

## **Implementing Rule 4500 – Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Schools:**

### **A Strategy for Building Administrators**

State Board Rule 4500 includes a set of procedural requirements that must be followed by all of Vermont's learning environments receiving public funding over which the Vermont Department of Education has regulatory authority. This document is a quick reference guide to the Rule including some strategies for implementation.

Since behavioral crises do not happen by appointment, are not always easily predictable and may involve students with no known history of violent behavior, compliance with Rule 4500 requires building level capacity to both prevent and respond to violent behavior.

Rule 4500 requires the building administrator to keep a written record of each use of restraint and seclusion. Ultimately, it is in the interest of the building administrator to strategically prepare for compliance with Rule 4500 as part of the charge of the charge of maintaining school safety.

A school-wide plan starts with prevention. The modeling, teaching and practicing of appropriate social skills consistent with clearly articulated school wide expectations are foundational to a school's prevention plan. A framework that emphasizes prevention also includes systemic staff acknowledgement and recognition of appropriate behavior and consistent application of an effective school-wide response to rule infractions.

An effective crisis plan depends on a group of trained staff (crisis team) who are available throughout the school day and during school events. The team's role is to respond to and support students through a behavioral crisis in a manner that preserves the safety and dignity of all using procedures consistent with Rule 4500. In small schools the team may be comprised of three individuals, while in larger schools six to ten may be necessary. Crisis teams respond to incidents ranging from severe and dangerous student disruption to violent misconduct.

Occasionally, crisis management may involve the use of restraint or seclusionary time out. As required by Rule 4500, any staff participating in the restraint of a student must have had prior training from a program listed in the Commissioner's Directory of Recommended Restraint Programs or a program that has received separate approval for use in a specific school/program. (unless trained personnel are not immediately available)

**4502.4** Physical restraint or seclusion shall only be imposed:

a. By school personnel or contract service providers who have been trained to provide the selected intervention unless, due to the unforeseeable nature of the danger of the circumstance, trained personnel are not immediately available;

Crisis team preparation typically includes training and ongoing practice in behavior management, de-escalation skills, personal safety and safe and supportive physical

intervention. Since effective and safe restraint may require at least three people to intervene, schools need to have an adequate number of trained staff on crisis teams.

Additionally, the crisis team must have a system in place for quick notification and response time. Since the procedures required by Rule 4500 include the responsibilities for staff taking part in the restraint or seclusion, familiarity with all parts of Rule 4500 is necessary, including:

- Knowledge of permissible and prohibited uses of restraint and seclusion (4501, 4502)
- Procedures for reporting and documenting the use of restraint and seclusion (4503)
- Parent notification (4503.2)
- Procedures and skills for debriefing with students, staff and parents (4505)
- Requirements for inclusion in a student's individual safety plan. (4502.3)

Finally, the building administrator must have overarching knowledge of Rule 4500. In addition to the items listed above the administrator is responsible for:

- Providing annual notification (4506)
- Establishing a procedure for the required routine physical/medical assessment of the student who was restrained or placed in seclusion (4501.4)
- Maintaining written records of each restraint and seclusion along with reporting to the Superintendent when a restraint or seclusion meets the criteria for such a report. (4503)

Further guidance for implementing Rule 4500 is located on the Vermont Department of Education's web-site. <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/rules/4500.html>

For further guidance or information, call Richard Boltax 828 5125 or [Richard.boltax@state.vt.us](mailto:Richard.boltax@state.vt.us)