

PRESS RELEASE

National Disability Rights Network Releases Shocking Report on Seclusion & Restraint in U.S. Schools

During Capitol Hill News Conference Today, Group Calls for National Ban on Seclusion and Prone Restraint, Increased Teacher Training and Other Immediate Action Items By Obama Administration and Congress

WASHINGTON (January 13, 2009) – The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) today unveiled a disturbing national report on seclusion and restraint in U.S. schools. The report shows an unsettling use of seclusion and restraint tactics, which resulted in physical and emotional injuries as well as deaths, in schools affecting students from grades K-12. The report documents cases that range from students being locked in rooms or even boxes for hours to students who were encouraged to release their aggression by wrestling in “WWF Rooms.”

“This report documents dozens of seclusion and prone restraint cases that have resulted in injuries and even death,” said Curt Decker, executive director of the National Disability Rights Network. “We feel that these numbers represent just the tip of the iceberg as there is no national reporting structure or official tracking of such incidents.”

NDRN held a news conference on Capitol Hill today, outlining specific cases of abuse and identifying inconsistent state laws and a lack of government oversight and investigation of this issue. NDRN also called for the incoming Obama administration and 111th Congress to ban the use of prone restraint and seclusion under federal law. The group is also calling for a national summit to devise plans to implement these bans and encourage the use of evidence-based positive behavioral supports.

“Children are supposed to be safe at school - and most of the time they are,” said U.S. Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT), who also spoke at the briefing. “Unfortunately, this report shows us that in too many schools in too many places children with disabilities are not safe - and are often subjected to inhuman treatment: being locked in rooms, tied down, or worse. Armed with this report, I will continue to work toward banning the inappropriate use of seclusion and restraint in our schools and ensuring the public knows and learns more about these practices.”

“This report raises serious questions about the treatment of schoolchildren, the qualifications and training of staff, and what actions have been taken to address these unconscionable practices.

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No child should be at risk or in danger while at school, no matter what the circumstances,” said U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. “Our committee will hold a hearing to look at how we can address and hopefully end these horrific acts.”

NDRN’s report makes several additional recommendations to quickly remedy this growing problem. Besides recommendations made to the Obama administration and the 111th Congress, the report provides a specific list of recommendations for state legislatures, boards of education and local school districts.

“Seclusion and prone restraint in schools is a widespread problem that the public and even parents know little about,” Decker said. “The goal of our report is to alert the public and also to provide guidance to key stakeholders on how to quickly resolve the issue.”

The report is a compilation of cases outlined by NDRN’s 57-member network of protection and advocacy (P&As) systems nationwide. The group works to ensure that people with disabilities are afforded equality of opportunity and are able to fully participate by exercising choice and self-determination.

To view the report in its entirety, please visit www.NDRN.org.

ABOUT NDRN

The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) is the nonprofit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Systems and Client Assistance Programs (CAP) for individuals with disabilities. Collectively, the P&A/CAP network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the United States.

Through training and technical assistance, legal support, and legislative advocacy, the National Disability Rights Network works to create a society in which people with disabilities are afforded equality of opportunity and are able to fully participate by exercising choice and self-determination.

The National Disability Rights Network serves a wide range of individuals with disabilities – including, but not limited to, those with cognitive, mental, sensory, and physical disabilities – by guarding against abuse; advocating for basic rights; and ensuring accountability in health care, education, employment, housing, transportation, and within the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

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Media Note: For more details on individual cases outlined in the report or specific cases in your state please contact Brian Remsberg at 864-232-6380 or BrianR@IMRE.com.

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