The Use of Physical Restraint and Seclusion in Schools: A Growing Concern

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Across the United States there has been a growing concern that children have been subjected to extremely harsh forms of behavioral interventions within the confines of the schools where they are served. Parents and advocacy groups have argued that, at times, many students have been physically and emotionally abused by the teachers charged with their care. The primary concern regarding these students’ safety deals with the use of seclusion and restraint procedures that many schools have begun implementing in an attempt to manage aggressive behaviors. Unfortunately, many of these interventions have been either misused or abused by staff members, resulting in numerous injuries and deaths. The following section highlights several examples of student abuses that were recently brought to the public’s attention through the media.

Media Stories on Abusive Use of Seclusion and Restraint

- **Arizona.** Five Tucson Unified School District employees were put on notice after an investigation revealed that a student with special needs and with a cognitive disability was routinely left restrained by his backpack straps to a school fence when his bus driver dropped him off until a teacher would arrive to release him to bring him to class (Brodfield, 2009).
- **Florida.** A family is considering suing the Pinellas County school board following an investigation that indicated that a teacher had placed their son into a large “body sock” as a form of punishment (Boy put in “body sock,” 2012).
- **Georgia.** Parents of a 13-year-old boy who hung himself while left unmonitored in a seclusion room are suing a Georgia school district for not informing them that their son was secluded in a concrete room numerous times throughout the school year (Fantz, 2008).
- **Iowa.** Teachers from three Iowa school districts disregarded state rules that limit the use of physical force and time-out rooms to discipline unruly students (Hupp, 2010).