

Use of Restrictive Procedures in Secure Juvenile Detention Facilities

Statement of the Issue:

Secure juvenile detention facilities in the Commonwealth are permitted to use restrictive procedures under 55 PA Code, Chapter 3800. As defined, a restrictive procedure includes chemical restraint, exclusion and manual restraint and for secure care, mechanical restraint and seclusion. A Department of Public Welfare initiative is underway in Pennsylvania to eliminate the utilization of restrictive procedures within secure juvenile detention facilities and other delinquent and dependent programs governed by Chapter 3800 Regulations.

Nature of the Issue:

- Juvenile detention facilities are legally and ethically bound to provide a safe and secure environment for the youth they serve as well as the community within and outside the confines of the physical plant.
- Juvenile detention facilities care for youth with acute behaviors who can be dangerous to themselves and others and therefore require restrictive procedures when all other options have been exhausted.
- Juvenile detention facilities are required to serve youth with serious mental health issues that are frequently a danger to themselves and require use of restrictive procedures to maintain their safety.
- Juvenile detention facilities utilize research based and validated crisis prevention and intervention programs to decrease the need for employing restrictive procedures and trained staff only employ restrictive procedures when a youth is deemed to be in imminent danger of harming themselves or others.
- Juvenile detention administrators and staff believe that a restraint, by its very employment, does not constitute, program, facility or provider failure.
- JDCAP member programs work continuously to minimize occasions of emergency restraint and to eliminate serious injury to any child who must be restrained.
- JDCAP member programs implement these core beliefs by selecting and training staff; by scrutinizing every client restraint; by systematically refining its best practices and revising its training curricula accordingly; and cooperating affirmatively with professional and governmental oversight.

Position Statement:

The Juvenile Detention Centers' Association of Pennsylvania (JDCAP) supports the use of restrictive procedures in situations where all other crisis intervention techniques have been exhausted and the youth is in imminent danger of harming himself or others. JDCAP believes that efforts to prohibit use of restrictive procedures would serve to jeopardize the safety of the very children detention facilities have been charged with protecting. Furthermore, JDCAP believes that restraint elimination and facility safety cannot be achieved through regulation. JDCAP supports all efforts to reduce the use of restrictive procedures within facilities and acknowledges the need for greater collaboration with the Department of Public Welfare's regulatory and licensing offices; additional funding to support enhanced training; and the mutual employment of credible, research driven best practices.