

Vermont State Board Rule 4500 Training: Restraint and Seclusion in Vermont Schools

Vermont Agency of Education

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Webinar Logistics

- You will be muted during this session. Please use the chat box or raise your hand.
- You may show or hide your video.
- This session is being recorded. Please email Anne Dubie for access.
- All materials can be found online (link in chat).

Introduction

The purpose of this session is to ensure that all educators, administrators, and school staff understand:

- What Rule 4500 requires,
- When (and when not) restraint or seclusion may be used,
- The processes for documentation, reporting, and debriefing, and
- Create learning environments where safety, respect, and positive supports prevent the need for restraint or seclusion.

These rules are applicable to all learning environments that receive public funding, or over which the Vermont Department of Education has regulatory authority (4500.2 Applicability).

Our Shared Goal

By the end of this training, you will:

- Be familiar with the definitions, conditions, and reporting requirements of Rule 4500.
- Ensure safe, supportive learning environments by using **restraint and seclusion only as last-resort emergency measure**, while strengthening prevention, positive supports, and reporting practices.

Agenda

- Purpose of Rule 4500
 - Why this matters
- Key Definitions
- When restraint and seclusion may be used
- Prohibitions and limitations
- Documentation, reporting, and debriefing
- Prevention and alternatives
- Roles & responsibilities
- Resources and supports

Why This Matters

- Rule 4500 exists to protect the rights, dignity, and safety of all students.
- It also provides clear guidelines to staff, reducing uncertainty and liability while ensuring practices align with state and federal law.
- Most importantly, it emphasizes that restraint and seclusion are emergency measures only. Restraint and Seclusion should **only be used when there is imminent risk of substantial physical injury**, and never as punishment or routine behavior management.

Definitions

Restraint

Physical Restraint means the use of physical force to prevent an imminent and substantial risk of bodily harm to the student or others.

Physical restraint does NOT include:

- Brief, limited physical contact to prevent harm or remove a disruptive student who refuses to leave voluntarily
- Minimal contact to physically escort a student
- Hand-over-hand assistance with feeding or task completion
- Techniques prescribed by a qualified medical professional for safety, therapy, or medical treatment

Physical Restraint- Moving

- A restraint, that needs to follow 4500 protocol by being temporary or momentary physical contact. For moving directly from one place to another and uses more than minimal force. There is restriction of the student's movement, **and the student is physically resisting by not moving of their own accord and is attempting to halt movement.**



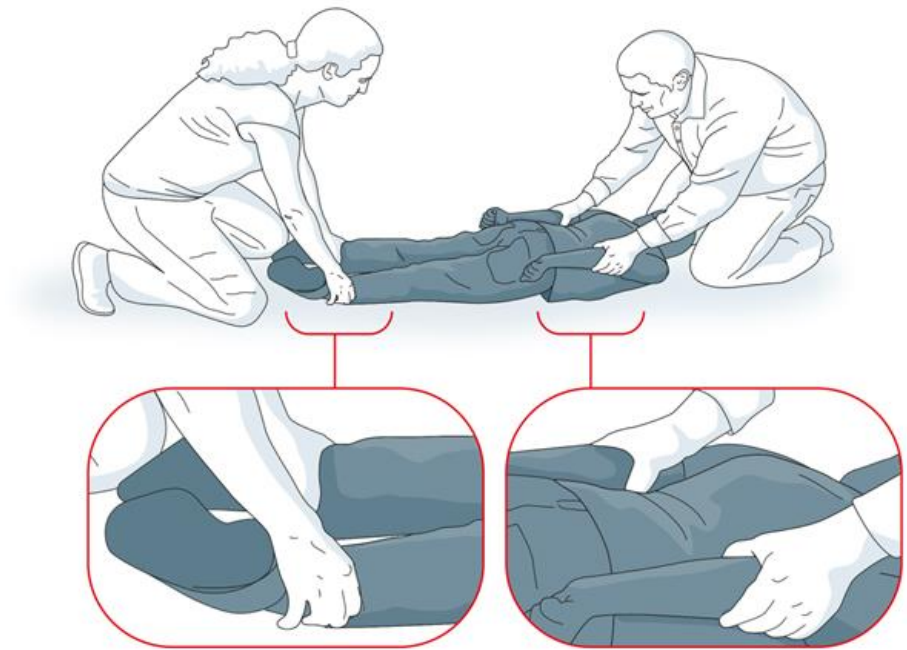
Physical Restraint- Supine

- Holding a student on his or her back using physical force for the purpose of controlling the student's movement.



Physical Restraint- Prone

- Holding a student face down on his or her stomach using physical force for the purpose of controlling the student's movement.



Physical Escort

- Physical escort means the temporary touching or holding, without the use of force, of the hand, wrist, arm, or back of a student who is exhibiting minimal resistance for the purpose of directing movement from one place to another.



Moving Restraint vs Physical Escort

Escort (Not Considered Restraint)

Examples:

- Lightly holding a student's elbow while walking them to the hallway after class.
- Guiding a younger student by the hand to the nurse's office.
- Placing a hand on a student's shoulder to direct them toward the exit after dismissal.

Key Point: The student is cooperating with movement; force is minimal.

Moving Restraint (Considered Restraint – Rule 4500 Protocol Required)

Examples:

- Two staff members physically lifting or dragging a student who is refusing to walk.
- Forcing a student forward while they push backward against staff.
- Using strong arm holds to compel a resisting student into another room.

Key Point: The student is actively resisting, movement is restricted by force, and the restraint must be documented and reported.

Prone and Supine Restraints

- **Prohibited** – except when ALL conditions are met:
 - Student's **size or severity of behavior** requires it
 - A **less restrictive restraint** has failed
 - OR a less restrictive restraint would be **ineffective**

More restrictive restraints = **Unsafe for Students and Staff**

Seclusion

- The confinement of a student alone in a room or area
- The student is prevented or reasonably believes he or she will be prevented from leaving
- Does NOT include time-out or private processing, in which the student is not left alone and is under adult supervision

Additional Definitions

“Imminent Risk” is defined in Memorandum of Rule 4500 Definition Guidance as:

- “A real and immediate threat of serious physical harm to self or others, requiring urgent intervention. The risk must be observable and not speculative.”

“Substantial Risk” is defined in Rule 4500.3(13) as:

- “An imminent threat of bodily harm where there is an ability to enact such harm. Substantial risk shall exist only if all other less restrictive alternatives to defuse the situation have been exhausted or failed or the level of risk prohibits exhausting other means.”

Substantial Risk

Imminent

+

Significant Bodily Harm

=

Substantial Risk

Comments and/or Questions on Definitions?



Rule 4500: Universal PreK

Rule 4500: Universal PreK (Under Age 5)

- **Restraint:** VT early childhood regulations strictly prohibit restraint except in rare, emergency circumstances. Only if student poses **imminent risk** and all **less restrictive options have failed**
- **Seclusion: Prohibited** in UPK settings
- Children must be under **continuous adult supervision**
- Discipline must be **developmentally appropriate**
- Aligned with **Child Development Division** licensing regulations

Future Questions and Inquiries

Universal PreK programs should contact the **AOE Early Learning Team** with questions regarding the developmental appropriateness of restraint and seclusion, for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children.

AOE.UPK@vermont.gov

Permissible Use of Restraint

Restraint May Be Used...

Only When ...

- **Imminent and substantial risk** of physical injury
- **Less restrictive interventions** failed or would be ineffective
- Consistent with the **school-wide safety plan**
- Student is **always monitored face-to-face**
- Used in a manner that is **safe, proportionate, and sensitive** to the student's characteristics (age, disability, culture, trauma history)
- Applied only by **trained and certified staff**

Permissible Use of Seclusion

Seclusion May Be Used...

Only when ...

- Student's behavior poses imminent risk of substantial physical injury
- Less restrictive interventions have failed or would be ineffective
- Staff are trained
- Temporary intervention
- Monitored at all times
- Space large enough; adequately lit, heated ventilated; free of dangerous objects; in compliance with fire/safety codes
- No known contraindications
- Physical restraint contraindicated

Seclusion May Be Used (cont.)...

- Only when imminent risk ...
- Only when less restrictive failed
- Only with trained staff
- Only as temporary intervention
- Only when monitored
- Only if space meets criteria
- Only when no known contraindications
- **Only when physical restraint is contraindicated**

When Restraint May Be Contraindicating

Medical conditions:

- Severe asthma, seizure disorder, brittle bone disease, heart condition, shunt, or other health issues that make restraint dangerous.

Physical limitations or injuries:

- Recent surgery, broken bones, or musculoskeletal conditions where applying pressure could cause harm.

Psychological or trauma-related contraindications:

- Student has a history of trauma (e.g., abuse, neglect, PTSD) where physical restraint would likely escalate danger, re-traumatize, or result in extreme distress.

Age/size differences:

- Very young children or significant size mismatches between staff and student where restraint would pose a higher risk of injury.

Environmental safety:

- Setting makes safe restraint impossible (tight space, unsafe surfaces, no trained staff available).

Seclusion vs. Restraint

- **Seclusion** is permitted only when physical restraint is contraindicating.
- **Restraint** is considered **less restrictive and is always the preferred option**
- **Seclusion must not be used** unless restraint has been deemed inadvisable
- There are valid reasons for determining restraint is not appropriate

Comments and/or Questions on Permissible use?



Prohibited Interventions

Rule 4501.1 & 4501.2

Prohibited Interventions

4501.1 – Absolutely Prohibited

- Mechanical restraint
- Chemical restraint
- Any restraint, escort, or seclusion that:
 - Restricts breathing or communication
 - Causes pain
 - Occurs without direct visual contact

4501.2 – Restraint/Seclusion May NOT Be Used For:

- Staff convenience
- Substitute for education, staffing, or training
- Discipline or punishment
- Profanity, disrespect, or verbal threats alone

Rule 4500: Additional Considerations for Students with Disabilities

- Must align with IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) & Section 504 requirements
- Cannot replace educational programming or supports
- IEP/504 team review required if restraint/seclusion is repeated
- Emphasis on prevention and positive supports
- Parents must be notified; documentation is critical

Comments and/or Questions on Prohibited Interventions?



Termination of Interventions

Termination of Restraint/Seclusion

Rule 4502.5 – Restraint or seclusion must be ended **immediately** when:

- Student shows **pain, distress, or compromised breathing/communication**
- Behavior no longer poses **imminent danger** of injury or property damage
- **Less restrictive interventions** would effectively address the risk

Following the Termination of the Intervention

After termination, the student must:

- Be **evaluated and monitored** for the rest of the school day
- Receive a **routine physical/medical assessment** by someone **not involved** in the restraint/seclusion
- Have any **injuries documented**

Comments and/or Questions on Termination of Interventions?



Reporting Restraint/Seclusion

Rule 4503.1

Reporting to Administrator

Any staff member who uses restraint or seclusion must:

- Report the incident to the **school administrator**
- **As soon as possible**
- **No later than the end of the school day**

Rule 4503.2

Reporting to Parents/Guardians

Administrator must:

- Make a **documented attempt** to notify parents/guardians verbally or electronically
 - **As soon as practical**, but no later than the end of the school day
- Provide **written notice within 24 hours** including:
 1. Date and time of restraint/seclusion
 2. Description of the intervention(s) used
 3. Date and time of the debriefing session
 - Parents/Guardians must be offered the chance to participate
 4. Contact person's name and phone number

Rule 4503.3

Reporting to the Superintendent

Administrator must notify the Superintendent within 3 school days if:

- Death, injury, or hospitalization occurred
- An employee/provider used restraint/seclusion **3+ times**
- Restraint lasted **over 15 minutes**
- A student was restrained/secluded **3+ times per school year**
 - A student was restrained/secluded **more than once in a single day**
 - The student is **not on a behavioral intervention plan**
 - **Any prohibited practice** was used or Rule 4500 violated

Note: In non-public schools, reports go to the SU Superintendent of the sending district (or to the Commissioner if no SU/LEA exists).

Rule 4503.4

Reporting to the AOE

The Superintendent must report to the Agency of Education within **3 school days** (of receipt of report) if:

- Death, injury requiring outside medical treatment, or hospitalization occurred
- Restraint/seclusion lasted **more than 30 minutes**
- Restraint/seclusion was used **in violation of Rule 4500**
 - Includes use of any prohibited restraint/seclusion

Report must include all information required under Rule 4504.

New Reporting Forms

Internal Report Form:

- A fillable [Rule 4500: Internal Restraint/Seclusion Documentation Report \(School Year 2025-2026\)](#) of the reporting form has been developed for internal reporting purposes (e.g., staff to administrator and administrator to superintendent).

Online Reporting Form:

- For incidents that meet the criteria to be **reported to the Secretary/Agency of Education**, reports must be sent virtually using the online report form.

[Rule 4500: Mandated Restraint/Seclusion Documentation Report \(School Year 2025-2026\)](#)

Comments and/or Questions on Reporting?



Documentation

Rule 4504

Documentation Requirements

The Administrator must maintain a written record including:

- Student's name, age, gender, grade
- Date, time, and duration of restraint/seclusion
- Any injuries, hospitalization, or death of student/staff
- Location of incident
- Precipitating event(s)
- Staff involved in application, monitoring, supervision
- Type of restraint or seclusion used
- Reason for use
- Other interventions attempted prior
- Whether student has a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), Individual Education Plan (IEP), 504, or Educational Support Team plan (EST)
- Date parent notification was provided

Comments and/or Questions on Documentation?



Debriefing

Rule 4505

Debriefing Requirements

Administrator ensures follow-up debriefing after each incident

Within 2 school days:

- Review incident with **student** (age-appropriate)
- Review incident with **staff involved** (procedures & prevention)

Within 4 school days:

- Provide parents opportunity to participate in review
- Send written/email notice with meeting details
- Meeting at a mutually acceptable time & place

Follow-up actions determined in consultation with parents

Debriefing With The Student

- Must occur **within 2 school days**
- Conducted by a **trained staff member**
- Utilize **debriefing techniques** from the recommended training program
- Review the incident and discuss:
 - **Precipitating behaviors**
 - Strategies for future prevention
 - Implementation of Positive behavior interventions/replacement behaviors
- Conversation should be age- and developmentally appropriate

Debriefing With Staff

- Occurs **within 2 school days**
- With the staff member(s) who administered the intervention
- Review whether **proper procedures were followed**
- Discuss use of **preventative strategies**
- Incorporate **techniques from recommended training program**

Debriefing With Parents

- Parents may choose to participate
- Must occur within 4 school days
- Parents receive written notice of the meeting
- Review the incident together
- Determine specific follow-up actions
- Meeting held at a mutually acceptable time and place

Comments and/or Questions on Debriefing?



Annual Notification

Rule 4506

Annual Notification

Requirement:

- At or before the start of each school year, schools must inform:
 - **All school personnel**
 - **Parents of enrolled students**

Notification must include:

- School policies on use of restraint and seclusion
- Commitment to **positive behavioral interventions & supports**
- Clear intent to **avoid restraint and seclusion** whenever possible

Comments and/or Questions on Annual Notification?



Complaints and Investigations

Rule 4507.1

Filing a Complaint

Who can file:

- Parent(s)
- School personnel

Process:

- May file at any time under district policy
- Complaint must be in **writing**, directed to school administrator
- If verbal: administrator completes form and provides copy to complainant

Rule 4507.2

Investigating a Complaint

Requirements:

All complaints must be investigated by the school or district

- Gather staff statements and relevant documentation.
- Check whether approved restraint programs and techniques were used.
- Determine if Rule 4500 requirements (imminent risk standard, termination conditions, monitoring) were followed.
- Look for patterns of concern (e.g., repeated incidents with same staff/student).

Written findings must be issued within **30 days**

- Share findings, conclusions, and any corrective action steps.
- Keep a copy of all communications in central records.

Rule 4507.3

Unresolved Complaints

If not resolved:

- Complaint must be directed to **Superintendent** of the Supervisory Union
- Processed under school board's established complaint policy process
- Escalation to AOE
- Students on **IEPs or 504 Plans** may also use dispute resolution under Rules 2365.1.4 – 2365.1.6

Comments and/or Questions on Complaints and Investigations?



Monitoring & Corrective Action

Rule 4508

Monitoring & Corrective Action

The Agency of Education's Role:

- Reviews reports received under Rule 4503.4
- Identifies schools needing additional training
- If reports show **over-use** of restraint/seclusion:
 - School must work with AOE to create a **Corrective Action Plan (CAP)**

Comments and/or Questions on Monitoring and Corrective Action?



State Recommended Trainings

Rule 4509

State Recommended Training

Directory maintained by AOE must include programs covering:

- **Prevention & de-escalation**
 - Relationship-building, alternatives to restraint
- **Identifying dangerous behaviors**
 - Evaluating risk of harm
- **Simulated practice**
 - Administering & receiving restraint techniques
- **Effects of restraint**
 - Monitoring distress, when to seek medical help
- **Handling injuries & complaints**

Use of Other Programs

Schools may use other training programs not on the state list if only after a plan is submitted to the **AOE** showing:

- Program meets all the components of **Rule 4500**
- Includes all required training elements

Comments and/or Questions on State Recommended Trainings?



Future Questions and Inquiries

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