



RESPECT



Youth Position Statement on Restraint/Seclusion

Created by The Massachusetts Statewide Youth Experts

In August, September, and December, 2009, eighty youth from across the state of Massachusetts gathered together for youth-only forums to develop a position statement on restraint and seclusion prevention. These forums were comprised of youth experts who experienced restraint and seclusion in mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice and school settings. Their experiences with restraint and seclusion included witnessing restraint and seclusion used with peers and personal experiences ranging from five times to "too many to count." The results of these youth forums are listed below. The youth proposed reasons, practices and values to prevent the use of restraint and seclusion:

1) Restraint and seclusion should be prevented because they:

- a. are overwhelmingly traumatizing experiences and emotionally stressful for youth, staff, and families
- b. injure youth and staff and cause a loss of self-respect and dignity
- c. impact relationships and create a loss of trust between youth and staff
- d. slow treatment progress for youth and result in longer treatment
- e. make people scared and can trigger other youth
- f. create an unsafe unit with unsafe behaviors

2) Things that help prevent restraint and seclusion are:

- a. using sensory strategies such as comfort rooms, music, coping skills, and blanket wraps
- b. having the support and leadership of peers
- c. creating comfortable environments that feel more like home
- d. having more individual time with staff
- e. allowing appropriate physical contact – youth need contact, too
- f. conducting community meetings and encouraging participation in activities such as sports, art, and music can be helpful for youth
- g. using strong communication skills and listening skills
- h. encouraging youth to be active and fully engaged in their treatment
- i. using nonjudgmental positive language and tone of voice and nonthreatening body language
- j. respecting confidentiality
- k. eliminating the use of point and level systems

3) The values that all programs should adopt to prevent restraint and seclusion are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. communication | f. acceptance |
| b. patience and understanding | g. confidence |
| c. respect and appreciation | h. honesty |
| d. compassion and support | i. responsibility |
| e. recovery | |



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