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## PHYSICAL RESTRAINTS AND SECLUSION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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# Physical Restraint and Seclusion in Special Education

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## Background Information

Many students with emotional disturbances are taught in the general education classroom. And while these students often exhibit severe and chronic behaviors (e.g., physical aggression, self-injury) that impact academic achievement and social development, they can be successful in the general education setting with appropriate behavioral intervention. One of the most intensive behavioral interventions employed by school districts are physical restraints and seclusions. However, there have been serious and sometime fatal consequences due to the improper use of these behavioral techniques. The lack of federal guidelines regulating physical restraints and seclusion, as well as the consequence of improper use, have called for some researchers to question the effectiveness of the practice.

## Purpose

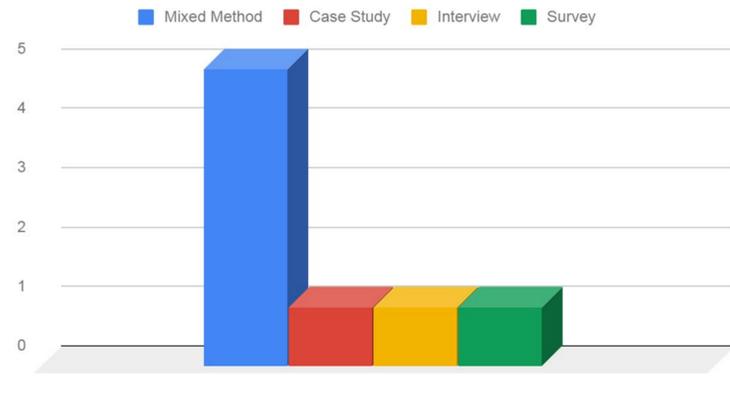
The purpose of this literature review was to examine the use of physical restraints and seclusion as a behavioral intervention for students with emotional disturbances. A synthesis of the research will be provided, as well as recommendations for future research.

## Methodology

A total of 8 articles published from 2000 to 2017 were included in the research synthesis. Studies were analyzed in regards to setting, participants, purpose, measurement, and results.

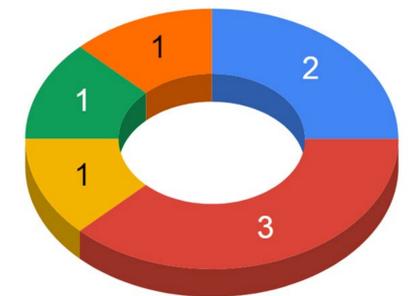
Articles were included in the research synthesis if they (a) were peer-reviewed and (b) included the use of physical restraints and/or seclusion as a behavioral intervention with students with emotional disturbances, or (c) explored the effectiveness of using positive behavioral support programs in reducing the frequency or duration of physical restraints and/or seclusion for students with emotional disturbances.

## Research Method



## Research Setting

- Residential Facility
- Residential/Day School
- Self-Contained Classroom
- Public School District
- No Applicable Setting



## Physical Restraint

- Prevents a student from moving freely or immobilizes the student through force.
- Forcefully holds the student to the floor either in the prone (face-up) or supine (face-down) position.
- Safely re-establishes physical and behavioral control over the student.



Hunsaker, M.R. (2013). "Restraints". Retrieved from <https://www.hawaii.edu/centerforchildrenandadolescents/2013/06/13/on-restraint-and-how-it-is-used-incorrectly/>.

## Seclusion

- Involuntarily confines the student or prevents the student from leaving a room/area.
- Removes the student from an environment; prevent student from receiving reinforcement for behavior.
- Often involuntarily locked in a room with padding.



Rappe, D. (2017). "Some schools use controversial 'seclusion rooms'". Retrieved from [https://www.enrthnews.com/news/local/news/some-schools-use-controversial-seclusion-rooms/article\\_032409b9-e280-5d47-b55c-374b0721952d.html](https://www.enrthnews.com/news/local/news/some-schools-use-controversial-seclusion-rooms/article_032409b9-e280-5d47-b55c-374b0721952d.html)

## Synthesis of Research Studies

- There were very few research studies performed in public schools.
- Limited research on the effectiveness of physical restraints as a behavioral intervention; lack of evidence or rationale.
- Physical restraints and seclusion may increase student aggression and could provide accidental reinforcement.
- Positive behavioral support programs (e.g., Shifting Gears, Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention, etc.) and/or staff trainings were found to be more effective at reducing physical aggression and behavior.

## Future Research

- Additional research on the frequency and use of physical restraints and seclusion in the public schools.
- Longitudinal research on the effectiveness of positive behavioral support programs and/or trainings as behavioral interventions in reducing physical restraints and seclusion.
- Develop guidelines for the use of physical restraints and seclusion in public schools at the district and national level.