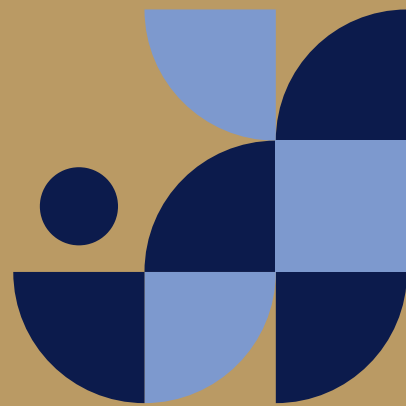


CRISIS INTERVENTION *Training*

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ADVISORY



No part of this course may be recorded, reproduced, transmitted, or shared in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical without written prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Nothing in this training is meant to override state laws, regulations, or organizational policies in which a course participant is working. Training participants are expected to understand the approved practices in their organization and apply the content of this curriculum accordingly.

Neither the opinions on nor any interpretations of Massachusetts 603 CMR 46.00: Prevention of Physical Restraint and Requirements if Used that are presented during the training should be taken as legal advice.

Any legal questions on or official interpretations of Massachusetts 603 CMR 46.00 Prevention of Physical Restraint and Requirements if Used should be directed to either an attorney or the proper state agency.

Any questions regarding either your role in your organization or any policies or procedures set forth by your organization should be directed to the proper supervisory personnel.

The physical skills presented in this training are intended to assist public education staff in handling mild to moderate levels of physical aggression when the safety of a student or another member of the school community is at risk.

The physical skills presented in this course are neither intended for use in the extended physical management of individuals demonstrating highly aggressive physical behaviors nor meant to replace the utilization of emergency services such as police, EMT's, or crisis centers .

Training participants are expected to apply physical skills correctly, use them in compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and policies, and implement them only when less restrictive interventions would be insufficient to prevent serious harm.

Neither Crisis Intervention Solutions LLC, nor its employees, agents or students, make any promises or representations concerning protection from injury, death, and/or loss of property when attempting or completing any of the services provided.

Participation in this training cannot and accordingly does not guarantee your safety or the safety of any other party in an actual event.

All participants are urged to (1) avoid physical confrontation whenever possible and if required to act (2) to call for help immediately before intervening in any potentially dangerous situation.

Be advised that this is NOT a train the trainer course so participants are not authorized to teach any of the physical skills being presented in the course...

Course participants are also not authorized to modify or add to any physical intervention skills presented in the course.

Course participants will be solely responsible for any inappropriate or illegal misapplications of the physical skills presented in the program.

If you have any questions regarding this advisory please contact Crisis Intervention Solutions.

COURSE INTRODUCTION



This manual is intended to support the two-part Crisis Intervention Training curriculum.

Part one of the training consists of an online portion.

Part two of the training will be an in-person session(s) consisting of the instruction and practice of physical skills, such as escorts and protective holds.

Unless instructed otherwise, a participant must first successfully complete the entire online section before attending an in-person session.

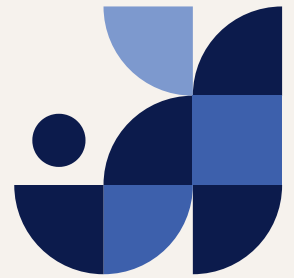
And both the online and in-person session must be successfully completed to receive certification.

If certification is achieved it will be good for one year from the date of successful course completion.

Course participants will need to complete a yearly refresher training to maintain certification.

**If you have any questions or concerns you can email
support@crisisinterventionsolutions.com**

ABOUT THE COURSE



This two-part training has been designed to provide staff with skills and suggestions to help prevent and de-escalate crisis as well as physically intervene in a safer manner.

Throughout the training emphasis will be placed on using good judgement to make more reasonable decisions when it comes to using physical interventions.

Topics that are going to be covered in part one, the online portion of the training, will include:

- Intervention Best Practices
- Preventing crisis
- De-escalating crisis
- Intervening as a team
- Post incident considerations & requirements
- An example of non-violent intervention skills such as escorts and holds
- The impact physical restraint can have on students, parents, and educators
- A general overview of the Massachusetts regulations on restraint in schools

The course will also include:

- when physical intervention might be justified and when it's likely not
- how to work more collaboratively to reduce incidents of restraint

By the end of this two-part training it's hoped that participants will have:

- an increased level of self confidence and awareness during interventions
- a better understanding of crisis scenarios
- some crisis prevention and de-escalation tools that can be implemented
- an enhanced knowledge of how restraint may impact students, staff & families
- an improved sense judgment and decision making around intervention



FOUNDATIONAL *Skills*

Having solid foundational (intervention) skills can lead to increased success with:

- preventing crisis
- quicker de-escalation
- shorter hold times
- improved safety for all



Foundational skill #1 – Having a proactive mindset rather than a reactive one.

Being proactive means taking the time to pre-consider the potential for student escalation and then doing whatever possible and reasonable to make sure that escalation doesn't occur in the first place.

Foundational skill #2 – The ability to get along, collaborate, and work well with others.

When staff can put aside personal differences, see others points of view and find common ground in approaches, students usually benefit.

This important skill also includes being able to accept corrective feedback from peers and/or admit that your way might be not be the best for a particular scenario.

Foundational skill #3 – The ability to assess situations to make reasonable decisions as to whether a physical intervention is necessary or not, what degree of force should be used, and when an intervention should end.

Foundational skill #4 – Being able to empathize with how someone may be feeling when they're escalated. People who are escalated can often be feeling a loss of control. And this loss of "control feeling" can be made worse when they're experiencing a hold.

Foundational Skill #5 – Being able to rationally detach from a situation.

Rational detachment is the ability to manage your own attitude (and behavior) and not take what someone else is doing or saying personally.

An inability to rationally detach from a situation can sometimes produce escalated emotions and potentially lead to overreaction to a situation. And overreaction to a situation can lead to behaviors which you may later regret.

Foundational skill #6 – Recognizing (and accepting) where you are emotionally during a situation. Recognition and acceptance of where you are emotionally can help you decide whether or not you're currently the best person to continue with a de-escalation scenario or physical intervention, or if someone else should take over.

Foundational skill #7 – Possessing a basic understanding of some of the reasons students might be acting out in the first place.



BEST PRACTICES

#1 Use restraint only when justified

In Massachusetts public education programs, the use of physical restraint is meant to provide SAFETY for a student, staff, or others present.

Physical restraints are not to be used as a means of punishment or for dealing with non-safety issues.

When providing justification for having used a physical restraint, it's not enough to simply use a statement such as *"restraint was used because the student was behaving in an unsafe manner"*.

This type of statement provides little information on the actual behavior that justified the need for staff to use a physical restraint.

Staff who use physical restraint should be able to clearly describe the student behavior or behaviors that were causing the immediate safety threat that justified the restraint.

Staff should also be able to describe all the non-physical alternatives (like de-escalation) that were tried prior to restraint and the result of those efforts.

If non-physical alternatives were not used prior to using a restraint, which can sometimes occur, then the reason or reasons for NOT using the non-physical alternatives should be clearly documented in the restraint report.



BEST PRACTICES

#2 Avoid moving students by force for non-safety related reasons

According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, moving a student by force (for instance to a timeout space) is considered a restraint.

Moving a student by force might include either picking up and carrying, or dragging a student against their will. Meaning, the student is not going with staff willingly and under their own power.

As stated in Massachusetts CMR 46.00 Prevention of Physical Restraint and Requirements if used, restraint is only to be used in emergency situations of last resort after other lawful and less intrusive alternatives have failed or deemed inappropriate; and with extreme caution.

The Massachusetts regulations on restraint further state that a physical restraint should only be administered when needed to protect a student and/or member of the school community from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm; and to prevent or minimize any harm to the student as a result of the use of physical restraint.

Based upon the restraint standards set by the Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary and Secondary education plus the fact that moving students by force can INCREASE rather than minimize the chance of injury to both students and staff it is not advisable to move students by force for non-safety related reasons.

Some example non-safety related situations for which students should not be moved by force can include:

- when a student simply refuses to exit a school bus in the morning or get on the bus in the afternoon
- when a student refuses to come in from recess
- when a student refuses to make a transition to a different classroom or area within a room.

If, for a legitimate safety reason, a student ever does need to be moved by force, then it should be documented as a physical restraint and clear justification for the action should be provided.

In the Massachusetts state restraint regulations, an escort, which is defined as – ***a temporary touching or holding, without the use of force, of the hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, or back for the purpose of inducing a student who is agitated to walk to a safe location***, would likely not be considered a restraint as long as the student is walking under their own power and control.



BEST PRACTICES

#3 Unless deemed inappropriate, always attempt an alternative form of intervention prior to physical restraint

Alternative forms of intervention might include de-escalation, re-direction, removing other students from a classroom or area, or planned ignoring.

If, however, staff need to quickly handle a situation such as:

- an ongoing physical altercation between students
- a student actively causing self-injury
- or a student in the process of physically assaulting another member of the school community.

... then de-escalation or other alternative forms of intervention may not be the best choice based on the immediate safety threat.

#4 Always notify other staff before intervening in any potentially dangerous situation

Ultimately it's going to be up to staff who are dealing with situations to decide:

- which situations will require a call for help
- whether or not to wait for enough help to arrive before intervening

Supervisory staff may want to consider identifying specific situations in which a call for help will be required, as well as situations in which physical intervention will only begin when the proper number of staff are present.

#5 Whenever possible have another staff member witness any physical restraint

Ideally the witnessing staff member would:

- not physically participate in the restraint
- monitor the student being restrained for signs or indications of breathing difficulties or physical distress
- monitor any changes in the student's skin color
- help with any de-escalation efforts



BEST PRACTICES

#6 Try to use any physical intervention in the least restrictive way possible and with the minimum amount of force necessary to achieve safety for all

Depending on the situation least restrictive might mean:

- standing in the way of or blocking a student... without placing hands on them
- using a brief physical redirection without grabbing or holding
- taking control of an object that a student is attempting to use in a dangerous unsafe manner
- use of a physical escort to induce a student to move away from a potentially unsafe situation

Please remember that if it has been determined that a physical restraint is necessary for student safety, then NO amount of body weight should ever be placed on or against a student to help intervening staff establish, stabilize, or secure the restraint.

#7 Work to reduce the duration of a restraint

The longer a student is held in a physical restraint the greater chance there is for injury to both student and staff.

For some students, the act of being in a restraint can further enrage or possibly traumatize them.

Ending restraints as quickly as possible can:

1. help reduce the potential for injury
2. provide a student with a chance to regroup and hopefully de-escalate on their own

Ending restraints as quickly as possible can also help demonstrate reasonableness on the part of staff.

Upon releasing a restraint, staff should consider stepping away from the student to provide some space.

Something to be avoided during a restraint is trying to force a student who is being held in a restraint to either physically comply with staff directions or answer questions before the restraint is released.

The nature of crisis could make it quite difficult for a student who was being held to physically comply with even simple directions, or answer questions.

Requiring a physical or verbal response from a student before releasing a restraint has the potential to increase restraint time and thus the potential for injury and should be avoided.



BEST PRACTICES

#8 During any restraint a student should be constantly monitored for signs or indications of breathing difficulties or physical distress

The preferred way to monitor a student who was being restrained would be to have a second staff person, who is not physically participating in the restraint, positioned in a way so they could easily see the front of the student's face.

For specific information on signs or indications of breathing difficulties or physical distress, staff should consult with their district's medical staff.

School staff should also strongly consider how non-verbal students, who may use either sign language or hand-held devices to communicate, are going to be monitored for signs or indications of breathing difficulties or physical distress during a restraint.

#9 If at any time during a physical restraint, a student expresses or demonstrates significant physical or medical distress including, but not limited to difficulty breathing, bleeding, vomiting, or seizures, the student should be released from the restraint immediately, and school staff should take steps to seek medical assistance

Releasing a restraint for a student experiencing physical distress is mandated in Massachusetts public schools.

#10 Have a student evaluated by either the school nurse or properly trained medical staff immediately after any physical restraint, physical student altercation or instance where a student bangs their head

This evaluation should be done by staff with state approved medical training and who have been authorized by a district or organization for the purpose of medically evaluating student health.

Staff who lack the proper training and are not in a formal position to medically evaluate student health should seek medical evaluation for students from properly trained and authorized individuals.

CRISIS PREVENTION

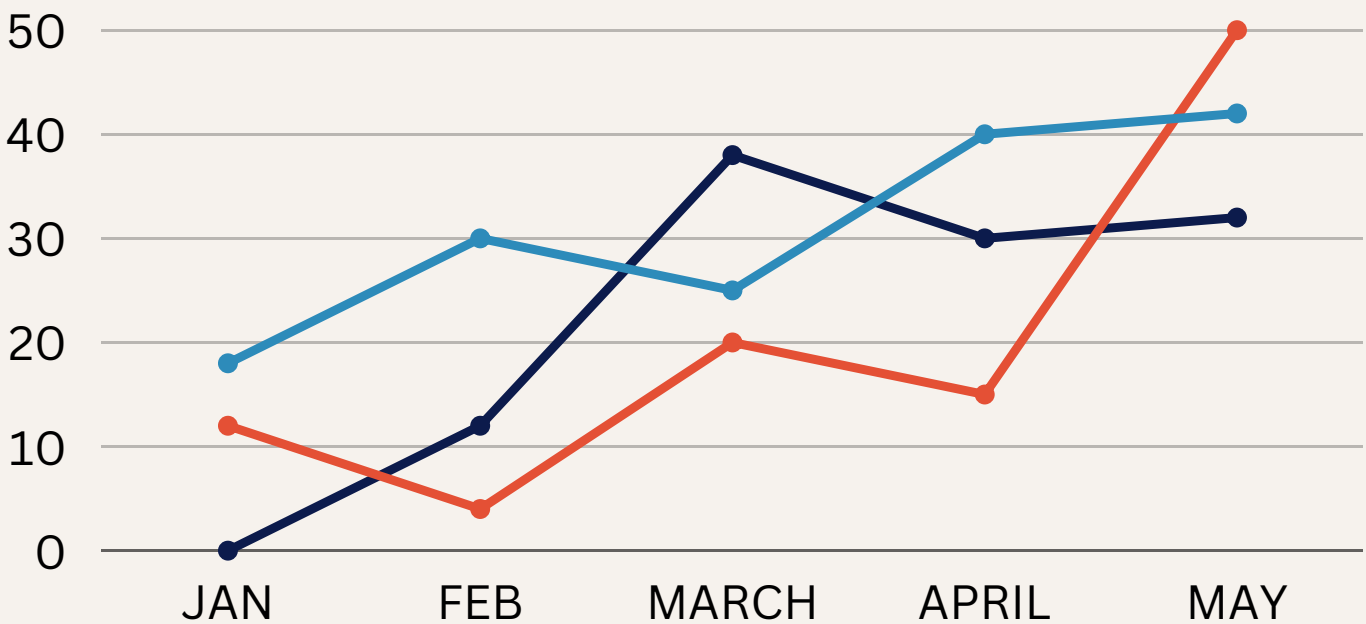
In many cases, taking some time to consider and implement crisis prevention measures will end up being time well spent.

Crisis prevention measures, are steps that staff can take to:

- prevent undesirable student behaviors from occurring in the first place
- have things in place to make undesirable behaviors easier to deal with if they do happen to occur

The undesirable student crisis behaviors to try and prevent are things like:

1. Non-compliance
2. Self Injury like scratching, biting, head-banging, or self mutilation with objects
3. Physical aggression towards others through hitting, slapping, pinching, kicking, hair-pulling, biting, or choking
4. Property Destruction
5. Flight from a room or building
6. Verbal disruptions in the form of yelling, swearing, outbursts, meltdowns, or tantrums



CRISIS PREVENTION *Keys*

Crisis Prevention Keys encompass a set of principles and behaviors that serve as the foundation for effective crisis prevention.

If these keys are ignored it can diminish the likelihood of successfully implementing preventive measures.

-  **Crisis prevention key #1 – Having a belief in the value of actually investing time in applying preventive measures.** Meaning, if someone understands the value of planning and preparing ahead of time to prevent classroom crises, they'll take the necessary steps to do so.
-  **Crisis prevention key #2 – Acknowledging that sometimes the things staff do or say can trigger undesirable behaviors or make a situation more difficult to handle.** This is something that's important to remain aware of.
-  **Crisis prevention key #3 – Being willing to work together with other staff members to prevent crises.** While it may not always be easy, when staff agree on how to prevent or minimize student crises and work as a team, things go more smoothly compared to constant disagreements or hostility.
-  **Crisis prevention key #4 – Having realistic expectations about crisis prevention efforts.** Sometimes things won't go exactly as planned and it might take a few tries to get it right. The important thing is to not get discouraged quickly and give up.
-  **Crisis prevention key #5 – Paying attention to our own behaviors so that, if possible, we can avoid being a trigger for crises.** We should try to notice how students may be responding to us in the moment and make any necessary changes in our approach.
-  **Crisis prevention key #6 – Being open to trying different approaches to prevent power struggles.** This might mean temporarily reducing demands, offering different choices, or putting aside our ego.
-  **Crisis prevention key #7 – Having a basic understanding of why people get upset in the first place.** This helps us approach situations with empathy, patience, and understanding, which can really make a difference in effectively preventing or resolving crises.

CRISIS PREVENTION *Know the Triggers*

For this course, the term “trigger” will be used to describe something that occurs just before an undesirable behavior.

Triggers can have various effects on students, including:

- eliciting emotions such as anger, shame, or embarrassment
- diminishing someone’s sense of control, safety, or comfort
- evoking memories of past traumatic events



A Trigger could easily cause someone to feel overwhelmed and distressed.

When someone feels overwhelmed or distressed, they may respond with undesirable behaviors as a way to cope.

Identifying, paying attention to, and addressing the triggers that can come before challenging behaviors may allow us to prevent a crises from occurring.

We'll be dividing triggers into two groups:

1. avoidable triggers
2. triggers that can be beyond staff control

CRISIS PREVENTION *Know the Triggers*

Possibly avoidable triggers:

1. Invasion of a student's personal space or privacy
2. Unwanted touching, (except when necessary for physical assistance)
3. Humiliation, embarrassment, or backing someone into a corner (especially in front of peers)
4. Abruptly changing a student's schedule without adequate notice
5. Displaying upset, anger, or frustration towards a student instead of remaining calm and understanding
6. Threatening of consequences for behavior, especially when the student is already upset
7. Reminding a student of past misbehaviors or failures
8. Challenging, intimidating, or confrontational body language
9. Placing a student with a trauma history in a small room or space (a student placed in a small room or time-out space might feel like they're being placed in a closet)
10. Demanding completion of tasks that may be too difficult or inappropriate for the moment

It's important to note that not all triggers can always be avoided. For instance, a trigger for some students might be hearing the words "no" or "stop" when staff need to set limits or establish boundaries.

In these cases, avoiding using the words "no" or "stop" to avoid triggering a student can make it more difficult for staff to establish the limits and boundaries that can be crucial to maintaining a safer and more productive school environment.

Some students may also be triggered when asked to either start work, make a transition, or answer a question, (all of which can be typical expectations in school).

Rather than avoiding these types of situations it would be helpful to provide students with the skills to better handle such requests.

CRISIS PREVENTION *Know the Triggers*

Triggers that can often be beyond the direct control of staff can include:

- A student's perception of disrespect, unfairness, injustice, or mistreatment
- A student's inability to easily communicate wants, needs, or feelings
- Recollection of past traumatic experiences
- Frustration with difficulties around task completion or problem-solving
- Exposure to loud noises
- Unfavorable weather conditions or room temperature
- A conflict a student had with a parent or guardian before school
- Extreme disappointment when expectations are not met
- A perceived loss of freedom (especially for students accustomed to more freedom outside of school)

It's important to remember that identifying and addressing triggers is an ongoing process.

Creating a safe and inclusive learning environment, where triggers are acknowledged and managed proactively, can help foster more positive outcomes for all students.

CRISIS PREVENTION

Recognize Warning Signs

Another valuable skill to possess in helping prevent student crisis is to be familiar with the specific behavioral warning signs students might display.

Behavioral warning signs, sometimes called pre-incident indicators, are behaviors that someone might exhibit right before they engage in a more serious behavior.

These warning signs can sometimes be quite noticeable while at other times very subtle. They could also happen alone or as part of a pattern.

Examples of some general behavioral warning signs a person might exhibit could include:

- pacing back and forth
- use of certain words or phrases
- talking to themselves
- yelling or growling
- verbal threats
- clenching of the fists
- trembling or shaking of the hands
- facial twitches
- rapid breathing
- complete disengagement from activities or people
- hitting objects or themselves
- breaking things

If we're able to successfully recognize a behavioral warning sign we may be able to intervene earlier before more serious behavior begins.

Keep in mind that not every crisis situation will actually be preceded by a clear behavioral warning sign.

That being said, we should still be paying attention and trying to notice them.



NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

This section of the course is going to include the following topics:

1. an explanation and demonstration of non-violent physical intervention skills including escorts and protective holds
2. a brief explanation of the difference between an escort and restraint
3. safety suggestions to keep in mind during physical interventions

ATTENTION

The Crisis Intervention Solutions training curriculum does NOT support nor teach prone or supine restraints.

An example of a prone restraint would be a physical restraint in which a student is placed face down on the floor or another surface, and physical pressure is applied to the student's body to keep the student in the face-down position.

An example of a supine restraint would be placing a student on their back on the floor or another surface, and then applying physical pressure to the student's body to keep the student in that position flat on their back.

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Escorts

It's important to mention that not all situations in which a student needs to move are going to require a physical escort.

Some students will move simply when asked or directed.

For each situation it's ultimately going to be up to staff to determine whether or not a physical escort is required or allowed under the regulations.

In making the determination whether or not to use a physical escort staff should consider:

1. Is there is a justifiable reason for the physical escort?
2. Could the use of physical escort cause an escalation and possibly trigger physical aggression from a student?

Some potential scenarios that may require the use of a physical escort could include:

- when staff are walking in the hallway with a student who has the potential to run from the building
- when staff have broken up a student altercation and need to remove at least one of the students from the area but the student is not responding to verbal directions
- when staff need to escort or direct someone away from property destruction that could lead to personally injury

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Protective Holds

There are five protective holds taught in the Crisis Intervention Solutions training curriculum.

1. **Standing Basket Hold** (see video) 
2. **Floor Basket Hold** (see video) 
3. **Kneeling Front Heel Lift** (see video) 
4. **Two Person – Basic Arm Control Hold** (see video) 
5. **Two Person – Full Arm Control Hold** (see video) 

Please remember:

- The purpose of a physical restraint is to keep a student or another member of the school community safe from assault or imminent serious physical harm.
- Restraint should not be used as a means of punishment, for non-safety related behaviors, or as a display of authority.

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Escort vs. Restraint

In 603 CMR 46 Prevention of Physical Restraint and Requirements if Used section 46.02:

Physical escort is defined as a temporary touching or holding, **without the use of force** of the hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, or back for the purpose of inducing a student who is agitated to **walk** to a safe location.

Based on the words (**without the use of force & walk**) from the definition of escort, for something to be considered an escort:

- it's brief
- the student is walking with their feet on the floor
and
- force is not being used, meaning, the student is moving under their own power

When an escort is used, meaning a student is moving on their own and are not being slid, pushed, or carried against their will, a written report (to the Mass Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) is not required.

If for safety, staff needed to move a student to a safer location by force, meaning the student was either being slid, pushed, or picked up and carried against their will then it would likely be considered a restraint and would require a restraint report.

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Escort vs. Restraint

In 603 CMR 46.00 Prevention of Restraint and Requirements if Used, a physical restraint is defined as direct physical contact that prevents or significantly restricts someone's freedom of movement.

One interpretation of that (restraint) is:

- someone is being physically held in place by a grab or hold and not free to walk or move away or
- someone does not have the freedom of movement of their hands, arms, feet, or legs due to a grab or hold for longer than what would be considered brief physical contact to provide student safety or
- a student is being moved against their will, as evidenced by their physical resistance to being moved in the form of dropping to the floor, or struggling to free themselves etc.

According to 603 CMR 46:02, the following interventions would not be considered a physical restraint:

- brief physical contact to promote student safety,
- providing physical guidance or prompting when teaching a skill,
- redirecting attention,
- providing comfort, or
- a physical escort.

A question and answer guide provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education related to the implementation of 603 CMR 46.00 states that the language *"brief physical contact to promote student safety"* refers to measures taken by school personnel consisting of physical contact with a student for a short period of time solely to prevent an imminent harm to a student.

Examples of "brief physical contact" given in that document are:

- physically redirecting a student about to wander on to a busy road,
- grabbing a student who is about to fall,
- breaking up a fight between students.

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Intervention Safety

By nature, physical interventions such as escorts and restraints place school staff closer to students thus increasing the chances of being physically assaulted and injured.

In addition, staff emotions can sometimes run high during physical interventions which can increase the possibility of excessive force being used on students. Which can lead to student injuries.

The following six safety suggestions are meant to help reduce the possibility of injury to BOTH students and staff during a physical intervention.

1. Maintain an awareness of possibility
2. Position for target denial
3. Use an elbow and or shoulder check on entry and release
4. Step away to disengage or release
5. Assess and re-asses situations
6. Use the proper intervention for the situation

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Intervention Safety

1. Maintain an awareness of possibility

This means having an awareness of two things:

1. the different scenarios in which physical aggression towards you could occur
2. if you're currently in a position that makes you more vulnerable to that physical aggression.

An example of a scenario in which physical aggression could possibly occur is when staff place their hands on a student to try and either assist, escort, re-direct, or hold them.

2. Position for target denial

This means positioning your body for increased safety either through:

1. your stance, which is how you're standing including foot, hand, and torso position
2. your location, meaning, where you're standing in relation to a student (i.e. to the front, side, or back)

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Intervention Safety

3A. Use an elbow and/or shoulder check on entry

Use an elbow and or shoulder check on entry refers to placing the palm of your hand(s) on a student's arm and or shoulder as you move in to initiate an escort or hold to help prevent getting hit by the student as you do.

3B. Use an elbow and/or shoulder check on release

Use an elbow and or shoulder check on release includes placing your hand(s) on either the back of a student's arm and/or the shoulder(s) when releasing a hold to again make sure you don't get hit during the release.

ATTENTION

Using an elbow and/or shoulder check on entry or release should be a deliberate gesture.

It should not, however, be aggressive or forceful, nor should it include a grab, strike, or push of the student.

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Intervention Safety

4. Step away to disengage or release

Instead of first removing your hands from the final position of a hold or an escort and then moving away from the student, you would let the act of physically moving away from a student cause the removal of the hands.

5. Assess and re-assess situations

This refers to:

- taking the time to notice where you are emotionally BEFORE starting a physical intervention
- reassessing how you're feeling during an intervention to make sure anger has not taken over
- paying attention to how the student is responding physically and verbally and adjusting a physical intervention as necessary

6. Use the proper intervention for the situation

This refers to:

- some students possibly requiring more than one staff to safely hold them

In these situations staff should strongly consider using a multi-person instead of a single person hold if the size and strength of the student calls for it.

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Team Interventions

Effective teamwork during interventions can lead to reduced hold times and safer interventions for all.

Unfortunately an inability to work well as an effective team can reduce the safety of interventions and even increase their duration.

Ineffective teamwork can also possibly lead to animosity among staff and higher levels of workplace stress.

Being an effective team actually starts with having the belief in the VALUE of teamwork AND of being a good team member.

When someone believes in the value of working as a team and being a good team member they will likely give it more attention and a higher priority.

When this happens greater levels of intervention success are likely to follow.

Here are some suggestions to help school staff work more effectively as a team.

1. Define what successful intervention looks like

When the team defines what success in specific scenarios looks like then plans and procedures can be made to help achieve it.

Defining what success looks like can also make it easier for the team to know if they're doing an effective job and where improvement might be needed.

2. Strive for a balance of experience and skill on each team

The more experience and skills team members have in handling various situations the more success the team will likely have.

A team that is entirely made up of staff who have less experience and are brand new at interventions might not yield the best results.

If possible, try to have a team made up of both experienced and less experienced staff.

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Team Interventions

3. Use the proper number of team members to handle a situation

Not having enough staff to handle highly escalated and potentially dangerous situations is not an ideal approach.

However, neither is having too many staff trying to intervene in a situation where they are not needed.

The proper number of staff to have on-hand for different scenarios is certainly something that should be discussed beforehand.

4. Have a reliable way for team members to communicate with each other

This can be crucial when staff either need additional support, more information about something, or to coordinate efforts when trying to prevent crisis or deal with escalated situations.

5. Have descriptive plans and/or procedures for how different situations are going to be handled

Plans/procedures should be fairly specific but also simple enough for everyone to clearly understand.

Having plans that are too wordy or overly complicated can confuse people and get in the way of the plan being followed.

When designing plans, consideration should be given to creating different roles and responsibilities for various scenarios, and then determining which staff will fill those roles.

6. Make sure all responding staff to know what the different intervention plans are as well as their respective role(s)

Part of this responsibility falls on individual team members.

Meaning, if you're part of a team and aren't clear on your role or what's expected of you during a situation then it's up to YOU to GET CLEAR.

And you do THIS by asking as many questions as necessary until you understand.

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Team Interventions

7. Conduct “after incident reviews”

This means checking in with all staff who were involved in or witnessed an incident to review how things went.

During an after incident review staff could point out what was done according to plan as well as identify areas in which THEY could do better rather than criticizing or calling out others.

Because of time constraints and staff availability though it's not likely that every incident is going to get an after incident review.

It's really up to each team to decide, based on necessity and regulations, which incidents a review will happen for.

8. Spend time actually practicing or rehearsing intervention procedures

Coming up with and then discussing plans, procedures, roles and responsibilities is a great start, but by itself it's might not be to ensure higher levels proficiency.

Physical skills and specific scenarios may need to be practiced on a regular basis.

9. Come up with some agreed upon terminology that the team will use to professionally and discreetly communicate with each other

Having terms or phrases that team members can use to quickly communicate things like the location and type of situation they're dealing with can help improve response time and make sure the proper number of staff are on-hand.

NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Roadblocks to Teamwork

There are certain actions, inactions, or attitudes that can easily get in the way of or block effective teamwork.

Understanding and being able to recognize roadblocks to teamwork is the first step to either avoiding or correcting them.

Roadblocks to teamwork can include:

1. **Poor attitude** – which can manifest as an unwillingness of staff to work together, compromise, or put aside differences in opinion in order to achieve desired results.
2. **Not having plans for how different situations will be handled**
3. **Team members arguing, accusing, or blaming each other for something while an intervention is actually occurring**
4. **Refusing to step back and let a different team member handle a situation when prompted**
5. **Assuming that someone (especially a new team member) has either the skills, confidence, or knowledge of what to do during an intervention**
6. **Never taking the time to debrief, even informally, after interventions**
7. **Criticizing or negatively talking about team members behind their back**
8. **Never practicing or going over plans or procedures as a team**
9. **Not having a reliable way to communicate (with other team members)**

DE-ESCALATION

Intro

During the school day staff might find themselves in a situation where a student gets very upset or angry.

In those moments, knowing how to calm the student down, or "de-escalate" the situation can be really useful.

The de-escalation topics that are going to be covered in this lesson will include:

- An explanation of de-escalation
- Understanding the escalated person
- Various pre de-escalation techniques
- Some specific approaches to de-escalation
- How to de-escalate as a team
- Common roadblocks to successful de-escalation
- De-escalation safety



DE-ESCALATION

Explained

Verbal de-escalation is a communication technique aimed at calming down or managing an individual who is becoming increasingly agitated, upset, or potentially violent.

It is a proactive approach that relies on a calm, patient, respectful and empathetic use of conversation, active listening, limit setting, and negotiation to help reduce feelings of anger, anxiety, or frustration to defuse tense situations, lower the immediate risk of harm, and facilitate more constructive interaction.

The primary goal of de-escalation is to create a safe environment and foster a state of mind that allows the escalated individual to regain control of their emotions, thereby reducing the likelihood of harm to themselves or others.

Besides the approach staff take, de-escalation effectiveness can be impacted by number of different variables including:

- the age and/or cognitive functioning of the person you're trying to de-escalate
- how angry or upset someone is
- the specific circumstances that led to the person becoming upset
- the strength of relationship between whoever is de-escalating and the upset person
- whether or not staff are working as a team during a de-escalation scenario

Using de-escalation in a school setting can be important for a number of reasons including:

- it's often the first thing staff are expected to try in the crisis intervention process. Meaning, if physical intervention ever needed to be used to make a situation safe, school staff are usually expected to have first attempted some type of de-escalation to avoid having to use a physical intervention.

Other reasons can include:

- knowing how to de-escalate a situation can help keep you and others safe
- being good at de-escalation can often lead to increased confidence and reduced stress when dealing with upset students
- using de-escalation can not only help prevent student behavioral crisis from getting worse, it can also often help resolve the situation faster

When it comes to using de-escalation it's important to remember that no two escalated situations will be exactly alike, so there's not one perfect way to calm every student down. So it's important to be flexible and adapt de-escalation strategies to fit the situation.

DE-ESCALATION

The Escalated Person



Having an understanding of how people might be feeling and then act when they're upset can not only guide us in helping calm them down, but also keep us safe.

When people get extremely angry, frustrated, or scared, their bodies can react by releasing adrenaline.

This can trigger a "fight or flight" response, which can lead to several things.

1. Studies have shown that a strong adrenaline release can affect vision, causing someone to experience "farsightedness."

This means that an upset person might struggle to focus on nearby objects or people which could make it challenging for an angry or upset student to clearly recognize staff members as such.

2. In "fight or flight" mode, people may have difficulty hearing instructions or questions that are stated only once and in a normal tone.

This would mean that, depending on the situation, it could be necessary to repeat directions or questions and in a louder voice.

3. Upset people can also experience reduced cognitive functioning making it harder for them to think logically or understand what's being asked of them.

4. When escalated, a person's ability to think through the consequences of their actions can also be impaired.

So in the moment, the trouble someone might get in for taking a certain action could be the furthest thing from their mind.

5. If someone is very angry, it may be nearly impossible to reason with them.

In situations like this, it's often best to wait until they've calmed down before attempting conversation.

6. An upset person might need more personal space than usual so they don't feel cornered or trapped.

DE-ESCALATION

The Escalated Person

It's also important to consider that staff members who are dealing with an escalated situation are not immune to adrenaline and the "fight or flight" response.

Staff who experience an adrenaline release may react out of anger or frustration, causing them to do or say things which they wouldn't normally do or say.



When staff members become upset, it can lead to poor decisions, such as:

- engaging in power struggles
- making unreasonable demands
- using physical intervention inappropriately
- making derogatory comments

Regrettably, these actions can't be undone. Therefore, it's crucial to pay attention to your own feelings during a tense situation.

This can help prevent you from saying or doing something you might regret later.

DE-ESCALATION

Pre De-escalation

Pre De-escalation strategies are things that staff can do either on their own or as a team, before having to use de-escalation, that can help improve the effectiveness of de-escalation efforts.

1. Plan, or at least think about, how to handle de-escalation scenarios you might be faced with.

If you're not the type of person who reacts well under pressure or is sometimes at a loss for what to say during an escalated situation, coming up with a plan could really end up helping.

To form your plan you could:

- a. think about some of the possible scenarios you might be faced with, including what a student might be saying or doing, and then come up with some things you might say to de-escalate the situation
- b. plan for what a student might say in response to your de-escalation efforts and how you'd handle it

2. Decide beforehand how a de-escalation situation will be handled when multiple staff may be involved.

This might include pre-identifying specific roles and clear responsibilities for staff to take when an escalation occurs.

Using a team approach with de-escalation can help prevent confusion, arguments, and hopefully staff stepping on each others toes.



DE-ESCALATION

Pre De-escalation

3. Teach students some self de-escalation methods.

Sometimes the best de-escalation is self de-escalation. Students who have been taught self calming strategies can then be prompted to try them when necessary, or may even use them on their own without staff prompting.

4. Ask students how THEY would like to be approached by staff if they are angry or upset.

- Do they want space?
- Do they want someone to just listen?
- Is there a particular person they would like to talk to?
- Are there certain things that will get them more upset (and that should be avoided)?
- Is there somewhere they'd like to go that feels safe?
- What would be their preferred method to communicate to you what they need in the moment?



DE-ESCALATION

Approaches

By combining some of the following **de-escalation approaches** with **pre de-escalation techniques**, while at the same time avoiding **de-escalation Roadblocks** the chances for de-escalation success will likely increase.



Before we take a look at the **de-escalation approaches** here are 4 things to consider when it comes to using de-escalation:

1. One of the reasons people can become escalated is from feeling a “loss of control”

A good goal for de-escalation would be to try and give an upset person some sense of control back. A person who’s feeling “in control” is more likely to feel calm and less likely to become upset.

Giving back a sense of control however isn’t about giving-in every time a student gets upset or throws a tantrum to get their way when staff try to maintain boundaries and limits. Repeatedly “giving in” to de-escalate a student could reinforce an undesirable behavior, in this case a tantrum, and set a up a repeat of it in the future.

2. Success with de-escalation can vary from student to student

This means that what may work to de-escalate one student may not work with another.

3. De-escalation methods that are successful for one staff member may not be for another

4. Talking or having a conversation with enraged student may not be possible until their level of agitation has lowered

In situations like this it’s probably best to be patient.

DE-ESCALATION

Approaches



De-escalation approaches staff can use to calm or manage an individual who is becoming agitated, upset, or potentially violent:

1. Limit the number of adults actively involved in the de-escalation

When too many educators are actively involved in a de-escalation, meaning there's more than one person talking to the student at the same time, it can slow progress by creating mixed messages and possibly confusing and further irritating an already agitated student.

One person should be talking to the student until staff decide to switch roles.

In addition, with too many adults involved, and in close proximity, a student could feel like they are being surrounded or trapped.

So if there are extra staff standing by for support make sure that they're not "hovering over" or "crowding" an escalated student.

2. Be patient

De-escalation can often take longer than expected, especially with younger students.

Using patience as a de-escalation approach simply means taking your time and not trying to force or rush the process.

For example, you may notice that if you were to patiently listen to a student vent their frustrations and feelings (without interrupting them) that the student started to "lose some steam" and begin to de-escalate on their own.

3. Validate what an upset person is feeling and try to confirm why

Validate and confirm works because when someone is upset it can usually feel good to be understood. To validate and confirm you could say:

"you seem really {angry | frustrated | upset} right now. Is that because blank happened?"

"you seem really {angry | frustrated | upset} right now. I'm just not sure why "

"you seem really {angry | frustrated | upset} right now. Are you willing to share with me what's bothering you?"

If the student does happen to confirm or provide the reason as to why they're upset (and it's valid) you could then follow up by saying something like:

"I would likely feel that way too if blank happened to me." or

"I can see why you would feel that way"

DE-ESCALATION

Approaches



De-escalation approaches staff can use to calm or manage an individual who is becoming agitated, upset, or potentially violent:

4. Speak calmly and slowly

It can be easy to get caught up in the emotions of a situation when attempting to de-escalate someone who is highly escalated.

Staff can begin to feel irritated, frustrated, or escalated themselves during difficult situations.

If this happens staff are likely to be less effective with their de-escalation efforts.

It's important to keep your tone of voice low and your words clear. This conveys a sense of calm and control over the situation, which can be infectious.

A quiet and steady voice can also contrast with the student's upset state helping them to realize the difference in their behavior.

5. Be respectful

Treating an escalated or agitated student with respect can be important.

An agitated person can sometimes be more sensitive to feeling shamed and disrespected.

You don't want the student to feel like they have to show you that they must be respected.

Being respectful towards someone who is escalated includes:

- not purposely shaming or embarrassing them in front of their peers
- staying away from reprimands or constant reminders of the consequences for their behavior
- avoiding sarcastic or negative comments about their behavior
- using empathetic statements

Empathy can be a powerful tool. By acknowledging the student's feelings, you show them that you're trying to understand their perspective which can help diffuse their anger or frustration.

DE-ESCALATION

Approaches



De-escalation approaches staff can use to calm or manage an individual who is becoming agitated, upset, or potentially violent:

6. Try to give back a sense of control through choices

When someone is experiencing a loss of control or a feeling of powerlessness it could lead to strong feelings of frustration or anger.

With students who might be lacking the appropriate coping skills to deal with their feelings it could result in escalated behavior.

Instead of issuing commands, try giving the student safe and reasonable choices where possible. This can help give them a sense of control over the situation, which can reduce feelings of helplessness or frustration.

Since situations that staff will be dealing with will differ, the following choice suggestions should be considered and modified to fit your particular communication style and needs.

Choice suggestions could include statements like:

- *"Is there anything I can do to help make this situation better for you?" or "What would you like to see happen?"*
- *"What do you need to start feeling better?" or "Can I get you anything?"*
- *"Could we have a discussion about this?" or "When would you be okay to have a discussion about this?"*
- *"Would you like to take a break/walk for a few minutes?"*
- *"Would you like me to give you some space?"*
- *"Is there someone else you'd like to speak with?"*
- *"Would you like to sit or stand while we talk about this?"*
- *"Would you like to rejoin the class now or take some more time?"*

DE-ESCALATION

Approaches



De-escalation approaches staff can use to calm or manage an individual who is becoming agitated, upset, or potentially violent:

7. Actively listen

This involves giving your full attention to the student, showing understanding through your responses, and empathizing with their feelings.

This doesn't mean you necessarily agree with their actions or feelings, but you acknowledge them.

Just listening to someone who's upset sounds simple enough, in reality, listening actively takes some effort.

Here are some simple steps to help with using Active Listening:

- First, verbally confirm to the escalated student that you can see they're upset and ask them if they'd like to talk to you about it.
- If they choose to speak with you, face the student to show that you'll be giving them your full attention then listen attentively without interruption while using good eye contact, head nods, and facial expressions to show you're listening and/or understanding.
- When the student pauses from speaking you can ask some clarifying questions to further demonstrates you're listening. The timing and speed of your questions can be important. Make sure you give the student time to fully answer your first question before asking your next.
- Then you could use paraphrasing to convey that you heard and understand what the student just told you.

You could start a paraphrase by saying something like:

- "So just let me make sure I understand what you just told me" or
- "So let me tell you what I thought I just heard you say" or
- "Just let me make sure I have things correct" etc.

Using paraphrasing on it's own can be a great de-escalation tool because of how it can make someone feel when their frustrations are heard and understood.

After listening for a while and you feel that you have enough information you could then begin proposing some solutions or compromises.

DE-ESCALATION

Approaches



De-escalation approaches staff can use to calm or manage an individual who is becoming agitated, upset, or potentially violent:

8. Use distraction

If it's appropriate and possible, distracting the student from what's upsetting them can help them to calm down.

This could involve suggesting a different activity, a calming exercise, or a change in environment.

9. Use positive reinforcement

People usually respond well to positivity. Point out the student's strengths and past successes, especially those relevant to their current situation.

You might say something like... *"I remember when you solved a situation like this before, you did a great job, and I know you can do it again."*

10. Turn the situation over to someone else if you're not the best option

It can be easy to get caught up in the emotions of an escalated situation. If this happens though you may no longer be the best option to continue with a de-escalation.

In that case it's probably best, if possible, to switch out and let another person take over.

A 2nd scenario in which you may not be the best option is when someone else, who has a much better relationship with a student, arrives on the scene.

Switching de-escalators in this 2nd scenario doesn't always need to happen, it's just something to consider.

DE-ESCALATION

Team De-escalation

De-escalating upset students can be a challenging task, but it is one that is essential for the safety and well-being of both students and staff.

Successful team de-escalation occurs when staff are able to effectively collaborate their efforts to bring about quicker de-escalation of escalated students.

Team de-escalation can also reduce the risk of injury to students and staff, create a more positive and supportive school environment, and improve communication between staff members.

Suggestions that could help with de-escalating as a team:

1. Plan beforehand how de-escalation situations are going to be handled

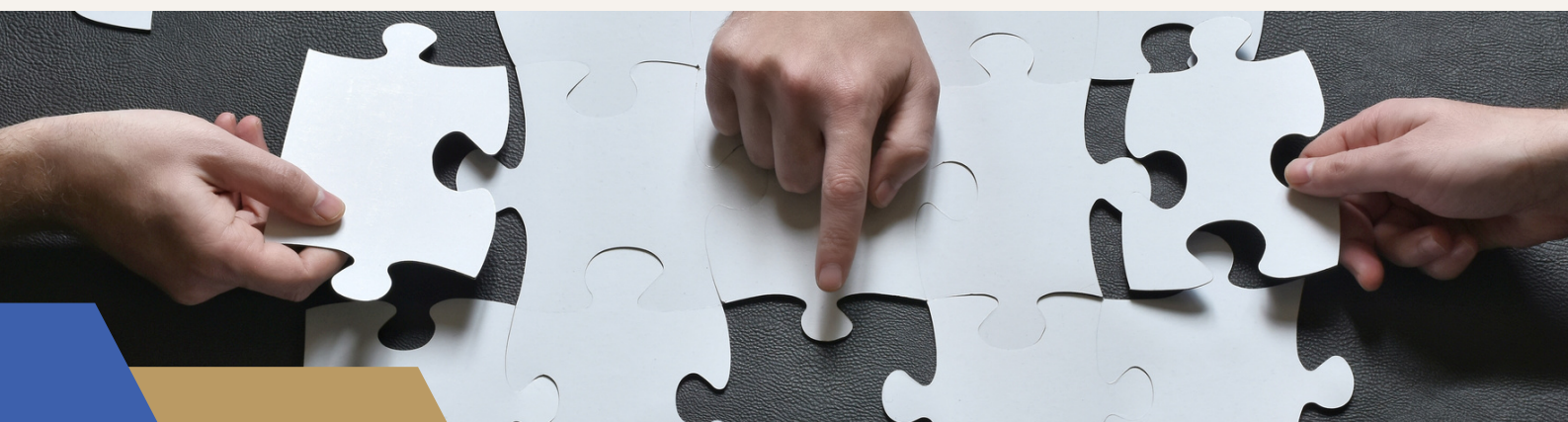
Taking the time to come up with a plan for how de-escalation situations might unfold and how staff should respond can help reduce confusion and frustration and make the de-escalation easier. The plan could include:

A. Which staff person(s) will be primarily responsible for interacting with the escalated student.

Will it be the staff person who started it? Or will it be someone who might have a better relationship with the student and that will take over when they arrive?

B. How the staff who arrive that may take over a de-escalation will do so in professional and respectful manner

C. Which specific words and phrases are likely to work best in helping to de-escalate a particular student and which would likely cause escalation and should be avoided.



DE-ESCALATION

Team De-escalation

Suggestions that could help with de-escalating as a team:

2. Limit the number of staff who will be actively talking to an upset individual.

Multiple staff talking at once in an effort to de-escalate a student rarely works out. Usually the best option in these situations is to have only one staff person talking. If, however, additional staff need to be involved then they should take turns speaking.

3. Be respectful towards other staff during de-escalation scenarios.

It can be quite frustrating for someone who is involved in a de-escalation scenario when other staff arrive and either “just take over”, start making background comments, or abruptly dismiss the initial staff.

These types of actions could negatively affect the relationship between staff as well as between staff and students and is usually not the best way to go about handling a situation.

4. Have a way to discreetly and respectfully communicate with other team members during escalated situations.

Sometimes staff who are attempting to de-escalate someone who is upset can themselves become escalated (possibly without even realizing it).

Having a pre-determined way for an observing staff member to discreetly (meaning without the student realizing it) communicate to the now escalated staff member would be something worth considering.

Being able to communicate to an escalated staff member that it looks like they’ve now become escalated and may want to consider stepping away from a situation could potentially prevent them from saying something out of frustration or anger that they may later regret.

5. Consider stepping back from a de-escalation scenario that you’re directly involved in if you either:

- a. realize yourself or
- b. it’s being discreetly pointed out that you may no longer be the best option to continue.

This does not mean you have to leave the scene completely. It just might mean that you step into an observation/support role.



DE-ESCALATION

Roadblocks

De-escalation roadblocks are things that can block the progress of, or prevent de-escalation from happening.

If someone is familiar with the roadblocks to de-escalation they can then either avoid them altogether or recognize when they're occurring and shift their approach.



1. Staff excessively talking during a de-escalation scenario in an effort to **MAKE** de-escalation happen

Doing this can actually have the opposite effect.

Often times de-escalation will occur more quickly when it's the upset student who is allowed to do most of the talking. With de-escalation sometimes staff saying less is best.

2. Too many staff actively involved in the de-escalation process

The term **actively involved** refers to too many staff talking and trying to verbally de-escalate at the same time.

If additional staff are standing by for safety reasons that's fine. But multiple staff trying to de-escalate at once could feel overwhelming and confusing to someone who's upset, and slow efforts.

3. Trying to force someone who's upset to either comply with a direction, answer a question, or agree with a point of view

Since people who are upset are likely feeling a loss of control and/or loss of power, demanding that they answer questions, quickly comply with a direction, or agree with a point of view could seem like they're giving up even more control and further aggravate the situation.

The same could be said for trying to get a student to admit that they have complied or yielded to staff authority.

If there's an immediate safety issue, however, that requires a student comply or answer questions then by all means staff should take the proper steps to try and keep everyone safe.

DE-ESCALATION

Roadblocks



4. Staff losing their cool (during a de-escalation scenario)

When we lose our cool and get angry or frustrated our emotions go up causing our ability to think logically to go down.

We can then become defensive, argumentative, and potentially do things out of character making for ineffective de-escalation.

5. Making agitating comments to an escalated student

These can include things like:

- A. commenting about how poorly the escalated student is behaving
- B. repeatedly threatening an escalated student with the consequences of their actions

Threatening with consequences can often lead to arguments and power struggles as a student can fire back with their own comments about what they think of staff consequences.

- C. Telling a student who is escalated and venting to you to “*calm down*”.

This usually doesn't work well because when an upset person hears the words “*calm down*”, what they actually could be hearing is that they don't have a right to be upset or express themselves....which might lead to more frustration.

6. Lack of trust or rapport with the de-escalator

If a student doesn't trust or have rapport with a certain staff member, they may be less likely to respond to that person's de-escalation attempts.

Building stronger relationships with students can help in preventing this.

7. Trying to correct inaccuracies in statements students make while they are venting

Doing this could appear confrontational and has the potential to turn the situation into an argument and in turn increase escalation.

If possible, staff may want to wait until a student is calm before addressing inaccurate statements they made while they were upset.

DE-ESCALATION

Roadblocks



8. Appearing confrontation

When trying to de-escalate you want to appear calm, understanding, open, and willing to engage in conversation.

You don't want the upset person to think you're angry with them, looking to argue, have a verbal fight, or not willing to listen.

Appearing confrontational can sometimes be conveyed by:

- invading personal space
- unwanted physical touch - which could easily be misinterpreted as threatening or hostile
- pointing or shaking a finger at someone
- clenching of the fists
- glaring without breaking eye contact
- crossing of the arms (in disapproval)
- raising your voice to try and talk over someone
- repeatedly cutting someone off as they try to explain things

9. Having unrealistic expectations

As mentioned earlier in the training, de-escalation can take more time and progress differently than people expect or would like it too.

Having the expectation that a student should be responding to de-escalation in a certain way can easily lead to frustration and disappointment if they don't.

The frustration and disappointment could cause someone to lose their cool and lead to appearing confrontational, or making agitating comments or gestures.

10. Giving a student a preferred item or allowing a preferred activity to de-escalate

Doing this may actually work to in the moment but will likely make future de-escalation more difficult as it could cause the student to use escalation again because of the previous success they experienced in obtaining the item or activity through the use of escalated behavior.

DE-ESCALATION

Safety



The following suggestions, while not a guarantee regarding personal safety can help make it less likely that staff become injured during a de-escalation scenario in which a student decides to become physically aggressive.

1. Always call for help if you feel a situation requires it

Do not take chances with your personal safety.

2. If you can, to try and get some background behavior info on any student you know you'll be working with

This includes trying to find out:

- if the student has ever assaulted anyone
- whether or not the student has ever used objects as weapons
- if there are any behavior warning signs specific to a particular student
- if the student can act aggressively with little to no warning
- what some of the specific behaviors are that a particular student might display when they're upset

3. Never assume that an upset student, even one who you've previously worked or have a good relationship with, is going to always act rationally, make good decisions, or respect your personal space when they're upset

People who get angry or upset enough can have difficulty making decisions based on logic or reason. And while escalated, someone may have little concern for the consequences of their actions. This could make someone both unpredictable and dangerous.

So it could end up being a mistake to assume that physical aggression isn't going to happen just because a student has never behaved aggressively towards you in the past.

Unfortunately, *"this isn't going to happen to me"* type thinking can make it easier for school staff to be physically assaulted and injured by students.

DE-ESCALATION

Safety



4. Create space between you and an escalated student and leave escape routes open

Creating space means putting physical distance between you and a student who is escalated.

At least of couple of YOUR arm lengths distance would be a good starting point.

By standing at least a couple arm lengths away, a student who tried to quickly initiate physical aggression would likely have to take some steps to reach their target.

The time it takes a student to take those steps to reach you is time that can be used for you to either:

- A. put your hands up in a protective position
- or
- B. quickly move further away from the student

If, however, instead of quickly initiating physical aggression, an escalated student begins to slowly move closer during your de-escalation efforts you could verbally ask them to *"please stay back"*, *"keep their distance"* or *"not come any closer"*.

The second part of suggestion four, which is to **leave escape routes open**, is based on the idea that when people are agitated and in 'fight or flight' mode they may not like feeling trapped or cornered.

So, unless it's necessary for the safety of the student you're working with, you should avoid blocking their access to exits or safe spaces.

You don't want an escalated student to feel like they have to go through you to move from the space they're in.

You should also always try to leave escape routes open for yourself. This includes not letting an escalated student, who has the potential for physical aggression, get between you and an exit.

5. Remove yourself from any situation in which you feel your physical safety is in jeopardy

If, however, you happen to be in a situation where you feel like you CAN'T leave a student alone you should:

- A. call for help and
- B. move to a place and distance where you can still safely monitor the student

DE-ESCALATION

Safety



6. Remain alert for indicators of possible aggression

Indicators of aggression are behaviors that can signal that someone could be preparing for attack.

Sometimes these indicators of aggression can be quite noticeable while other times they can be subtle and hard to detect.

Here are a few indicators that might signal someone could be preparing for physical aggression:

- Clenching of the fists and tightening of the jaw
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Making verbal threats
- Pacing
- Staring to intimidate
- Flushed or pale skin
- Excessive sweating
- Taking a fighting or readiness stance
- Shaking or trembling
- Destructive acts
- The use of confusing or rapid speech

7. Utilize a non-aggressive yet protective posture whenever you feel it's necessary

If a student threatens you with physical aggression either verbally or visually, that is through some type of fighting stance, it's not only important to maintain a safe distance between you and the student but to also be in a non-aggressive protective posture.

Non aggressive protective postures are designed to:

- a. position your body in a less vulnerable way
- b. provide you with better foot positioning for quicker movement
- c. give you a more balanced and stable stance
- d. keep your hands in more protective position

DE-ESCALATION

Safety



A more protective position for your hands is in front of you, instead of behind your back.

Having your hands in front and out of your pockets places them in a better position for you to react more quickly for instance to block or deflect a grab attempt.

Keeping your hands in front may also help demonstrate to a student that you're not hiding something behind your back.

This training will cover three different non-aggressive protective postures that could be utilized. All three protective postures have the same foot and body positions. The only difference in the postures will be where your hands can be placed.

The foot and body position for the protective postures is to have:

- one foot in front of the other, with your feet approximately shoulder width apart and your knees slightly bent
- toes pointed at about a 45° angle
- the back foot positioned slightly to either the right or left of the front foot depending on which is forward
- the upper body facing the general direction that the toes are pointed with your face turned towards the student (see video) 

The three different postures are called **Supportive, Listening, and Reasoning** (see video) 

- In the **Supportive Posture** both of your hands would be held around your waist or midline area.
- In the **Listening Posture** your front hand would be up around the mouth/chin area with the second hand cupping your elbow.
- In the **Reasoning Posture** both hands would be up around the face area fairly close together with palms facing forward.

The idea with these postures is that the closer both of your hands are to your face then the less distance they (your hands) would need to move, and the time it would take to be able to possibly block an incoming strike or defend a grab from a student.

So, if you were standing in the supportive posture it takes longer to move your hands into a more protective position than if you were standing in the reasoning posture.

Which posture you decide to use would be based on the level of protection you feel you need.

DE-ESCALATION

Safety



8. Apply a defensive measure if necessary

In this training there are three defensive measures that can be used in combination with the non aggressive protective postures.

- A. **High Cover** – for defending against strikes and punches
- B. **Foot Check** – for stopping kicks thrown by younger and smaller students and
- C. **Quick Step Back** – for moving out of the way of kicks from larger, stronger students.

The **high cover** is done by placing your forearms together and brining them to a position about 6 to 8 inches in front of your face.

In the **higher cover** your hands are closed in fists, your palms are facing you, your arms are in about a 90° angle, and your wrists will be just about even with or at the same level as your eyes.

The idea with a **high cover** is to place your arms in the way of an oncoming strike to block it from hitting you in the face, neck, or head.

While the **high cover** is up you can turn your body left or right to better meet the direction of a punch or strike. (see video) 

Ideally after the first punch or strike attempt hits the cover you would want to either:

1. Quickly try to move behind the student to apply a reasonable physical intervention
2. Or use one or multiple Quick Step Backs to create a safe amount of space between you and the student.

A **foot check** can be achieved by lifting your front foot slightly off the ground to meet the student's kick with the bottom of your foot. Video

During the **foot check** the knee of your lifted leg will be slightly bent and, since this will be for a smaller student, your leg will be angled downward.

ATTENTION

The **foot check** is NOT a kick delivered to meet the student's kick. This is a block of the student's kick with the bottom of the shoe.

DE-ESCALATION

Safety



The **Quick Step Back** could be used for situations in which a larger student attempts to step towards you to kick, grab, or strike.

The **Quick Step Back** works best when there is already at least two arm lengths of distance between you and the student so that the student would first need to take a couple of steps to reach you.

As soon as the student takes the steps to move towards you to kick, grab or strike you would quickly move back by lifting your rear foot just slightly off the ground, bending the front knee and quickly pushing backwards off of the front foot and landing on the back foot about a foot or two back. (see video) 

After landing on the back foot you'd then quickly bring the front foot backwards to re-establish a good protective posture.

Meaning, your feet would end up about shoulder-width apart, with your knees slightly bent and your hands in defensive position.

ATTENTION

The **Quick Step Back** isn't something you'd want to use if a student was charging/running at you

9. **Do not to turn your back on someone who is escalated, fairly close to you, and has the potential to hurt you.** (see video) 

Turning your back on an escalated person who is close to you, for instance if you were trying to call for help, can put you in a bad position and should be avoided.

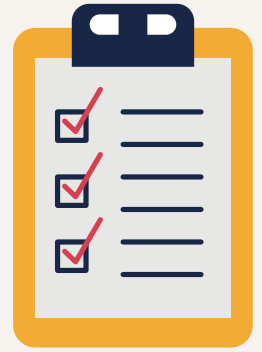
This suggestion, however, does not include scenarios in which you feel you need to run away for personal safety reasons.

10. **Have an appropriate amount of properly trained intervention staff on hand to physically intervene if a de-escalation scenario turns into a physical intervention scenario because of a student's actions.**

POST INCIDENT

Intro

In this section includes three practices to considered implementing after a physical intervention occurs. They are **Recover**, **Review**, and **Report**.



Recover

Behavioral crisis, whether it's verbal or physical, can be a highly stressful experience for both students and staff.

After a crisis has subsided both students and staff would likely benefit from some amount of recovery time before being asked to return to their regular schedule or activities. How much recovery time someone needs is likely going to vary.

It's not unusual for a person to claim that they feel and even appear fine after being involved in a behavioral crisis. While in reality they could still be holding onto feelings of fear, anger, or frustration. And these residual feelings can sometimes be enough for behavior crisis to be easily reignited.

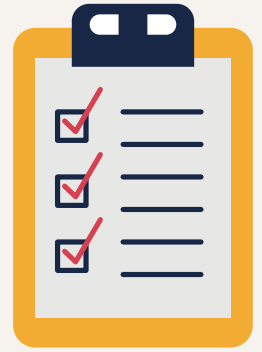
Even a small amount of recovery time that's provided for a student to take a walk, have something to drink or talk to someone can prove valuable in preventing crisis from flaring up again. Trying to make a student rejoin classroom activities before they appear ready could end up being a mistake.

School staff may want to consider doing some type of assessment to determine whether or not a student has actually regained enough control and composure to safely return to their regular activities. Staff should make sure that their assessment of student's readiness to rejoin school activities is relaxed and not forced. Essentially, you don't want the assessment to be the cause of another escalation.

Staff who were involved with a behavioral crisis should also be provided with any needed recovery time. Not every staff person who might be involved in an escalated situation is going to want or need this time, but they should at least be given the option.

POST INCIDENT

Review



According to Massachusetts 603 CMR 46:00 Prevention of Physical Restraint and Requirements if Used, after the release of a student from a restraint, the public education program shall implement follow-up procedures. These procedures shall include reviewing the incident with the student to address the behavior that precipitated the restraint

Reviewing incidents with students could also be helpful in relationship building and preventing future crisis.

Here are 5 things staff may want to consider that could impact the outcome of a post-incident review with a student:

1. **When the review is conducted.** It's probably best to put some time between the end of an intervention and the start of a review to help make sure that a student isn't still escalated.
2. **A student's residual feelings of anger, or trauma history may prevent them from analyzing an event objectively and leave them with a distorted view of the facts.**
3. **A student may not be open with their thoughts for fear of punishment or repercussions.**
4. **Who (staff) is present during an after-incident review.** Having too many staff present or staff who a student does not get along well with could negatively impact a student's participation.
5. **Even carefully worded questions asked by staff could be taken in an accusatory way by students and thus act as triggers.**

The Massachusetts Regulations on Physical Restraint also require that incidents of restraint be reviewed to make sure staff followed proper procedures.

Reviewing incidents with staff can also:

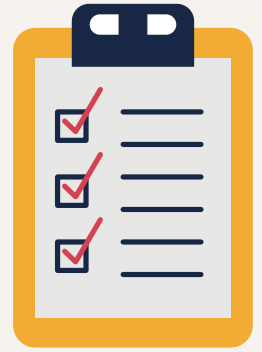
- help clarify events to increase written report accuracy
- allow staff to express their thoughts and feelings around an incident
- and identify any barriers to safer and effective interventions

Some helpful questions that staff could be asked during a post-incident review:

- Were you injured in any way?
- What do you feel was the likely cause of the student's agitated behavior?
- What de-escalation or redirection techniques were used and what was the result?
- What was the specific student behavior(s) that prompted the need for physical intervention.
- What are some things that could possibly be done to help avoid restraints in the future?
- Does the situation need to be addressed with any students who witnessed the restraint?

POST INCIDENT

Report



Completing an accurate and descriptive written report on physical restraints is an important part of the post-incident process.

It's also required by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has a standard report form for documenting restraints and includes sections for things like a student's name, the names and titles of staff members involved in a restraint, names of observers, date of the restraint, and holds used to name a few.

Another section of the report however calls for more of a "written narrative" on what happened. This narrative section is where you would include things like:

- the activity in which the restrained student and other students and staff in the same room or vicinity were engaged in immediately preceding the use of physical restraint
- the behavior justifying the use of restraint
- specific de-escalation strategies or other alternatives to restraint that were attempted
- the student's behavior and reactions during the restraint
- how the restraint ended

When filling out a narrative staff may also want to consider adding:

- A. how many times de-escalation strategies were attempted and the result of those efforts
- C. specific physical alternatives that were tried such as blocking, escorting, or redirection
- B. And any efforts to try and shorten the time of the restraint by releasing the student early and often (if safe to do so)

When it's time to actually write a restraint report:

- make sure you're calm so you're not writing out of emotion
- consider talking to other staff who were involved to get an accurate picture of what happened
- be behaviorally descriptive in your report and document observable student actions without evaluating them as good or bad
- set the context for the student emotions during a situation by using the term "appeared" rather than "was" so for instance you might write..." the student appeared upset, or angry" rather than the "student was upset or angry"
- have any staff who were involved in or were on hand to witness a restraint look it over a report for accuracy

THE IMPACT OF RESTRAINT

Introduction

Physical restraint might seem like an effective and quick way to deal with an out-of-control student. Physical restraint however can have both short and long-term negative impacts on all those involved.

These impacts can include, but not limited to, psychological, physiological, and social-emotional.

Physical restraints can also impact a student's physical well-being, their relationships with peers and staff, their ability to learn and their sense of belonging and safety while in school.

In addition, physical restraint can also have an effect on:

- students who witness or hear about restraints
- parents or guardians of students who are restrained
- school staff who apply or witness physical restraint



THE IMPACT OF RESTRAINT

Impact on Students

There are a number of potential impacts that physical restraint can have on students who have been restrained that should be taken into careful consideration.

They are:

1. Physical restraint could cause serious short or long term physical injury.
2. Restraint could trigger a student's past traumatic and/or abusive experience causing them to experience feelings of anger, anxiety, powerlessness, loss of control and even nightmares.
3. Restraint could cause a student to no longer trust or feel safe in the room of a staff member who restrained them thus damaging whatever relationship they had or make it harder to form one.
4. Restraint can make it more difficult for students to form positive relationships with or be accepted by their peers, who might become fearful or wary of students who are constantly being restrained.
5. Restraint can create feelings of humiliation, confusion, frustration, helplessness, or embarrassment.
6. Restraint can leave a student fearful of expressing how they feel because doing so could land them in a restraint.
7. A student could attain a "restraint reputation", possibly causing them to be unfairly pre-judged by some staff before they (staff) even get to know them.
8. Because some students might find it reinforcing to be restrained either because they feel it helps them vent emotions or because they like the attention they get then restraint could cause undesirable behaviors to increase.

Physical Restraints can also impact students who witness or hear about them.

- Students who witness a restraint could have their own past traumatic experiences triggered causing them to experience the restraint as if it were happening to them.
- Restraints could cause students who witness a classmate being restrained to become fearful of that student thus affecting their own sense of safety and security while in school.
- Students who witness restraint may also no longer trust or feel safe around staff they have either seen or heard of using restraint.
- Students watching other students being restrained and wanting to help but not being able to could create feelings of powerless, frustration, or sadness.



THE IMPACT OF RESTRAINT

Impact on Others

Parents or guardians of students who are restrained can be impacted by restraints as well.

It's quite possible that after a parent or guardian learns that their child was restrained they:

- may no longer trust staff who were required to use a restraint on their child
- could feel confused, powerless, disappointed, or embarrassed over their child being restrained
- could react to the restraint before fully understanding the details of the situation causing them to either:
 - completely cut off dialogue with the school
 - come to the school while upset
 - threaten to or take legal action
 - post inaccuracies on social media
 - try to bring the situation to the highest levels of administration.

Physical restraint can also impact **school staff** who either participate in or witness restraint in a number of different ways:

- School staff who are required to use restraint could become physically injured in the process.
- Staff who had to use a restraint could be unfairly judged by other staff who might not have the whole picture regarding the justification for the restraint, including everything that may have been done to avoid it.
- Staff who have students in their room that require repeated interventions could develop feelings of frustration, anticipatory stress, and even an attitude of apathy towards those students thus effecting the learning environment.
- Staff could develop strong feelings of guilt or sadness from either witnessing or being required to use a restraint.
- Because restraint can sometimes quickly bring about the end of undesirable student behaviors a staff member may be reinforced to use it in situations where it may not be warranted or legal.



THE IMPACT OF RESTRAINT

Reducing The Impacts



Schools that use physical restraints should have procedures in place to help reduce the impacts that physical restraint can have.

Here are just a few suggestions school staff may want to consider implementing.

1. Provide parents or guardians with clearly written restraint policies and procedures that include what alternatives to restraint that staff use, what specific behaviors restraints are used for, the safety standards that staff apply when restraints are used, how staff are trained, and their rights as parents or guardians.

These safety standards staff apply when restraint is used could be things like:

- using the minimum amount of force necessary to gain control,
 - never placing body weight on a student during a restraint
 - monitoring the student for breathing difficulties and physical distress,
 - and letting go of holds early and often to give students a chance to regain their composure
2. Give parents or guardians the opportunity to be heard and voice any concerns over the use of restraint on their child.
 3. Whenever possible, remove other students from a room or area before attempting a physical restraint to reduce the possibility of a traumatic experience from witnessing it.
 4. have age appropriate discussions with students who might witness a restraint to explain what restraints are specifically for and when or why they might be used.
 5. For students who have a known or suspected trauma history staff apply physical interventions in such a way as to minimize the impact the intervention might have on a student's psychological or emotional well-being.
 6. Process incidents of restraint with students while encouraging them to ask questions or voice their feelings and concerns around the intervention.
 7. Provide whatever staff who were involved in a restraint may need to clean up, calm down, and feel well enough to return to their normal duties.
 8. Give staff who were involved in a physical restraint the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have around their involvement.

The goal of any educational institution should be to create a nurturing environment conducive to learning and development. Schools that employ physical restraints are faced with a unique challenge, as they walk the tightrope of maintaining safety while also ensuring that the physical and emotional well-being of their students are preserved.

Hopefully these suggestions will help empower students, parents and guardians as well as staff to become part of the process of reducing not only the impacts but also the use of physical restraint.

END