

Extratime

Physical Restraint Policy

Definition

Physical Restraint is a form of physical contact in which one person imposes his/her will upon another often (but not always) by the use of superior strength.

When is physical restraint appropriate?

Physical restraint can be used to prevent a child/young person from doing, or continuing to do any of the following:

- Committing a criminal offence (or what would be a criminal offence if the Child/young person were not under the age of criminal responsibility)
- Injuring themselves or others
- Causing damage to property
- Engaging in behaviour which is affecting or disturbing other children/young people to the extent that it may be difficult to maintain order

Staff must be aware that they have a duty of care to the children/young people in their charge and should therefore take reasonable action to ensure children's or young person's safety and well being. Failure to physically restrain a child or young person, who is subsequently injured or injures another, could in certain circumstances lead to an accusation of negligence.

Staff are, however, not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention. In some circumstances it may be necessary to seek the help of another worker before intervening physically.

There are some situations when the need for physical restraint is immediate (e.g. if a child/young person is about to run into a road). However, in many circumstances there are other alternatives such as:

- Assertiveness skills such as 'broken record' where workers repeat an instruction until the child/young person complies
- Using a distracter i.e. a loud whistle to interrupt behaviour (such as a fight) long enough for verbal methods to be effective.
- Withdrawal of attention (the audience)

Physical restraint should only be applied using “reasonable force”. There is no absolute definition of this as it is dependent on the particular situation. However as a general rule only the force necessary to stop or prevent the behaviour should be used. It is not possible to define every circumstance in which physical restraint would be necessary or appropriate and workers will have to exercise their own judgement.

Some forms of physical intervention may involve minimal physical contact such as blocking a child’s or young person’s path, or physically placing yourself between one child/young person and another child/young person or object.

Physical restraint is a last resort; the following are some DO’S and DON’TS to remember in cases where it is necessary:

DO

- Tell them what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another worker if possible
- Tell the child/young person what they should do for you to remove the restraint (you may need to repeat this frequently)
- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow
- Relax your restraint in response to the compliance of the child/young person

DON’T

- Act in temper (if you can’t control your emotions get another worker to deal with the situation and remove yourself from it)
- Involve other children/young people in the restraint
- Touch or hold the child/young person in inappropriate areas
- Twist or force a limb back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the child/young person in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck
- Slap, kick or punch
- Trip up the child/young person

ANY INCIDENT INVOLVING PHYSICAL RESTRAINT SHOULD BE RECORDED IMMEDIATELY ON AN INCIDENT REPORT FORM AND STATEMENTS MADE BY ANY WITNESSES TO THE INCIDENT

Document version and review control

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