

Seclusion and Restraint Data in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has consistently emphasized that seclusion and restraint may only be used as the last resort when there is an imminent safety risk. This is in accordance with our state law. The 2019 [Wisconsin Act 118](#) generally prohibits the use of physical restraint and seclusion in schools. The limited exception is when a student's behavior presents a *clear, present and imminent risk* to the physical safety of the student or others, and it is the *least restrictive intervention feasible*. Seclusion and restraint may not be used for disciplinary reasons, and the force and duration may not exceed what is reasonable and necessary to resolve the imminent safety risk.

[Act 118](#) also established a statewide reporting requirement for seclusion and restraint data. The DPI collected data from school districts during the 2019-2020 school year from September 2019 and March 2020 due to the pandemic and extended school closures.

- 46.7% or 1,019 schools reported zero instances of seclusion or restraint
- Overall, there were 18,341 incidents among 5,742 students
- Students with disabilities were disproportionately secluded or restrained

Incident Type	Number of Schools w/ >1 incident	Number of Districts w/ >1 incident	Number of Incidents	Number of Students Involved	Percent of Students with Disabilities Involved
Seclusion	812	266	8,733	2,419	82%
Restraint	1,090	331	9,790	3,412	77%

Seclusion and Restraint Trends

Seclusion and restraint remain widely used practices throughout Wisconsin schools, with no clear concentration in urban or rural settings. Some trends are evident, such as widespread use in elementary schools and higher rates among students with disabilities.

How can Schools/Districts Decrease the Use of Seclusion and Restraint?

Districts are encouraged to analyze their data, conduct a root cause analysis, and problem-solve. Access resources for alternative solutions to seclusion and restraint on the [DPI web page](#). Other helpful resources:

[School-Based Mental Health Framework](#)

[Trauma Sensitive Schools](#)

[Culturally Responsive Evidence-Based Practices](#)

[Wisconsin Center for Resilient Schools \(WCRS\)](#)

[College and Career Ready Individual Education Plans](#)

[Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\)](#)