-2010 academic year. Although they comprised only 12 percent of the survey sample, children with disabilities represented nearly 70 percent of those restrained.

The Department’s 15 principles offer clear direction to schools and districts on evidence-based practices that are known to prevent and eliminate restraint and seclusion use. However, since it appears only as a resource document, these principles are not enforceable, and do not explicitly prevent, reduce or eliminate aversive practices used against children. As outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as well as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Department may guide schools on evidence-based practices that promote positive and safe learning environments, something it has yet to do in the case of restraint and seclusion.

“It’s a positive sign that the Department of Education has come to see the real dangers of restraint and seclusion, a clear response to APRAIS and the thousands of families and advocates who have pushed to eliminate these practices for years,” said Barb Trader, executive director of TASH,

which leads APRAIS. “But until prevention becomes enforceable at the federal level and our children are no longer at risk of being improperly restrained or secluded in school, we’ll continue advocating for protections under the law.”

Despite its lack of enforcement, the release of principles by the Department could be the impetus needed to pass Senate Bill 2020 and House Bill 1381, landmark legislation that would impose the first-ever federal protections against abusive restraint and seclusion practices in U.S. schools. APRAIS urges Congress to recognize the need for such protections and to act swiftly to honor our commitment to children across the nation for a safe and healthy learning environment.

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About APRAIS

The Alliance to Prevent Restraint, Aversive Interventions and Seclusion (APRAIS) was established in 2004 by leading education, research and advocacy organizations to protect children with significant disabilities who exhibit challenging behaviors from abuse in schools, treatment programs and residential facilities. Led by TASH, APRAIS is comprised of members from leading disability advocacy organizations. Visit www.tash.org/aprais for more information.

About TASH

A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, TASH is an international grassroots leader in advancing inclusive communities through research, education and advocacy. Founded in 1975, we are a volunteer-driven organization that advocates for human rights and inclusion for people with the most significant disabilities and support needs – those most vulnerable to segregation, abuse, neglect and institutionalization. The inclusive practices we validate through research have been shown to improve outcomes for all people. More information about TASH can be found at www.tash.org.