

Press Statement

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Major Step Forward in Improving Safety of Children in Schools with New Legislation to Restrict the Use of Restraints and Seclusion

SILVER SPRING, MD (December 8, 2009) — AUCD applauds Representatives George Miller (D-CA), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) who announced that they will introduce legislation tomorrow, December 9 to restrict the use of restraints and seclusion in schools. Sen. Dodd (D-CT) also announced his intention to introduce a companion bill in the Senate.

There is an urgent need for minimal Federal protection and allocation of resources and assistance to States in developing plans to reduce the use of these dangerous techniques. Currently, no federal guidelines exist regarding the use of restraint and seclusion. Risk of injury and harm is significantly increased because seclusion and restraints are implemented by staff who are not adequately trained.

“School personnel are not adequately trained in the use of evidence-based techniques in crisis reduction and de-escalation or on the use of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports,” stated Tamar Heller, AUCD President and Director of the Institute on Disability and Human Development (the Illinois UCEDD). “Research by our University Centers has shown Positive Behavioral Supports as an effective intervention for children with disruptive or challenging behaviors across a broad age range and spectrum of behaviors.”

Evidence shows a disproportionate use of these techniques on students with disabilities, violating their right to nondiscrimination in accessing education. A majority of problem behaviors that are used to justify seclusion and restraint could be prevented with early identification and intensive early intervention. The need for seclusion and restraint procedures is, in part, a result of insufficient investment in prevention efforts.

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), located in Silver Spring, MD, promotes and supports a national network of interdisciplinary centers on disabilities. The members of AUCD represent every U.S. state and territory. AUCD and its members work to advance policy and practice through research, education, leadership, and services for and with individuals with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and communities. For more information, visit AUCD’s website: www.aucd.org.