

The Cost of Waiting

A report on restraint, seclusion and aversive procedures one year after the passage of the Keeping All Students Safe Act in the U.S. House of Representatives



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On March 3, 2010, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to protect school children from abusive restraint, seclusion and aversive interventions. This bill represented a monumental change in protections that would allow all children to learn in a safe environment. Its passage created a wave of momentum that shifted toward the U.S. Senate. Unfortunately for thousands of children and families, this critical legislation never reached the Senate floor. One year after the passage of the Keeping All Students Safe Act in the House of Representatives, this is The Cost of Waiting.

The purpose of this report is to document the high cost of waiting to protect our children. In the following pages we have included background information into the use of restraint and seclusion in schools. We have also conducted an analysis of media coverage on restraint and seclusion since the passage of the Keeping All Students Safe Act in the House of Representatives. By issuing the Cost of Waiting, TASH hopes to continue to elevate the national dialogue on restraint and seclusion practices in schools.

Background

The impact of restraint and seclusion practices can be felt in schools across the U.S. each day. Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are especially vulnerable to such acts, which are often carried out by untrained or undertrained personnel and may result in permanent injury, trauma and death. There are currently no federal standards for monitoring and preventing restraint and seclusion techniques in schools, despite the pleas of thousands of families, the disability community and other human rights advocates.

Physical Restraint is the use of various “holds” to grab and immobilize a child or bring a child to the floor. The child is restrained by one or more staff person’s arms, legs or body.

Chemical Restraint is the application of medicine to dull a child’s ability to move or think.

Mechanical Restraint is the use of straps, tape, cuffs, mat or blanket wraps, helmets and other devices to prevent movement or sensory perception, often by restraining the child’s limbs to a splint, wall, bed, chair or floor.

Seclusion is forced isolation in a room or space from which the child cannot escape.

The harmful practice of restraint, seclusion and aversive interventions was well-documented in *School is Not Supposed to Hurt* (National Disability Rights Network, 2009), which examined the use of such tactics on public and private schools children as young as three years old. In response, the Government Accountability Office conducted an investigation that found no federal laws specifically regulate the use of restraint and seclusion in schools, and state laws vary widely, if they exist at all. Examples of abuses that led to the death of minors in educational settings were highlighted in both the reports, including but not limited to the following:

Michigan: a 15-year-old boy with autism became the second child in the state to die from the use of restraint after four school employees pinned him face down on the floor for over an hour. He became non-responsive after 45 minutes, but the restraint continued and he eventually stopped breathing.

Wisconsin: a 7-year-old girl, restrained as punishment for blowing bubbles in her milk and not following the time out rules regarding movement, died from suffocation when several adult staff pinned her on the floor.

Georgia: a 13-year-old hanged himself in a small, concrete, seclusion room using a cord provided by a teacher to hold up his pants. He had pleaded with his teachers that he could not stand being locked in the room for hours at a time, and he had threatened suicide in school only a few weeks before.

(National Disability Rights Network, 2009)

In addition to shocking deaths like these, children are injured and traumatized by restraint, seclusion and aversive interventions every day in U.S. schools, despite no evidence of their therapeutic value. And while all school children are at risk for restraint and seclusion abuses, they are used disproportionately on children with disabilities, often for non-dangerous behaviors to force compliance or for the convenience of school staff. These practices frequently escalate a child's fight-or-flight response, deepen negative behavior patterns and undermine the child's trust and capacity for learning. Restraint and seclusion can have a lasting impact on not only the child, but also the personnel implementing this practice or other students who witness them.

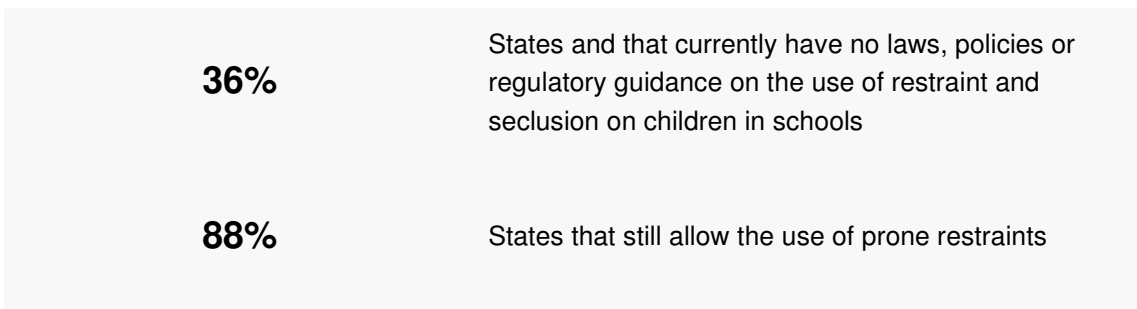
In 2009, the Alliance to Prevent Restraint, Aversive Interventions and Seclusion, a coalition of disability advocacy organizations, conducted a study on the *Use of Restraint, Seclusion, and Aversive Procedures with Students with Disabilities* (APRAIS, 2011) which details survey responses from parents and caretakers of children with disabilities. With 48 states, the District of Columbia and two U.S. territories represented, the study included 1,300 survey respondents in a two week period. The results painted an alarming picture of the use of such procedures, including:

65%	Respondents that claimed their child had been subjected to restraint, seclusion and/or aversive procedures
69%	Children subjected to these procedures between the ages of 6 and 10
41%	Incidents that occurred in a special education classroom
22%	Incidents that occurred in special education <u>and</u> general education classrooms
25%	Restraints that were prone restraints
58%	Incidents of seclusion that occurred in a "special seclusion room"



Why Legislation is Needed

Rarely do we find out about restraint and seclusion abuses until it is too late and the child is deeply traumatized, injured or even killed. To address this patchwork of inconsistent rules and absence of rules, federal legislation is urgently needed. This is a nationwide problem that can be addressed through federal legislation. We must provide children in all states equal protection from these dangerous techniques, and create a cultural shift toward preventative, positive intervention strategies backed by research. Teachers require the knowledge, training, tools and support to protect themselves and their students by preventing problem behaviors and maintaining a positive and healthy educational environment.



44%

States that require schools to notify parents and guardians when seclusion or restraint is used

(National Disability Rights Network, 2010)

Untold Thousands

Children who are repeatedly abused within their school systems every year through these archaic techniques

The First Legislative Steps

U.S. Reps. George Miller (D-CA) and Cathy McMorris-Rodgers (R-WA) introduced the Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act (H.R. 4247) in the 111th Congress, the first comprehensive federal effort to deal with the problem of inappropriate and dangerous restraint and seclusion in our nation's schools. This legislation was renamed the Keeping All Students Safe Act and passed the House of Representatives on March 3, 2010, by a bipartisan vote of 228-184. The bill established federal minimum safety standards to limit the use of restraint and seclusion in schools by:

Banning the use of mechanical, chemical and physical restraints that restrict breathing and aversive interventions that compromise health and safety;

Prohibiting physical restraint and seclusion used as planned interventions; they should only be used as a last resort in emergency circumstances where a student's behavior poses an imminent danger of physical injury and less restrictive interventions would be ineffective;

Requiring school personnel who implement the emergency techniques to be trained and certified, and require that they continuously monitor students during interventions;

Requiring schools to establish procedures to be followed after restraint or seclusion are used, including parental notification;

Requiring states to report the yearly number of restraint and seclusion incidents; and

Creating a discretionary grant program to assist states, districts and schools to establish, implement and enforce the minimum standards; support data collection and analysis; support staff training; and improve school climate and culture through the implementation of school-wide positive behavior supports.

For full passage of federal legislation, the U.S. Senate needed to pass a similar bill. This effort was led by Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT), who introduced Senate Bill 2860. In late 2010, families and advocacy groups supporting the legislation were informed the bill would not be voted on under the current Congress. This news came after months of contention over proposed changes to the bill's original language, including the allowance of restraint and seclusion into a student's individualized education plan, or IEP. The House version of the legislation would have prevented restraint and seclusion from being included in the IEP, a provision applauded by many families and advocacy groups.

Summary of Media Reports

Our review of media reports includes one year's worth of documentation on serious restraint and seclusion incidents involving U.S. school children with disabilities. They were collected beginning March 3, 2010, the date of the House passage of the Keeping All Students Safe Act. It was all too easy to uncover more than 50 news articles that described incidents of harmful practices during that time, and we acknowledge our limitations in capturing all articles that have appeared in news outlets. There are undoubtedly many more articles. And since the existing articles represent only a fraction of the real abuses, this is, tragically, only a small sample of the restraint and seclusion abuses in our schools today.

The sample reviewed for this report revealed insights into the use of restraint and seclusion in schools, including:

Trauma – children involved in incidents of restraint or seclusion are likely to suffer long-term impacts. When such practices are inflicted upon children with disabilities, both the trauma and ethical offense are magnified.

Multiple abuses – many reports make reference to repeated abuse. In some cases it is revealed children undergo months or years of abuse before the actions are known by parents.

National coverage – the incidents of restraint and seclusion are widely spread across the U.S., with more than 50 news articles in 23 states in all regions of the country. The scope of this problem points clearly to the need for a baseline of protections for students in all states.

Met with resistance – schools and officials often respond to complaints about abuse with denial and resistance. The complaints tend to be taken seriously when law enforcement or media become involved.

No clear laws – many news articles emphasize the lack of clear and effective laws in most states to prevent or manage the aftermath of the abusive infliction of restraint and seclusion. Many articles also describe the efforts of advocates to gain protections in schools.

Firing offense – often, teachers or other school officials lose their job because of their actions. With clear policies against restraint and seclusion, and proper support for research-based practices, many of these employees may have made better judgments and created better outcomes.

Lawsuits – reports of restraint and seclusion are frequently mentioned in the same breath as lawsuits. These preventable civil suits undoubtedly cost taxpayers considerable sums in legal defense and damages.

The following is a small sample of the media reports on restraint and seclusion practices in schools over the past year:

Dismissal Sought in Abuse Case won't go to Trial

Court documents filed in 2009 allege that Kallies and Parish used severe punishment against the boy. Witnesses cited in the original police affidavit stated that the women would hold his head under a running faucet if he fell asleep. The affidavit also alleges that witnesses saw the paraprofessionals leave Garrett sitting in his own feces for half a day, and that he had eaten his own vomit in another alleged incident.

Great Falls Tribune
Great Falls, Montana
January 27, 2011

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/article/20110127/NEWS01/101270302/Dismissal-sought-in-North-Middle-School-abuse-case&template=artsemantics&server=MOC-WN0402>

Two Indicted in State School Abuse

The suspects were seen pushing or pulling at the client, according to court documents. Then they pushed the couch against the wall. A short time later, they lifted the couch, causing the client to fall into the wall, according to reports.

The video also shows the pair following the client, who has profound mental retardation, around in what appears to be intentional harassment. One employee is seen smiling after tipping the couch over and dumping the client on the floor, according to reports.

Avalanche-Journal
Lubbock, Texas
January 26, 2011

<http://lubbockonline.com/crime-and-courts/2011-01-26/two-indicted-state-school-abuse>

Parents Seek Response from Waupaca School District after Child was Improperly Restrained

"Kids are getting hurt and frankly staff is getting hurt," he said. "They don't know what they are doing. They are not trained and these kids can react violently if touched. We are allowing a very unsafe environment to persist without regulation. This wouldn't happen in mental health institutions, which have regulations. Why do we allow schools to treat them worse than if they were inpatients at Mendota or Winnebago Mental Health Institute?"

There are about 20 states that have either statutes or regulations to limit use of seclusion and restraint, he said, but Wisconsin has no laws on the books. Nor is there a federal law.

Post-Crescent

Appleton, Wisconsin

December 16, 2010

<http://www.postcrescent.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20101216/APC0101/12160512/Parents-want-district-to-address-restraint-issues>

Why Did School Duct-Tape 4-Year-Old?

"I received a call from the school informing me that my son was in the principal's office because he refused to take a nap, and he didn't want to wash his hands," Irving told me.

The boy's wrists were taped together, he said, as were the lower portion of his hands.

...

According to what the 4-year-old told his father, two school administrators were involved in the duct-taping. He said the vice principal held his hands while a teacher's aide affixed the tape.

After first using blue painter's tape to bind the child's hands, Irving said the teacher's aide removed the painter's tape, saying it wasn't "strong enough," and applied the duct tape.

Chicago Sun-Times

Chicago, Illinois

December 13, 2010

<http://www.suntimes.com/news/mitchell/2829547-452/irving-hands-child-principal-tape.html>

Mom: School Guard Hurt Special-Needs Boy

The mother of a special-needs student in Wayne Township says her son was seriously injured when a school security guard knocked him to the ground and pinned him there with his knee.

Deborah Faver said Thursday that her son, Luke Freeman, was then left writhing in pain on the floor of a locked room at the Sanders School for two hours after the Dec. 2 incident.

When she took the 15-year-old eighth-grader to Community Hospital South's emergency room that evening, she said, a doctor told her an X-ray showed Luke had a broken pelvis.

Indianapolis Star

Indianapolis, Indiana

December 10, 2010

<http://www.indy.com/posts/mom-school-guard-hurt-special-needs-boy>

Grandma: Teacher Used Duct Tape to Stop 5 Year Old's Thumb Sucking

A Lamar County woman says a teacher went too far when she taped her granddaughter's thumbs together in an effort to get her to stop sucking them. Faye Buckner says a teacher at the Lamar County Primary School used duct tape on her 5-year-old granddaughter's thumbs.

WAGA-TV

Atlanta, Georgia

Dec 9, 2010

http://www.myfoxatlanta.com/dpp/news/local_news/grandma-teacher-used-duct-tape-on-thumb-sucking-girl-20101209-es

Child Regularly Restrained, Isolated At School

There are serious questions about the way a child was punished in a Metro school's kindergarten. The 6-year-old had severe autism and was, at times, restrained in a dark basement or forced to stay alone in a bathroom. The school district has acknowledged it wasn't right, but the child's mother wants more.

A spokesman from the American Autism Society reviewed the Channel 4 I-Team's findings and called it "a form of torture."

WSMV-TV

Nashville, Tennessee

November 19, 2010

<http://www.wsmv.com/news/25854017/detail.html>

School Settles after Autistic Child was Forcefully Restrained for 3 Hours

In April a video surfaced on YouTube.com that was both shocking and difficult to watch for many parents with special needs children. It was footage of an incident in 2007 where a child with Autism was restrained for over 3 hours on his first day of school, because he cried for his mother. The child was not being violent or lashing out.

Nashville Special Needs Examiner

Nashville, Tennessee

October 11, 2010

<http://www.examiner.com/special-needs-kids-in-nashville/school-settles-after-autistic-child-was-forcefully-restrained-for-3-hours-video>

Police Charge Teacher with Breaking Student's Arm

A Fayetteville teacher is accused of breaking a five-year-old student's arm while trying to apply what's called a therapeutic hold.

Cumberland County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Debbie Tanna says Jackie Bennett faces assault and child abuse charges.

The 57-year-old teaches students with disabilities at J.W. Coon Elementary School in Fayetteville.

Bennett told police he was trying to apply a therapeutic hold meant to stop a child from injuring themselves or others.

Associated Press

Fayetteville, North Carolina

September 16, 2010

http://www.wlos.com/template/inews_wire/wires.regional.nc/30137aa7-www.wlos.com.shtml

Manatee Teacher on Path to being Fired

At a rehearsal for a Memorial Day program at Tillman Elementary School, students sang and waved flags.

But when one student in the front row of the school auditorium did not join in, first-grade teacher Karyn Cena "forcefully" grabbed the boy by the arm, dragged him to the back of the auditorium and shoved him onto a seat, district officials say.

Herald Tribune

Sarasota, Florida

September 8, 2010

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20100908/ARTICLE/9081068>

Teacher's Aide Claims School Taught How To Abuse Kids

"I'm not in favor of waterboarding or any of the things that we do to terrorists," Cowand said. "But you don't use that stuff on a child, especially a child that cannot defend for themselves. It's just absolutely unbelievable."

After she started sharing her concerns with parents, the mother of a 10-year-old "life skills" student discovered that some of the behavior described by the teacher's aide was captured on Fiest Elementary's security cameras.

Adriana Herrera continued pushing for the release of that video, which shows a teacher dragging her daughter down a carpeted hallway from one classroom to another, pulling her arms behind her and dragging her for more than 12 feet. Local 2 Investigates broadcast the video on Tuesday night.

KPRC-TV

Houston, Texas

August 31, 2010

<http://www.click2houston.com/news/24827641/detail.html>

Iowa – 3 Schools Cited for Using Restraints on Kids

A substitute teacher in a small school district dragged a boy across a carpeted floor to a timeout area in the boy's classroom. Education department officials refused to identify the district, which "was so small that anybody in that community would know which child was being referred to," said Thomas Mayes, an Iowa Department of Education attorney.

A Council Bluffs Thomas Jefferson High School teacher used physical force to punish a disruptive student, Mayes said. The education department's ruling excluded the teacher's name and details of the offense, which Mayes described as "abusive."

A Creston teacher strapped Tracy Terrell's son, Storm, into a chair with a seatbelt to control him during the 2009-10 school year when his two teacher aides were absent.

Des Moines Register

Des Moines, Iowa

August 24, 2010

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/20100824/NEWS02/8240367/1004/3-schools-cited-for-using-restraints-on-unruly-kids>

Florida 'Gutted' Child Restraint Bill of Most Important Protections, Mother of Restrained Child Says

"They took a good bill that had protective language for children with disabilities and gutted the bill, took out all the safety precautions," said Phyllis Musumeci, a mother whose son was forcibly held in a prone restraint more than 20 times at a Palm Beach County school. The Autism Association agreed: In a 180-degree turn, the group urged a letter writing campaign to persuade Gov. Charlie Crist to veto the bill.

Palm Beach Post

Palm Beach, Florida

October 11, 2010

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/schools/florida-gutted-child-restraint-bill-of-most-important-964179.html>

Disability Rights Center Challenges Handling of Restraint Complaints

The complaints also said that each district poorly documented and failed to notify parents of multiple incidents of physical restraint or seclusion -- which is when a student is purposely separated from others, often in another room.

In one complaint, the use of physical restraint wasn't prescribed in the student's individual education plan, Smith said. Also, staff members failed to notify the school nurse when they held the student in a face-down or prone restraint.

In the other complaint, the student was restrained by one staff member when two were required, Smith said.

Maine Today

Portland, Maine

October 15, 2010

http://www.pressherald.com/news/disability-rights-center-challenges-handling-of-restraint-complaints_2010-10-15.html

Student with Bloody Eyes Will Likely Change Schools

A 14 year-old boy who claims a school aide put him in a restraining hold that led to his eyes bleeding will likely wind up at a new school. The white part of Abdullah Fisher's eyes were still blood red today, a week after the incident at Dorothy Thomas School.

"When Abdullah was getting choked - he told him that he couldn't breathe," said Deborah Williams, his mother. "I don't want Abdullah going back to that school."

Fisher said it started last Thursday when he "smacked" paper out of his teacher's hands. Staff called in the school's resource officer, formally called an exceptional student education aide, and a scuffle escalated, according to Fisher. That aide tried to put Fisher in a time-out room, but he fought back.

WFLA-TV

Tampa, Florida

November 4, 2010

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/nov/04/041857/student-with-bloody-eyes-will-likely-change-school/>

Sumter Mom Sues School District for Abuse of Autistic Son

A Sumter mother has filed a lawsuit against a Midlands school district because of what she says is negligence. According to the suit, the woman's son was abused by a school bus aide.

"He was grabbed around the neck and pushed into the window, pushed down to a seat, punched in his stomach," said Melodee Kinyon-Davis.

The description is like something that would happen during a fight. The mom says it wasn't a fight, but her son is a victim. "I called the police as soon as I found out," said Davis.

WIS-TV

Columbia, South Carolina

November 5, 2010

<http://www.wistv.com/Global/story.asp?S=13455146>

Father of First-Grader Handcuffed at Sarah T. Reed Files Lawsuit against RSD Officials

The suit, filed by Sebastian Weston in federal court today, alleges that Reed's principal, Daphyne Burnett, enforced a policy of handcuffing misbehaving students. The suit claims that Burnett ordered a school security officer, identified only as "Jane Doe," to chain the boy by his ankle to a chair on May 4 after he failed to follow his teacher's directions.

Two days later, on May 6, the boy was handcuffed and shackled by another security officer, identified as "Defendant Willis," after arguing with another student in the cafeteria, according to the suit.

The Times-Picayune

New Orleans, Louisiana

July 8, 2010

http://www.nola.com/education/index.ssf/2010/07/father_of_first-grader_handcuf.html

Abuse Claims at N.C. School for the Deaf

The report details instances in which students were slapped, pushed or held face-down on the floor. Staff who reported the incident where the girl was held on the floor with her arms pinned said administrators threatened and harassed them, according to the report. McDaniel "failed to take a single action to protect the student," the report said, and confronted staff who told the girl's mother what happened.

Charlotte News-Observer

Charlotte, North Carolina

July 17, 2010

<http://www.newsobserver.com/2010/07/17/585446/abuse-claims-at-deaf-school.html>

KSL 5 News investigates use of Rifton chair in Granite School District Classroom

The school district says the student's family was told that the chair was being used. The family says it had no knowledge of the chair until the 4-year-old came home one day with bruises.

The chair is called a Rifton chair. You may see them in special-needs classrooms all across the state.

Rifton chairs have straps at the waist and legs, and often a tray. The manufacturer's website says the chairs are intended for children with disabilities who need help with posture, but the 4-year-old's West Valley family believes the chair was being misused to restrain the child.

KSL-TV

Salt Lake City, Nebraska

May 25, 2010

<http://www.ksl.com/?nid=148&sid=10920097>

'I Thought I Was the Only One': 3 Kids, 3 Years, nearly 100 School Restraints

From Dec. 4, 2007, through May 7, 2010, according to those forms, 18 Scarborough school employees performed 95 restraints on three boys between the ages 5 and 8.

Many of the forms contain documentation of several restraints performed the same day, often culminating in the parents being called to pick up their sons. One restraint lasted two hours 35 minutes, with staff switching out when they got tired.

In some cases, the restraints were not documented using the formal restraint forms required by district policy, and only mentioned in passing on a child's daily progress report.

The Forecaster

Falmouth, Maine

August 10, 2010

<http://www.theforecaster.net/content/pnms-restraintfollowup-081110>

Special Needs Student Restrained 66 Times in 19 Days

Fowler gave Humble I.S.D. her permission to restrain Garrett. Being a special education teacher herself Fowler said she thought her little boy would only be restrained in emergency situations But according to Fowler's attorney Humble I.S.D's own records show Garrett was restrained 66 times in just a 19 day period.

"In all my wildest dreams I would have never imagined on a 7-year-old that that would have been done that many times," Fowler said.

Fowler said she learned the exact number of times Garrett was restrained after filing suit against the district.

"It was devastating," Fowler said. "I just couldn't believe it."

KRIV-TV

Houston, Texas

May 3, 2010

<http://www.myfoxboston.com/dpp/news/local/100503-special-needs-student-restrained-66-times-in-19-days>

Restraints used by NJ Educators to Curb Unruly Behavior under Scrutiny

It's been called "the dirty little secret" of special education.

New Jersey gives public and private schools a virtual free pass to forcibly restrain unruly children with disabilities.

School employees can use "bear hugs," "basket holds" and "take downs" ... which sound more like wrestling moves than anything you'd expect to see in school ... and keep children confined in "time-out" rooms until they calm down.

State law also allows school employees to use extreme measures to control severely autistic children who habitually injure themselves by banging their heads, biting their hands or other compulsive behaviors. The

techniques include spraying water or noxious chemicals in kids' faces, snapping their wrists with rubber bands or putting hot sauce on their tongues, disability rights advocates say.

Asbury Park Press

Asbury, New Jersey

May 4, 2010

<http://www.app.com/article/20100505/SPECIAL20/100504060/Restraints-used-by-NJ-educators-to-curb-unruly-behavior-under-scrutiny>

Preschool Teacher Charged with Shutting 5-Year-Old in Closet

A Gastonia NC preschool teacher is accused of hitting a 5-year-old girl and shutting her in a storage closet as a form of discipline.

She also struck the girl's leg, according to an arrest warrant and affidavit.

Kasha Hatten said she filed the charge against Corry after her 5-year-old daughter, Destiny, told her she didn't want to go back to Head Start because her teacher was "being mean."

Gaston Gazette

Gastonia, North Carolina

April 1, 2010

<http://www.gastongazette.com/articles/closet-45498-gastonia-old.html>

Summary of Media Reports

The harmful use of restraint and seclusion continues to be a pervasive, nationwide problem that cannot be addressed effectively without federal legislation that provides children in all states equal protection from dangerous techniques and creates a cultural shift toward preventive, positive intervention strategies. Teachers need knowledge and tools to protect themselves and their students by preventing problem behaviors and maintaining a positive and healthy educational environment. This legislation would go a long way toward achieving those goals and assuring parents that their children are safe in our nation's schools.

The cost of waiting is clear. If we do not act now, how many children will be subject to abuse before the next report is filed? TASH urges your action now.

Find more information at www.TASH.org

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