

ODE Reports 5,000 Student Restraint Incidents in First Year of New Policy

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The Department of Education has assembled its first year of data after implementation of a new restraint and seclusion policy that found almost all cases of restraint involved students with disabilities.

School survey data shows 5,000 restraints occurred last year, with that number potentially involving the same students multiple times, ODE Assistant Director of Resource Management Jo Hannah Ward told the State Board of Education's Achievement Committee.

The bulk of the restraints reported were for students who have autism or emotional disabilities, she said.

"Of the number of restraints that were reported across the state...about 97% of those restraints were students with disabilities" and 3% general education students, Ms. Ward said.

Ms. Ward said the agency received 760 survey responses. Participation is mandatory, but about 50 districts are still being prodded into submitting them.

Although the data will serve as a baseline for the annual surveys going forward, ODE Director of the Office of Exceptional Children Sue Zake said she thinks it will take three to five years before the state can determine what impact the new policy had.

"The other part of this impact isn't just about reducing the numbers of restraint and seclusion, it's about how do we build healthy school climates that support student learning and achievement," she said. "Our best indicator of success is achievement."

The State Board of Education established a policy that requires schools to reduce their use of seclusion and restraint as a mode of student discipline and instead employ a method called "positive behavior intervention and supports."

"It is a data-based decision-making framework that guides selection and implementation of evidence-based practices to improve student outcomes," ODE Assistant Director of Diverse Learners Wendy Stoica said.

"While it's a framework and an approach, it's not a packaged curriculum. It's not software that's developed or created through the Internet and then purchased as a packaged curriculum, scripted interventions, or in any way a manualized strategy. It's prevention-oriented for school personnel to organize evidence-based practices, improve their implementation of their practices and then maximize both academic and social behavior outcomes for all students."

Districts use certain "universal" interventions for all students in all settings to prevent behavioral problems. Smaller segments of the student population require more than that, however, Ms. Ward said.

"Just as we provide direct or targeted group interventions that are academic in nature, we must provide targeted group interventions that are behavioral for about 5-10% of those students," she said.

Also, about 1% to 5% of students in most schools need intensive academic interventions and the same percentage need intensive behavioral treatment.

The legislature also made a minor change to the restraint and seclusion policy to incorporate charter schools under the rule. The state board had been unable through their authority to apply the language to community schools, so the General Assembly last month enacted such a change ([HB 178](#)).

Board member [C. Todd Jones](#), a Kasich-appointee, said he wants to have the rule from legislation ready for a committee vote next month so that by the time it goes through the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review process it will be effective for next school year. He asked how charter schools have responded to the policy this past year even though it does not yet apply to them.

Ms. Zake said the network of state support teams do work that addresses all constituents in their regions without making a distinction between district and charter. If the community schools have written PBIS into their improvement plans, they receive state support for the policy's implementation.

"Just due to the fact that we had the number of community schools respond to this survey and the kinds of inquiries we're getting from community schools...tells us that there's an interest, a willingness to move forward," she said. "So we're not making a distinction as to whether you're an ESC or career-tech center, a traditional district or a community school in this work. It's for all. "I would say that the interest is good, it's positive and hopefully our community school partners will see that the extension of the rule is just merely something that they already have underway as opposed to something unique and different being applied to them."

Ms. Ward also informed the board about a federal grant it received to make schools safer and increase access to mental health services. The five-year Making Ohio AWARE funding started in October and is expected to touch 1,860 students and 98,000 households in three counties: Wood, Cuyahoga and Warren.

She said the focus is to increase the: number of individuals who receive training in prevention and mental health promotion, number of organizations that enter into formal agreements to improve mental health activities, number of students who receive school-based mental health services, and percentage of mental health referrals for community services.

It also aims to decrease the percentage of students who report: consuming alcohol on one or more occasions, being in physical fights at school, not going to school on one or more days because they felt unsafe at or on their way to school.

"We expect to increase school connectedness and that we will be measuring that by attendance, by academic success, college and career readiness and graduation rates, as well as decreasing discipline problems, suspension and school removal, incidents of bullying, academic failure and dropout," Ms. Ward said.

- See more at: http://www.gongwer-oh.com/programming/news.cfm?article_ID=840080201#sthash.n320FZEs.dpuf