

**This is from Pender Makin:**

I am writing in response to an email from Arthur Keenan to offer my thoughts regarding potential changes to the DOE's regulations governing restraints in public schools:

I have worked with behaviorally challenging youth for over 15 years and have served for the past eight years as Director of The REAL School - a public alternative and special education placement for extremely at risk students in grades 7-12. Because the phenomenon of resilience seems to be the key for students who have had to overcome profound challenges, I have researched this extensively and have found that resilience is linked closely with internal locus of control. Nearly 100% of our incoming students exhibit externalizing thought patterns and behaviors (they blame others and/or circumstances for what goes wrong, and they attribute their successes to random luck or "it was too easy anyway"). Therefore, I have worked with my dedicated staff members to develop a school culture and specific programming that teaches and reinforces the concepts of personal responsibility and the connections between one's actions and the resulting situations. This approach has been transformational for many of our students.

We accept students with and without disabilities whose needs have not been met in their previous settings. Many of our students have been identified as posing a serious risk to others within their previous school settings. Many of our students have been unsuccessful in private, special purpose schools where "therapeutic" restraints are commonly used. Most of our students have lengthy disciplinary histories of violent, explosive behaviors in previous settings. Given this description, one might expect to find a fairly dangerous place out here on Mackworth Island - but most visitors will attest to the fact that our school is a very positive and generally peaceful place with students who are supportive to each other and engaged in self-improvement.

We have developed a highly effective, three-tiered approach to behavior management, utilizing best practices for prevention, intervention, and de-escalation without the use of physical restraints and/or isolation rooms. All behavioral "mistakes" are viewed as learning opportunities, and we have a 4-step "restorative learning process" designed to foster internal locus of control.

We often have students entering our school from settings wherein they experienced frequent (even daily) "therapeutic" restraints. These students exhibit profoundly externalized patterns of thinking and behavior. We explain up front that we do not use restraints at this school, and they typically test us for a period of time before they truly understand and respond to this.

I believe that great damage is done when a person is physically incapacitated by others with the intent of controlling behavior. The fact that this is done in a systematic way - as a normal or accepted course of action - must certainly damage any budding sense of internal control of the self, and is utterly anti-therapeutic. Our students and families frequently describe situations wherein, for instance, a student is restrained not because he was about to hurt himself or others, but because he would not move to the next classroom. I have

personally witnessed similar incidents. In settings where well-meaning people are trained and given permission to utilize this approach, it becomes a frighteningly common tool for gaining compliance; and then learning doesn't happen, growth doesn't happen, students externalize control, and resilience is sacrificed.

My hope with respect to potential changes to Reg. 33 is that we remove the oxymoronic term "therapeutic restraint" from the document altogether.

Respectfully Submitted by Pender Makin, REAL School Director

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