



LaGrange, Adriana, Honourable
Office of the Minister Education
Legislature Building
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August 30, 2019

Honorable Adriana LeGrange;

**Re: Ministerial Order (#039/2019)
Standards for Seclusion and Physical Restraint in Alberta Schools**

On behalf of individuals and families living with Autism Spectrum Disorder throughout our province, working in unity with representatives of Autism Society Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Chinook Autism Society, Autism Edmonton, and Autism Calgary, we have developed the following position and recommendations for your consideration.

Although we have concerns that Ministerial Order 006/2019 has been repealed, we are encouraged by your commitment to work with key partners to revise the Government of Alberta position on Seclusion and Restraint as this issue seriously impacts a significant number of families in our community.

In advance of our participation on collaborative efforts to revise Alberta's direction on this issue, we have the following recommendations to share:

- Revise both the title and focus of Ministerial Order #039/2019 to follow a foundation of evidence informed practice; **Seclusion and Physical Restraint in Alberta Schools, a Last Resort**. This will create consistency with the direction of Alberta Health, having recently published **Restraint as a Last Resort, February 2018** (This cultural shift is inspired by extensive research indicating that incidence reporting is significantly higher where restraint /seclusion is accepted practice in clinical and community settings.)
- Ensure detail in the "Last Resort" document to generate accountability, follow through, and monitoring (including both incident reporting and stringent timelines.)
- Provide ongoing professional development training of all staff (inclusive of Special Education Assistants, Teachers, Consultants, Administrators, and other support staff.)
- Develop/revise positive behavioural support guidelines and ensure priority resource allocation to support sensory rooms and the implementation of other evidence based calming strategies (where a child is guided to self initiate/regulate.).

- Include guidelines to address circumstances of students without identified diagnosis or condition (to ensure follow through with referral to appropriate supports).
- Add seclusion / restraint to the School Act, Section 124, criteria to allow a Ministerial Review if required.
- Spearhead a collaborative public awareness initiative to support the understanding of evidence based approaches to student safety and aggression. (Seclusion / Restraint increases incidence reporting, contrary to common misconceptions.)

Lastly, with regards to exceptional cases that may lead to use of restraint and seclusion, we recommend that the Government of Alberta work with cross ministerial partners and community stakeholders to develop a strategic framework. Complex case care requires a cross system approach (Education, Health Care, and Community & Social Services) to bring balance to a child's life in their home, school, and community. The use of restraint / seclusion is always a Band-Aid solution to circumstances requiring a broader vision to minimize intrusive / costly lifelong systems of support for the child and their family.

Autism Alberta representatives look forward to meeting with representatives from the Ministry to discuss our recommendations in further detail. Thank you for investing in Alberta's vulnerable students.

Warmest Regards,

Submitted Electronically

Jason Scheyen
President, Autism Society Alberta

cc:

Premier Jason Kenny, Premier
Honorable Rajan Sawhney, Minister of Community and Social Services
Honorable Tyler Shanro, Minister of Health
Honorable Rebecca Schulz, Minister of Children's Services
Honorable Rick Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations

Tony Flores, Advocate for Persons with Disabilities
Del Graff, Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
Neil Pierce, Chair, Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities