

AP – 3.3 PHYSICAL RESTRAINT & SECLUSION OF STUDENTS

1. PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES

This procedure outlines the expectations and protocols for the use of physical restraint and seclusion in BC public schools. It ensures compliance with relevant legislation and promotes student dignity, safety, and well-being.

It is expected that school personnel will:

- Implement positive behaviour supports and interventions, behaviour plans, safety plans, and other strategies to prevent and de-escalate potentially unsafe situations.
- Involve parents and students (where appropriate) in the development of behaviour support and safety plans.
- Address the underlying causes of potentially harmful behaviour and emphasize student dignity and respect.
- Ensure that school staff working with students at risk of presenting imminent danger receive training in the safe use of physical restraint and/or seclusion.

Physical restraint and seclusion are only to be used as a last resort when there is an immediate and substantial risk of serious physical harm to the student or others.

2. PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

Definition

Physical restraint is defined as immobilization through direct, **temporary** contact with a resisting student in a controlled manner, for the purpose of preventing harm. It is not to be used as a punitive action, a behaviour modification tool, or motivated by anger or malice.

When Restraint is Permitted

Physical restraint may be used only:

- When other interventions have been ineffective or are likely to be ineffective.
- When there is imminent danger of serious harm to the student or others.
- When restraint does not jeopardize the safety and security of others.

Restraint Process

Steps to follow in a restraint incident:

1. **Verbal Warning** – The staff member must explain what will happen and provide clear, calm instructions for de-escalation.
2. **Application of Restraint** – The least amount of force necessary should be used to ensure safety, while minimizing disturbance.
3. **Staff Presence** – Restraint should occur in the presence of another adult when possible.
4. **Debriefing** – A structured discussion should take place afterward for:
 - The restrained student.
 - Staff involved in the incident.
 - Any witnesses (students or staff) to re-establish a safe learning environment.

Notification and Documentation

- Principals/Vice Principals must be notified immediately after a restraint incident.
- Parents/Guardians must be informed as soon as possible, and no later than the end of the school day.
- Superintendent and Student Services Coordinator must be notified as soon as possible.
- Written documentation must be completed within 24 hours, including:
 - A Physical Restraint and/or Seclusion Form. (Form 3.3)
 - A Violent Incident Report Form (if necessary).
 - A review of the incident to prevent future occurrences.

3. SECLUSION

Definition

Seclusion is the involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or space from which they are physically prevented from leaving.

Seclusion does not include:

- **Voluntary removal** when the student independently seeks a quiet or private space.
- **“Time out”** strategies used as part of a planned behaviour intervention.

Seclusion Conditions

- The health and safety of the student must not be compromised.
- A staff member must visually observe the student continuously and be physically present.
- At least one staff member must be able to communicate in the student’s primary language or mode of communication.

Seclusion Process

The process for a seclusion incident follows the same steps as physical restraint:

1. Incident occurs (seclusion is used only as a last resort).
2. Debriefing (student, staff, and witnesses).
3. Notification (school administration, parents, and district leadership).
4. Documentation (written reports within 24 hours).

4. COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW

- The school district will conduct regular reviews of physical restraint and seclusion incidents to ensure compliance.
- Staff training in de-escalation strategies and the safe use of restraint and seclusion is mandatory.
- The goal is to minimize and ultimately eliminate the need for restraint and seclusion through proactive, positive behaviour supports.

5. ASSOCIATED:

- **POLICY 3.3** Physical Restraint & Seclusion of Students
- **FORM 3.3** Physical Restraint & Seclusion of Students