

Hello, I am Colleen Carlson, the Director of Educational Programs at MAWSECO. I support eight alternative educational programs throughout our cooperative, three are schools within area residential programs and five are Federal Setting IV special education programs. I am writing to explain the critical role of the seclusion tool within our Federal Setting IV special education programs. Student safety is our number one priority. When students feel safe, their brains are ready to learn.

Most special education students in our districts and programs do not engage in behaviors that result in emergencies. For the small number of students who may escalate to that level, staff use proactive and preventive strategies to support safety and regulation. When a student becomes physically aggressive despite these efforts, staff rely on their training in Handle with Care and Ukeru to support de-escalation in the safest manner possible.

In some situations, these techniques are not effective or appropriate, such as when a student has a medical restriction that prevents physical intervention. In those rare emergencies, the appropriate use of a seclusion space, implemented by highly trained staff and in accordance with established protocols, serves as a critical tool to protect safety and maintain educational continuity for all students and staff. The primary importance of this tool can be broken down into several key areas:

Safety and Privacy for the Student in Crisis

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- **Student Safety and De-escalation:**
 - The seclusion space provides a quiet, safe, and minimized-stimulus environment where a student experiencing an escalating behavioral crisis can be protected from harming themselves or others. It is utilized as a last resort, alongside Handle With Care and
 - Ukeru strategies, to allow the student a safe place to calm and regain emotional control.
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- **Privacy and Dignity:**
 - Utilizing a designated seclusion space helps preserve the student's privacy and dignity during a moment of profound distress. It removes the need for highly public and potentially traumatizing physical management in a common area.

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Minimizing External Intervention

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- **Reduction in Use of Law Enforcement:**

- The availability of a seclusion room as an option significantly reduces the need for police or other emergency personnel involvement in managing student crises. This maintains the school environment as an educational setting, rather than a correctional one.

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- **Safety of Peers and Staff:**

- During a behavioral escalation that poses a risk of harm (e.g., throwing furniture, physical aggression), allowing the student to de-escalate in a controlled, safe space directly preserves the safety of their peers and the surrounding educational staff.

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- **Maintenance of Educational Continuity:**

- By quickly and safely managing the crisis away from the classroom, we preserve the learning environment for the remaining students. Their instructional time and sense of security are not disrupted by prolonged, high-intensity outbursts.

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Our staff are highly trained in crisis prevention, de-escalation techniques, trauma, brain science, Handle with Care, Ukeru, legal compliance, and the appropriate, safe, and ethical use of seclusion as an intervention. Although seclusion is not used often, it is an important and safe tool, when monitored closely and only used in emergency situations when other interventions have not been successful.

Thank you for engaging in this important work. I hope this information helps to highlight how this tool is a necessary and important component of our comprehensive strategy for supporting students in Federal Setting IV special education programs.

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