

## **Guidelines for Use of Physical Restraint in New Hampshire School Settings (Source: NH Dept. of Education, 2005)**

**Physical restraint** refers to the restriction of a child's movement against his or her will. Districts will need to consider whether physical escort, touching to provide instructional assistance and other forms of physical contact will be specifically excluded from the definition of physical restraint.

### **Physical Restraint is unacceptable when:**

- A known medical/psychological condition contraindicates its use;
- It is used as a means of punishment;
- An adult is seeking student compliance to follow a school rule or staff directive;
- Escorting the student to a different location can be done safely;
- The situation could be deescalated by removing others from the setting;
- The student is engaged in aggressive verbal comments that do not lead to physical aggression.  
**A verbal threat does not constitute a physical danger unless a student also demonstrates a means of or intent to carry out the threat.**
- The student is destroying property that does not pose a substantial risk of harm to self or others;

### **When necessary, physical restraints should be provided:**

- with controlled, unemotional and reassuring statements that concisely give reasons for the restraint and describe the necessary behavior for ending the restraint;
- with the purpose of assisting the student to regain emotional stability;
- for the time necessary to accomplish its purpose;
- with the least amount of force to protect student and staff;
- with the least amount of disturbance to the other students;
- with the presence of another adult whenever possible;
- with as much privacy as possible;
- with the least amount of embarrassment to the student; and
- with staff able to monitor the child's physical well-being throughout the incident.

### **Training on physical restraints should include:**

- Appropriate procedures for preventing the need for physical restraint, including the de-escalation of problematic behavior, and the use of alternatives to restraint;
- Methods for evaluating the risk of harm in individual situations in order to determine whether the use of restraint is warranted;
- The simulated experience of administering and receiving a variety of physical restraint techniques, ranging from minimal physical involvement to very controlling interventions;

- Instruction regarding the effects of physical restraint on the person restrained, including instruction on monitoring physical signs of distress and obtaining medical assistance;
- Instruction regarding documentation and reporting requirements, and investigation of injuries; and
- Demonstration by participants of proficiency in administering physical restraint.

### **Preventing unnecessary physical restraint**

The use of positive proactive behavioral interventions is crucial to the prevention of unnecessary restraints. These may include:

- Use of verbal and nonverbal techniques that assist the de-escalation of behavior and that reduce the tension of an agitated student;
- Helping the student safely communicate her/his needs;
- Hierarchy of planned responses to the behaviors of concern;
- Implementation of a structured and consistent behavior management system;
- Physical structuring of the environment, such as seating away from certain stimuli, room to move, etc.);
- Escorts away from the setting; and
- Removal of others from the setting.