

CODE: HAH.AR

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TOPIC: Division Seclusion Rooms and Use of Physical Restraint

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REVIEW YEAR: (2026)

OBJECTIVE

To confirm the Division’s responsibilities as defined in Section 33(1)(d) of the *Education Act* to establish practices and standards that prioritize the safety and well-being of students and staff within a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environment.

To provide clear expectations with respect to the use of seclusion rooms and physical restraint in the Division.

DEFINITIONS

Seclusion room is a dedicated area in the school intended to provide a safe, quiet and supervised space for students whose behaviour poses an imminent danger of physical harm to themselves and/or others. All Division seclusion rooms must be recognized by Division infrastructure staff as meeting the standards for a seclusion room.

Alberta Education defines a seclusion room as “a room, structure or enclosure in a school operated by a school authority, the primary purpose or use of which involves the involuntary confinement or isolation of a student where the student is prevented or incapable of evacuating from the room, structure or enclosure without the assistance of another person because security measures are not under the student’s control. All seclusion environments are safe, humane and abide by all building, safety and fire codes, free of items that may be harmful to students, adequately lit, well-ventilated and at a suitable temperature”.

Sensory room is a dedicated area in the school where students can stimulate or calm their senses by engaging with a range of equipment, lighting or sounds. A sensory room is designed to support self-regulation and positive behaviour and can be used by one or more students at a time. A sensory room is not intended to be used as a seclusion room.

Crisis management includes decisions or actions informed through training that are used by staff only as a last resort when a student’s behaviour is dangerous or imminently dangerous. These decisions and actions are used to ensure student and staff safety and are comprised of a range of strategies and procedures, including but not limited to: physical restraint and the use of a seclusion room.

Physical restraint, as defined by Alberta Education, is “any method of using physical contact for restricting or immobilizing another person’s freedom of movement, physical activity or normal access to their body. It is a personal restriction that serves as a means of controlling an individual’s movement, reconstituting behavioural control and establishing and maintaining safety for the individual and other individuals”.

RESPONSIBILITY

Central Administration has the responsibility for:

- Providing access to specialized expertise and support to schools in the area of implementing positive and proactive strategies to reduce the need for the use of crisis management procedures.
- Developing, reviewing and updating training standards that address:
 - Positive and proactive strategies.
 - Function-based approaches to problem behaviour.
 - Crisis management procedures, including the use of seclusion rooms and/or physical restraint.
- Coordinating and delivering training for staff.
- Maintaining a record of staff who meet training standards.
- Managing processes to support the establishment and ongoing maintenance of seclusion rooms that adhere to provincial infrastructure standards.
- Decommissioning or repurposing seclusion rooms that schools have determined are no longer required to support the school's crisis management strategy.
- Maintaining a record of Division schools with operational seclusion rooms.
- Overseeing the PowerSchool documentation tool and data.
- Adhering to provincial reporting requirements on behalf of Division schools.

The principal has the responsibility for:

- Engaging with students, staff and parents/guardians around expectations and standards related to the use of seclusion rooms and/or physical restraint.
- Facilitating access to and collaborating with appropriate specialized expertise to support school staff in managing challenging behaviour through positive and proactive strategies to reduce the need for crisis response strategies.
- Determining if the school requires a seclusion room as part of a crisis management strategy.
- Ensuring that any use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint in the school adheres to Division expectations and provincial standards.
- Ensuring that the school staff who may implement the use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint as a crisis management strategy meet training standards; when there is potential for the use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint schools are required to have a minimum of two staff who meet training standards.
- Ensuring parents/guardians of students with an Individual Behaviour Support Plan (IBSP) are informed of Division expectations (as articulated by this administrative regulation) related to seclusion rooms and physical restraint.
- Supporting staff in their work with parents/guardians around the development of an IBSP that includes the potential use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint.
- Ensuring there is a process in place to notify parents/guardians about the use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint with their child; this notification must occur as soon as possible after the incident and on the same school day as the incident.
- Reviewing and approving the PowerSchool documentation data relevant to the use of seclusion rooms and physical restraint.
- Working with Central Administration overseeing infrastructure around logistics related to the establishment, modification, maintenance, decommissioning or repurposing of a seclusion room.

REGULATION

A. DIVISION PRINCIPLES

1. When making decisions around the use of behavioural interventions, staff in Edmonton Public Schools put the safety, well-being and dignity of students and staff first. Within the school community, this is a shared responsibility between Division staff and families.
2. Staff use a strengths-based approach, professional judgment, provincial standards, Division expectations and our legal responsibilities to inform decisions that prioritize safety in all situations.
3. These decisions reflect a range of developmentally and age-appropriate supports and interventions and are always intended to support students towards positive and safe behaviour.
4. Students are most successful when school staff and families work together. This includes the development and implementation of a student's IBSP.
5. The use of seclusion rooms and/or physical restraint are not substitutes for comprehensive, proactive and positive behaviour supports; they are measures of last resort to manage crisis situations.

B. DIVISION EXPECTATIONS

1. In all situations, staff make decisions that prioritize safety, as per Section 33(1)(d) of the *Education Act*, which states, "*A board, as a partner in education, has the responsibility to ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by the board and each staff member employed by the board is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging*".
2. Seclusion rooms and/or physical restraint are to only be used as part of a crisis management strategy when:
 - a. The behaviour of a student poses an imminent threat to the safety of the student and/or others.
 - b. Less restrictive interventions are not possible or are proving ineffective at ending the threat to safety.
 - c. The threat to safety can be diminished by using a seclusion room and/or physical restraint.
 - d. Their use is conducted in a manner that reduces the risk of harm to the student and/or others.
3. Seclusion rooms and/or physical restraint are never to be used:
 - a. As punishment, discipline, to force compliance or as a response to disruptive behaviour.
 - b. To stop a student who is engaging in destructive behaviour such as damaging property, unless there is an immediate risk to the safety of the student and/or others.
 - c. As substitutes for appropriate educational support.
 - d. When a physical, psychological or other type of condition that has been diagnosed and/or verified by a medical professional would make the use of a seclusion room or physical restraint dangerous for a student. The information must be provided in writing by the medical professional who made this judgement; this information will be documented in the student's IBSP.
4. Seclusion rooms and physical restraint are only to be implemented by staff who meet training standards.

5. In addition to meeting training standards, staff implementing the use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint must:
 - a. Maintain continuous visual and aural monitoring of the student.
 - b. Be familiar with or have access to the student's IBSP.
 - c. Ensure the student has access to food, water and bathroom facilities, when safe and appropriate to do so.
6. During the implementation of a crisis management strategy, staff will:
 - a. Only use physical restraint as a procedure when the student's behaviour poses a greater risk to safety than the potential risk associated with the use of physical restraint.
 - b. Ensure that a student remains in a seclusion room or in physical restraint only until their behaviour no longer poses an imminent threat to the safety of the student and/or others.
 - c. Ensure that a student attempting to engage in severe self-injurious behaviour is supported with direct adult supervision at all times.
 - d. Ensure that a student who is unable to adequately express themselves through speech is supported at all times by staff who are able to communicate with the student.
7. When a student has a history of crisis-level behaviour or a student's behaviour can be reasonably predicted to pose an imminent threat to the safety of the student and/or others, a functional behaviour assessment must be conducted to inform the development of an IBSP.
8. When the use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint is part of a crisis management plan to support a student, it must be documented in the student's IBSP. This plan must include:
 - a. Notification to parents/guardians that the school has an operational seclusion room.
 - b. A continuum of strategies and interventions that:
 - i. Support positive and proactive engagement.
 - ii. Reflect de-escalation strategies to diffuse challenging behaviour.
 - iii. Reflect the student's functional behavioural needs.
 - iv. Identify any crisis management responses that may be implemented.
 - c. A communication strategy between the school and parents/guardians regarding notification of the use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint.
9. The IBSP must be signed by staff who work directly with the student, parents/guardians, school administration and where appropriate, the student. School staff must make reasonable efforts to obtain parents/guardians signature; the efforts to obtain parents/guardians signature must be documented in the student's IBSP.
10. In accordance with the *Education Act 32(e)*, parents/guardians have a responsibility to "co-operate and collaborate with school staff to support the delivery of supports and services to the child". In cases where parents/guardians indicate they do not support the potential use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint for their child, the school will work with them to identify an alternate crisis management plan. This alternate plan must reflect safety, be feasible to implement and be documented in the student's IBSP.
11. Staff have the responsibility to support the safety of the student and/or others. When an alternate crisis management plan has failed to be effective or is not feasible, staff may use a seclusion room and/or physical restraint in response to imminently dangerous behaviour. Following the use of the seclusion

room, the school will work with the family to appropriately review and/or revise the alternate crisis management plan.

12. After each incident where there is use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint:
 - a. The principal/principal designate must be notified as soon as possible on the same school day of the incident.
 - b. Parents/guardians must be notified about the use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint with their child; this notification must occur as soon as possible after the incident and on the same school day as the incident.

13. Following each incident where there is use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint, it is required that:
 - a. There is a developmentally appropriate debrief with the student that includes reflecting on the circumstances leading up to the use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint, and the teaching of positive behaviour strategies.
 - b. There is a debriefing session among all involved staff that:
 - i. Is held within three days of the incident.
 - ii. Explores the cause of the behaviour.
 - iii. Identifies preventative actions that could be implemented in the future to avoid the use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint.
 - c. The student's IBSP is reviewed regularly and updated where appropriate to prevent and reduce reoccurrence.
 - d. The parents/guardians and the student, where appropriate, have the opportunity to debrief the incident with staff.

14. In circumstances where a student without an IBSP demonstrates unanticipated behaviours that are imminently dangerous to the student and/or others:
 - a. The seclusion room and/or physical restraint may be used as a crisis response to maintain safety.
 - b. Parents/guardians must be notified as soon as reasonably possible.
 - c. Subsequent to this single event an IBSP must be developed for the student.

15. When a student self-selects to use an operational seclusion room as a strategy to regulate their own behaviour, staff will adhere to the expectations of this administrative regulation and an IBSP must be developed reflecting this self-selected use of the seclusion room as a strategy.

16. When an operational seclusion room is used to support a learning accommodation that is not a crisis response to unsafe behaviour, staff will adhere to the expectations of this administrative regulation and an IBSP must be developed reflecting this learning accommodation.

17. In order to adhere to provincial documentation requirements, each use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint must be documented. Division schools must use the PowerSchool documentation tool developed to support this requirement.
 - a. Documentation for use of a seclusion room that is student self-selected and/or to accommodate a learning accommodation must include:
 - i. Name of student.
 - ii. Reason for using the seclusion room.
 - iii. Time the student entered the room.
 - iv. Time the student left the room.

- b. Documentation of physical restraint and/or seclusion room as a crisis response must include:
 - i. Name of student.
 - ii. Total time the student spent in the seclusion room and/or in a physical restraint.
 - iii. Names of the staff supervising the use of the seclusion room and/or implementing the physical restraint.
 - iv. Behaviour resulting in the use of a seclusion room and/or physical restraint.
 - v. Interventions used by staff to de-escalate the unsafe behavior prior to the use of the seclusion room and/or physical restraint.
 - vi. Student's behaviour while in the seclusion room and/or while being physically restrained.
 - vii. Injuries to the student or others and damage to property, if applicable.
 - viii. Confirmation of efforts made to notify parents/guardians as per the communication strategy in the student's IBSP, including dates and times.
 - c. Documentation for physical restraint must also include the physical restraint technique(s) used.
18. Should a school have more than one operational seclusion room, each room will have a separate log in the PowerSchool tool.
19. All PowerSchool records related to the use of seclusion rooms and physical restraint must be retained in accordance with the Division's records retention schedule.
20. All seclusion rooms in the Division must be established, maintained and/or decommissioned by Division staff responsible for infrastructure, according to provincial infrastructure standards.

REFERENCES

AE.BP - Welcoming, Inclusive, Safe and Healthy Learning and Working Environments

CN.AR - Creation, Use and Maintenance of Division Information

EA.BP - Infrastructure Planning Principles

FA.BP - Human Resources Framework

FBEB.AR - Workplace Violence

HA.BP - Inclusive Education

HA.AR - Students in Need of Specialized Supports and Services

HF.BP - Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments

HG.BP - Student Behaviour and Conduct

HG.AR - Student Behaviour and Conduct

Education Act Sections 32(e), 33(1)(d)

[Ministerial Order \(#042/2019\) *Seclusion and Physical Restraint in Alberta Schools Standards Guidelines for Time-out in Alberta Schools*](#) (Alberta Education)