The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) requires licensed School-age programs in Massachusetts to use child guidance practices that foster children’s physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. EEC strongly supports building caring, pro-social and positive relationships between the adults and the children enrolled in the programs. Practices that include physical restraints of children must not be used in any child care program licensed by EEC.

Below are answers to frequently asked questions that may help clarify acceptable child guidance practices in licensed school-age programs:

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1) **Question:** If a group leader or administrator completes training on passive physical restraint techniques may they then use these techniques to assist children who are “out of control” in their program?

**Answer:** No. Practices that include physical restraints of children in any School-age program licensed by the EEC must not be used.

2) **Question:** Can I use physical restraint on children in my School-age program, if the children's parents have signed a permission form?

**Answer:** No. EEC prohibits the use of physical restraint in any licensed school-age program regardless of any signed permission the program receives.

3) **Question:** If I am following the Department of Education's restraint regulations, can I use physical restraint in my child care programs?

**Answer:** No. Practices that include physical restraints of children in any School-age program licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care must not be used.

4) **Question:** Can I try to contain or physically move a school-age child against their will as a way to remove them from a difficult situation or in an effort to calm them down?
Answer: No. A school-age child may not be contained or physically moved against his/her will. School-age children usually need a cooling–off period when they are angry or upset. School-age children do not like being physically handled. Speak calmly to the child and give him/her choices about where s/he would like to cool-off. Assess the situation. Your goal is to have the child regain self-control in the least restrictive way. Additionally, if your assessment of the situation is that in a short time the child will regain composure, you may try to have the child move on his/her own to a soft “quiet space” in your program. Speak softly to the child in a supporting way. Do not force the child if the child continues to resist. Remove anything in the physical environment that the child could harm him/herself or others with and continue your efforts to calm the child. Offer the child opportunities to continue to stay in a “quiet space with a favorite book or paper to express him/herself until s/he is ready rejoin the group. Process the situation with the child as soon as the child is ready to do so. Each child is different and the group leader or adult staff person should know each child’s temperament and limitations.

5) Question: Is holding a child considered a restraint?

Answer: Yes. Holding a child as a response to their challenging behaviors or as a means of confining his/her movements is considered a physical restraint. Adults must always intervene in a calm non-threatening nurturing manner in an effort to calm the situation in the least restrictive way.

6) Question: Can I supportively hold on a child who is in imminent danger or about to harm self or others?

Answer: Yes. The group leader or administrator may hold a child who is willing and able to be held. Staff should know the child’s temperament and limitations. Interventions with children should be safe and appropriate for the situation. School-age children usually need a cooling–off period when they are upset. Interventions should vary based on the age and needs of the child. Interventions should be limited to actions that are comforting or supportive to the child experiencing the difficulty. Speak calmly to the child and give him/her choices about where s/he would like to cool-off. Assess the situation. The goal should always be to help the child regain self-control in the least restrictive way.

7) Question: What can I do if a child in my school-age program does not regain self-control?
Answer: Assess the situation; if the child cannot regain control contact the child’s parents or guardian. Contact police if necessary. Remove other children from the area and monitor the child until parent/or guardian or police arrive.

8) Question: If a child runs from the school-age program and puts him/herself in a dangerous situation, can I run and grab the child to stop the child from getting hurt?

Answer: Yes. If this is not possible because of the physical size of school-age child and a staff’s personal safety concern, then school-age staff should contact police.

9) Question: Can I escort a child from one area to another?

Answer: The group leader or administrator may direct or escort a child from one area to another. The group or administrator should use his/her judgment and knowledge of the child as to whether s/he should “put hands” on the child as a means to move the child to a different area. The provider should always speak calmly and use additional familiar ways to acknowledge and affirm the child. An escort is when a staff person and child agree to walk to another area in the program. The staff places his/her hands either on the child’s arm, shoulder or hand and walks with the child to the designated space. This is done with the child’s consent.

10) Question: Can I use pillows, blankets, nap mats or other objects to restrict a child's freedom of movement as a way to better control the SACC classroom during quiet time?

Answer: No. The group leader or administrator must not use any device meant to restrict a child's movement or free will, at any time as a method of controlling a child's behavior, as a means of punishment, limiting the child’s participation, or for the convenience of the program.

11) Question: Can I put my knee, leg, or arm across a child who is having difficulty controlling his/her behavior?

Answer: No. The group leader must not use any method that is meant to restrict a child's movement or free will, at any time as a method of controlling a child's behavior, using as punishment, limiting the child's participation, or for the convenience of the program.

12) Question: Can I put myself between two children who are fighting and physically separate them?
**Answer:** The group leader or administrator must assess and consider his/her own safety and the safety of the children and group when deciding to intervene in a fight between children. If necessary the group leader should immediately call for help, remove other children and call the police. When developing your child guidance emergency procedures, consider the possibility of having to intervene in this type of situation beforehand and develop a plan of action and strategies to resolve this type of situation before it occurs.

13) **Question:** Where can I get help for a child that is disrupting daily program activities and is pushing the limits of staff and other children?

**Answer:** There are many resources available to school-age programs in the community. With discussion and written parental permission a program may refer children and families to local community services such as a mental health clinic:

- *Call your School-age Licensor for information and assistance;*
- *Training and consultation services through private consultants;*
- *Training opportunities offered by the local child care resource and referral agency services;*
- *Current subsidy resources such as flexible funding for children with special needs for any program holding a voucher agreement with their local CCRR or an EEC contract*
- *For additional resources solutions or ideas you may call your EEC Policy and Training advisor.*