

As President of North Dakota PTA I served on a ND State Task Force on Restraint and Seclusion. I then worked with my local school district SPED Director to review and update our Restraint and Seclusion Policy. At that time there were only a few school districts in ND that actually had any Restraint and Seclusion policies.

During the past several years in working as an advocate for children and families I have heard so many times from parents about the treatment their child has received and the trauma it has caused. Pulling a child out from under a table by the feet when he is trying to find a safe place to avoid the adult who is yelling at him is not an appropriate action to calm the child.

I believe that every school district in ND should have a Restraint and Seclusion policy to protect our vulnerable students. There must also be explicit reporting guidelines, reporting to administration and to parents. These children more often than not cannot tell their parents what happened or why. Sometimes they can only tell their parent that they were hurt at school.

When my son was in elementary school he was restrained and secluded. He still remembers these incidents. When these incidents occurred he couldn't tell me anything about it, he didn't understand what was happening or why. As he grew and matured he was able to tell me about being "put in the time out room" (a free standing room that was built with a door that could be closed to keep the child inside. The door had a window yet no staff member was watching him while he was in there. He was put in it by school staff for anything that they thought inappropriate. He was also put in a janitor/storage closet as a "time out" space.

He had also been restrained many times, one in particular was when the school SPED teacher and the school principal carried him by the arms and feet down the hall to another room. He had no idea why and couldn't tell me that it had happened. Reporting to the parent/s is not a priority and many parents do not find out about these incidents. During his middle school years there was a time that he was being "kept" in one of the principal's offices, he was in that office and two adults were in there and one of them stood at the door blocking his exit. I was in the building and heard him screaming for help and had to rescue him from being kept in that room. As soon as I went into the room he was able to calm and we were able to determine what the problem was that caused the adults to block him in the room. Recently as an adult he asked me why I didn't stop them, the teachers, paras and school staff - I had to admit that I hadn't been informed of any of these incidents of restraint and seclusion.

We need to move forward in putting this bill into effect. Policies must address the who, what, where and why of restraint and seclusion as well as very clear procedures for reporting.

Thank you,

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