Seclusion Working Group - NAMI Minnesota Ideas
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Summary of Meetings

What the working group agrees on/acknowledges:
- Seclusion is used disproportionately with students of color and those with disabilities such as Autism, EBD, and ODD.
- Data reporting and collection is an issue.
- Misuse of seclusion happens.
- Injuries to staff and students happen.
- Alternatives to reduce (at a minimum) seclusion exist.
- More funding for school staff training and supports are needed.
- Everyone wants staff and students to experience a safe learning environment.
- No one supports the misuse of seclusion or infliction of harm or trauma on children.
- No one enjoys using seclusion.

What the working group doesn't agree on:
- Whether there's a place for seclusion- using seclusion only for emergencies vs a total ban.
- Timeline for a ban, if total ban becomes the policy - immediate vs. giving schools a runway to have supports in place.
- There is a scenario with tools and culture shifts in which the need for seclusion is eliminated.

NAMI Minnesota's Position on Seclusion

NAMI believes that no one should be subject to practices that can cause or worsen mental health symptoms. NAMI National supports the elimination of restraints and seclusion in schools. NAMI Minnesota recognizes the often traumatizing, ineffective, and disproportionately use on students with disabilities and students of color. After meeting with Ukero and seeing their success in the elimination of seclusion we also acknowledge that there are successful alternatives with evidence-based strategies that have eliminated the need for seclusion altogether.

Reducing or banning the use of seclusion without providing tools, supports, and training can lead to reactive measures including increased restraints, increased calls to law enforcement and/or EMS, more suspensions, home-based and level 4 placements, increased trauma and the continued disproportionate impact on BIPOC and disabled students, as well as staff and students feeling unsafe. Any successful policy toward reducing or banning the use of seclusion must be paired with investments in prevention, de-escalation, and support structures. At the core is building a culture of regulation, de-escalation and inclusion in our schools and that takes investment in time and money.

Ideas:

- The Working Team should hear from Kim Sanders, CEO of Ukeru. Their story and approach at Grafton could be very valuable to the discussion. They've developed best practices that can inform our approach regardless of the company the schools work with.

- According to Ukero, they have seen the best outcomes when seclusion remains an option while alternatives are implemented. It is NAMI MN's position that investments need to be made in evidence-based alternatives and implemented as an additional tool, with accountability to staff for necessary shifts in new tools/ strategies and culture. Seclusion should remain available during implementation while the goal is to ultimately <u>eliminate the need</u> for seclusion.
- Include a prohibition on the use of law enforcement and school resource officers (SROs) as a behavior or disability response by creating policies/ practices that law enforcement cannot be used for nonviolent behavior, disability-related behavior, or mental health episodes.
- Any action should include solving for the issues with data collection and monitoring the impact on students and staff including police/EMS calls, student/ teacher injuries, expulsion/ suspensions, physical holds, home-based or level 4 placements, and whether there is disproportionate impact on students of color and with disabilities.
- Shift from culture of violation/repercussion regarding seclusion/ restraint to one of culture to one that encourages safety with kindness and compassion alongside the use of PBIS and de-escalation strategies. Create a culture of collaboration, de-escalation and learning debriefs vs a punitive approach to schools struggling with student behavior. This staff mindset shift flows to the student culture and becomes rooted in what Ukeru calls comfort over control.
- All of this needs Investment in:
  - **Oversight and data collection** to increase appropriate use of seclusion, eliminate improper use of seclusion and improve the use of de-escalation strategies. Require an annual review and setting of strategic targets for training and improvement in identified areas of need.
  - **Prevention and early intervention** through more school-linked mental health services, multi-tiered levels of support and school staff (counselors, psychologists, social workers)
  - **Evidence-based Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports** from organizations like Ukeru and others. Attention should be paid to the culture of the organization chosen as well as the implementing practice to ensure alignment with goals.
  - **Designated and trained de-escalation mentor response teams** who work with schools side-by-side and onsite on PBIS, de-escalation strategies and reduction in use of seclusion. Ukeru, for example, offers this mentoring/ coaching in a train-the-trainer model. Schools are either identified as schools in need of assistance (e.g. improper use of seclusion, increased seclusion/ restraints happening, etc) or it is requested by the school themselves. The response teams could act as a mobile crisis team who assists onsite during crisis and/or after a crisis to debrief and work collaboratively to improve skills and procedures. The response teams could be embedded in the school staff as well. Prioritize the schools currently using seclusion with options being available to all schools.
  - **Ongoing staff training** (including de-escalation, bias-awareness, team-based crisis response) with priority being current schools using seclusion rooms (50 school districts). This training is inclusive of all staff in the building from teachers to custodians to build a culture of regulation and skills for de-escalation.
  - **State-wide training standards** on de-escalation, use of alternatives over seclusion, awareness of response teams to ensure consistent and equitable, and non discriminatory practices.