

Health and Safety

Restraint and Seclusion Policy

Rationale

To guide the Board, Principal and staff in the use of restraint in the school.

Purpose

To ensure that Northern Health School provides a safe physical and emotional environment for all staff, students, their families and that any use of physical restraint is in accordance with the rules and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education.

Guidelines

- a) It should be noted that any form of seclusion is not permitted and will not be used in the school.
- b) Physical restraint will only be used when safety is at serious and imminent risk. Physical restraint will:
 - Be reasonable and proportionate to the circumstances
 - Respect the student and their dignity
- c) De-escalation techniques, including understanding the student, giving them space and communicating calmly will be used before physical restraint.
- d) Physical restraint will follow the Ministry guidelines as to the form of restraint used.
- e) Individual support plans will be in place for specific students where:
 - The student is highly likely to be involved in a situation where physical restraint may be used
 - The student has been physically restrained more than once in a term
 - A support plan is requested by parents/caregivers
- f) Where physical restraint is included in a plan, parents and caregiver consent is required.
- g) The frequency of restraint will be monitored with the intention to minimise or eliminate its use.
- h) The wellbeing of the student will be monitored throughout the restraint process.
- i) Following a restraint incident, the wellbeing of the staff member(s) and the student will be monitored.
- j) After a situation involving physical restraint, NHS will notify the following parties:
 - Staff inform the principal (or their delegate) as soon as possible in order to support students, other staff, and anyone affected by the situation
 - The school notifies parents/caregivers as soon as possible after physical restraint has been used (at minimum before the student is returned to their care). Parents/caregivers are provided with a reasonable opportunity to actively participate in a debrief about the incident, including how it was managed with regard to the guidelines, within three working days of the incident (or later by mutual agreement)
 - The school notifies the Ministry of Education through the online incident reporting form or our student management system. We keep a secure copy of the notification, in line with the Privacy Act 2020 and the Official Information Act 1982
 - The principal reports the use of physical restraint and analysis of physical restraint trends to the board

- k) If the principal considers that use of physical restraint was inappropriate, they are responsible for following up with the board and subsequent reporting to the Teaching Council.
- l) A debrief will be undertaken with staff, witnesses and the student(s) following an incident.
- m) Training will be provided through the Ministry of Education for all authorised staff.
- n) All teachers are automatically authorised to act under the legislation. Where necessary, other employees of the school will be authorised in writing to use physical restraint.

Legislation and associated documentation

The physical restraint rules set out in this policy comply with the Education (Physical Restraint) Rules and the framework for physical restraint set out by the Education and Training Act 2020 (s. 101).

This physical restraint policy also aligns with [Aramai He Tētēkura: A guide to understanding distress and minimising the use of physical restraint](#), which provides a practical approach for recognising and understanding student distress, providing acceptable physical contact, and minimising the use of physical restraint in schools. This includes eliminating unjustified physical restraint.

Definitions

Physical restraint: in the context of this policy, means to use physical force to prevent, restrict, or subdue the movement of a student (or any part of their body) against their will.

Seclusion: is prohibited under the Education and Training Act 2020 (s. 98) and is defined as putting a student alone in a room or space against their will, which they cannot (or think they cannot) leave.

Unsafe physical restraint techniques include:

- Restraint that restricts breathing or communicating, including speaking and sign language
- Face-down restraint
- Immobilising through pressure points and pain holds
- Actions such as tackling, sitting, lying on, or kneeling on a person
- Headlocks or putting pressure on the chest or neck
- Bending joints backwards

We do not use unsafe physical restraint techniques under any circumstances.

Imminent harm: In the context of legislation, imminent harm is an immediate threat that a person will cause and/or suffer harm which jeopardises the health and safety or wellbeing of themselves or others if protective action is not taken immediately.

Significant emotional distress: In the context of legislation, significant emotional distress means harm that is caused by the intentional acts of one person that significantly affects the emotional wellbeing of another person, to such an extent that they need intensive support to cope and recover.

Informed Consent: We provide comprehensive information about the details of an individual support plan to parents/caregivers and whānau so that they can make informed decisions about approving the plan.

This includes information about:

- The positions and holds that would be used, if physical restraint is needed
- The possible impacts of physical restraint and how these will be managed

Even if consent is not included in the plan, teachers and authorised staff may still use physical restraint if it is required to prevent imminent harm.

Adopted August 2023

Presiding Member _____

Review Date August 2026