

As a Setting VI teacher who has worked with high school-aged students exhibiting severe aggression, I have found seclusion to be an effective emergency intervention when students pose an immediate danger to staff and peers. We have a legal and ethical duty to maintain safety for everyone in the building, and eliminating seclusion removes one of the few remaining tools available in these high-risk situations.

It is evident that both MDE and the Minnesota Disability Law Center lack a clear understanding of the day-to-day realities and needs of Setting VI programs. There is a growing disconnect between those working directly with students and those making policy decisions without firsthand classroom experience. Furthermore, special education programs are already experiencing significant staffing shortages, particularly within Setting VI settings. Removing seclusion as an emergency option will likely increase staff injuries, exacerbate burnout, and negatively impact retention. Ironically, this shift may result in increased reliance on physical restraints, which are more intrusive and restrictive than seclusion.

The approach proposed from MDE, MN Disability Law Center, and other advocacy groups raises serious concerns about safety and does not reflect the complex realities of serving students with intensive behavioral needs. Additionally, the unexpected removal of seclusion for K-3 students was demonstrably harmful, leaving staff with virtually no effective interventions, other than physical restraints, for managing severe aggression directed at peers and staff. The failure to learn from this prior decision and the attempt to replicate it reflects a serious disregard for the safety of both students and staff in our state.

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