

PHYSICAL RESTRAINT POLICY 3.14.22 Draft

I. Introduction

It is the policy of the Brookline School Committee to promote a safe and productive workplace and educational environment for its employees and students, and to ensure that every student in the Brookline Public Schools is free from the use of physical restraint that is consistent with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regulations, and that physical restraint shall only be used with extreme caution as a last resort in emergency situations, supervised, after other lawful and less intrusive alternatives have failed or been deemed inappropriate.

We believe in preventive and positive approaches to discipline with interventions and consequences aimed at addressing the causes of misbehavior, resolving conflicts, meeting students' needs, and keeping students in school. We believe it is the responsibility of all school staff, students, families, and the community to contribute to a school community that promotes a safe, secure, and learning environment. Preventive and positive discipline is a shared responsibility for students, administrators, teachers, families, and the community. School personnel shall only administer a physical restraint as a last resort when it is needed to protect a student and/or a member of the school community from imminent, serious, physical harm. When a physical restraint needs to be administered, school personnel shall seek to prevent or minimize any harm to the student as a result of the use of the physical restraint. School personnel shall further ensure that the physical restraint is supervised by another adult as quickly as practicable.

This policy shall not be construed to limit the protection afforded to publicly funded students under other federal and state laws, including those laws that provide for the rights of students who have been found eligible to receive special education services. Additionally, this policy shall not be construed to preclude any teacher, employee or agent of a public education program from using reasonable and necessary force to protect students, other persons or themselves from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm.

The Superintendent will develop written procedures and guidelines related to this policy identifying:

- Appropriate responses to student behavior that may require immediate intervention;
- Alternative methods that should be used first when seeking to prevent student violence, self-injurious behavior and/or de-escalating potentially dangerous behavior occurring among groups of students or with an individual student, including alternative methods in emergency situations that avoid resorting to physical restraint.
- Methods for engaging parents in discussions about restraint prevention and use of restraint solely as an emergency procedure;

- A statement prohibiting: medication restraint, mechanical restraint, prone restraint unless permitted by 603 CMR [46.03](#)(1)(b), seclusion, and the use of physical restraint in a manner inconsistent with 603 CMR [46.00](#);
- A process for obtaining Principal/Head of School approval for a time out exceeding 30 minutes.

II. District's Physical Restraint Procedures

A. Definitions

"Consent" shall mean agreement by a parent/guardian/caregiver who has been fully informed of all information relevant to the activity for which agreement is sought, in their native language or other mode of communication, that the parents/guardians/caregivers understand and agree in writing to the carrying out of the activity, and understand that the agreement is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. The agreement describes the activity and lists the records (if any) which will be released and to whom.

"Restraint" shall mean limitation on a student's physical movement using force against the student's resistance.

"Physical restraint" shall mean direct physical contact that prevents or significantly restricts a student's freedom of movement. The term physical restraint does not include prone restraint, mechanical restraint, or medication restraint. Additionally, physical restraint does not include: providing brief physical contact, without force, to promote student safety or limit self-injurious behavior, providing physical guidance or prompting when teaching a skill, redirecting attention, providing comfort, or a physical escort.

"Physical escort" shall mean a temporary touching or holding, without the use of force, of the hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, or back for the purpose of inducing a student who is agitated to walk to a safe location.

"Mechanical restraint" shall mean the use of a physical device to restrict the movement of a student or the movement or normal function of a portion of their body. A protective or stabilizing device ordered by a physician shall not be considered a mechanical restraint. The use of a mechanical restraint is prohibited unless explicitly authorized by the student's physician and consented to in writing by the parents/guardians/caregivers of the student.

"Seclusion" shall mean the involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented, or reasonably believes they will be prevented, from leaving. Seclusion does not include a time-out as defined in 603 CMR [46.02](#). The use of seclusion is expressly prohibited.

"Time-out" shall mean a behavioral support strategy in which a student temporarily separates from the learning activity or the classroom, either by choice or by direction from staff, for the purpose of calming.

"Medication restraint" shall mean the administration of medication for the purpose of temporarily controlling behavior. The use of medication restraint is prohibited unless explicitly authorized by a physician and consented to by the parents/guardians/caregivers of the student.

"Prone restraint" shall mean a restraint in which a student is placed face down on the floor or another surface, and physical pressure is applied to the student's body to keep the student in the prone position. The use of prone restraint is expressly prohibited.

"Principal/Head of School" shall mean the instructional leader of a public education school program or designee.

B. Use of Restraint

Any physical restraint shall be limited to the use of such reasonable force as is necessary, for the least time necessary, to protect a student or another member of the school community from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm. A physical restraint may only be administered by school personnel who have been properly trained in the use of physical restraint.

C. Other Limitations on Use of Restraint

The following practices are expressly prohibited: (i) use of restraint inconsistent with the provisions set forth Section II (B) above (ii) use of physical restraint as a means of discipline or punishment, as a response to the destruction of property or disruption of school order, as a response to a student's refusal to comply with a school rule or staff directive, or as a response to verbal threats when those actions do not constitute a threat of imminent, serious, physical harm;(iii) use of prone restraint; (iv) use of mechanical restraint; (v) use of medication restraint that has not been approved by a physician or consented to by the student's parents/guardians/caregivers; (vi) use of restraint when a student cannot be safely restrained; and (vii) continued use of restraint when students indicate that they cannot breathe, or appear to be in severe distress (including but not limited to: difficulty breathing, sustained or prolonged crying and coughing).

D. Proper Administration of a Physical Restraint

Only trained school personnel shall administer physical restraints. Trained school personnel are those individuals who have received either the in-depth training detailed below, or who have received the required basic training detailed below.

The administration of the physical restraint shall be witnessed by at least one adult, as quickly as practicable, who does not participate in the physical restraint. When administering a physical restraint, school personnel shall use only the amount of force necessary to protect the student or others from physical injury. Program staff shall review and consider any known medical or psychological limitations, known or suspected trauma history, and/or behavioral intervention plans regarding the use of physical restraint on an individual student.

During the administration of a restraint, school personnel shall monitor the physical status of the student, including skin color, temperature and respiration. Any and all

restraint shall be immediately released upon a determination by the school personnel administering the restraint that the student is no longer at risk of causing imminent physical harm to themselves or others. Additionally, restraints shall be administered in such a way as to prevent or minimize physical harm.

At any time during the administration of a physical restraint, school personnel shall seek to contact the Office of Student Services behavioral specialists, or the Crisis Intervention Team, or take other steps to seek medical assistance if it appears that the student is demonstrating significant physical distress.

E. Reporting Requirements

At an appropriate time after a student has been released from a restraint, the restraining staff member shall:

- a. review the restraint with the restrained student and relevant staff to address the behavior that precipitated the restraint;
- b. review the incident with a supervisor to discuss whether proper restraint procedures were followed;
- c. notify the Office of Student Services and principal/head of school in timely fashion;
- d. notify the parents/caregivers/guardians in timely fashion.

F. Records Maintenance

- a. Every use of physical restraint shall be documented in writing and reported to the Office of Student Services and the immediate supervisor of the principal/head of school, including a basic description of what transpired, the name of the student restrained, the name of the staff member who restrained the student, the name(s) of any other staff member(s) who observed the restraint, and the name(s) of any other witnesses.
- c. The principal/head of school shall maintain ongoing records of all reported instances of physical restraint. In order to ensure equitable implementation of this policy, both the principal/head of school and the Office of Student Services shall keep records of all uses of restraint, including relevant demographic data on students involved in any action reported under this policy. This data shall be regularly reviewed by the Superintendent to provide constructive feedback on the policy and PSB practice, and a summary shall be made available to the School Committee at least once per year by the penultimate School Committee meeting in June.

III. District's Training Requirements

A. For All Program Staff

Staff shall receive annual training, within the first month of the school year or their employment, consisting of the following: (a) this policy and related procedures and

guidelines developed by the Superintendent or designee; (b) interventions that may preclude the need for restraint, including de-escalation of problematic behaviors and other alternatives to restraint in emergency circumstances, including use of time-out as a behavior support strategy distinct from seclusion; (c) when behavior presents an emergency that requires physical restraint, the types of permitted physical restraints and related safety considerations, including information regarding the increased risk of injury to a student when any restraint is used, in particular a restraint of extended duration; (d) administering physical restraint in accordance with known medical or psychological limitations and/or behavioral intervention plans applicable to an individual student, including known or suspected trauma history; (e) the role of the student, staff and family in preventing use of restraint; and (f) identification of program staff who have received in-depth training pursuant to 603 C.M.R. [46.03](#)(3) in the use of physical restraint. See 603 C.M.R. [46.03](#)(2).

B. For Staff Authorized to Serve As A School-Wide Resource on the Proper Administration of Physical Restraints

At the beginning of each school year, the principal/head of school of each school shall identify program staff that is authorized to serve as a school-wide resource to assist in ensuring proper administration of physical restraint. The content of the in-depth training shall be thorough and competency-based. See 603 C.M.R. [46.03](#)(3) and [46.03](#)(4).