



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
OFFICE OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
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Richard J. Gold
Deputy Secretary for
Children, Youth and Families

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Dear Colleague:

The use of restraints is a growing concern within this Commonwealth, nationally and internationally, as youth have been injured, emotionally traumatized and have even died as a result of the unnecessary use of restraints. Many deaths and injuries resulting from restraints are unnecessary and preventable. The best way to reduce restraint deaths and injuries is to absolutely minimize restraint use by making it the rare exception rather than the norm. We now know that unnecessary restraints can be eliminated when trauma-informed beliefs and principles are directed by leadership and also carried out with committed action by staff.

In partnership with the Alternatives to Coercive Techniques (ACT) Work Group and providers, the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) is sharing the attached tools to help children's facilities eliminate the use of unnecessary restraints, including tip sheets for De-escalation, Incident Documentation and Debriefing.

Observation of our children and knowledge of their history and triggers should lead staff to engage in early intervention of escalating behaviors that remains our best tool for restraint prevention. Involvement of the child and family in the early and ongoing identification of child specific triggers and approaches to mitigate these triggers are essential in our restraint reduction efforts. There are a variety of strategies that can be employed in treatment planning to help anticipate triggers and the types of events that might lead to de-escalating negative behavior. Debriefing after a restraint is also essential to learn about what caused the event, but also to proactively attempt to mitigate future events. Management and staff should be aware of critical events that may upset the child.

OCYF regional staff will continue to be available to assist in the implementation of strategies and practices that lead to the elimination of unnecessary restraints.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard J. Gold', written over a white background.

Richard J. Gold

Enclosures