

Reducing Student Distress and use of Physical Restraint

[Ministry of Education Information Page](#)

Delegation

The board as Employer states in its [Operations Policy](#) that “... the principal shall not fail to... Ensure that the school [meets the requirements](#) of the Education (Physical Restraint) Rules 2024.”

Definitions¹

“**[P]hysically restrain**, in relation to a student, means to use physical force to prevent, restrict, or subdue the movement of the student’s body or part of the student’s body against the student’s will.”

Limits

“A teacher or authorised staff member must not physically restrain a student unless:

- (a) the physical restraint is necessary to prevent imminent harm to the student or another person; and
- (b) the teacher or authorised staff member reasonably believes that there is no other option available in the circumstances to prevent the harm; and
- (c) the physical restraint is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.”

“**[H]arm** means harm to the health, safety, or well-being of the student or another person, including any significant emotional distress suffered by the student or the other person.”

“**[A]uthorised staff member** means an employee of a registered school who is trained and authorised by the employer to use physical restraint”

Rules ²	
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¹ [Education and Training Act 2020 s99](#)

² [Education \(Physical Restraint\) Rules 2024](#)

Rule 4 - School Policy (1) Every employer must have a policy on reducing student distress and the use of physical restraint that has regard to the guidelines issued by the Secretary for Education under section 101 of the Act, including a process for managing complaints. (2) Every employer must take reasonable steps to ensure that parents and caregivers, students, school staff and the school community know about the school's policies on reducing student distress and the use of physical restraint.	• School Policy • Complaints • A link to this page is included in the Health and Safety section of the board's published Operations Policy • This policy is included in the regular staff review of the school's Health and Safety procedures
Rule 5 - Authorisation of staff members who are not teachers 1) An employer may authorise an employee, who is not a teacher, and who has been trained in accordance with Rule 12, to use physical restraint in accordance with section 99 of the Act. (2) Every authorisation under sub-clause (1) must be in writing. (3) The employer must give the employee a copy of the authorisation. (4) The employer may, by written notice to the employee, revoke an authorisation at any time.	• Authorisation Letter(s) (Staff access only)
Rule 6 - Information to be made available (1) Every employer must ensure that the following documents are available to the school community: (a) the guidelines issued by the Secretary for Education under section 101 of the Act; (b) the names and positions of any authorised staff members; and (c) the school's policy on reducing student distress and the use of physical restraint (Rule 4)	• Guidelines³ • Teaching Staff List (Password protected - contact Principal) • Support Staff Authorisation Letters (Password protected - contact Principal) • School Policy
Rule 7 - Keeping Records (1) Every employer must keep written records of every instance of physical restraint of a student. (2) Any record must be kept for a minimum period of 10 years from the date of last action.	• Every instance of physical restraint of a student will be recorded on the PB4L Problem Behaviour Form in eTap Guidance. (Staff access only) • See also Rule 11 - Reporting on the use of Physical Restraint.
Rule 8 - Developing support plans for the prevention of physical restraint (1) Every employer must ensure a support plan for preventing student distress and de-escalating crisis situations is put in place for any student:	• The Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) develops and monitors support plans.

³ [Aramai he tētēkura: Physical Restraint Guidelines](#)

(a) who the employer identifies as having a high likelihood of being involved in a crisis situation where physical restraint may be used on them; or (b) who is subject to the use of physical restraint more than once in a term; or (c) at the request of the student's parents or caregivers. (2) Every employer must ensure the student's parents or caregivers provide written informed consent if a section on physical restraint is appended to the student's support plan.	
Rule 9. Notifying the use of physical restraint Every employer must ensure that when a student has been physically restrained, the student's parents or caregivers are: (a) notified as soon as possible about the incident of physical restraint; and (b) provided with a reasonable opportunity to actively participate in a debrief about the incident, including how it was managed with regard to the guidelines, within three working days of the incident or later by mutual agreement.	• The principal (or a senior leader) must be advised as soon as practicable after an incidence of physical restraint. • The principal (or senior leader) will ensure that: ◦ The incident is recorded on the PB4L Problem Behaviour Form in eTap Guidance. (Staff access only) ◦ The requirements of Rule 9 (a) and (b), and Rule 11 are met. • Resources ◦ Checklist following an incident of physical restraint - Guidelines page 75 ◦ Sample Debrief Form - Guidelines page 76
Rule 10. Monitoring the use of physical restraint (1) Every employer must take reasonable steps to ensure that: (a) any student who has been physically restrained; and (b) any staff member who has used physical restraint, has their physical and psychological wellbeing monitored so that appropriate support can be provided if adverse impacts from the restraint occur. (2) Every employer must ensure that the records kept under Rule 7 are analysed so that trends including increased use of physical restraint can be identified, and appropriate responses to minimise restraint developed.	• The principal, in consultation with Senior Leaders, will ensure that the requirements of Rule 10 (1) and (2) are met.
Rule 11. Reporting on the use of physical restraint (1) Every employer must report every incidence of physical restraint to the Ministry of Education using the online notification form. (2) Every staff member who uses physical restraint must complete a staff physical restraint incident report. The employer must place a copy of the form in the student's file and provide a copy to the student's parents and/or caregivers.	• Checklist following an incident of physical restraint - Guidelines page 75 • The "staff physical restraint incident report" is the PB4L Problem Behaviour Form in eTap Guidance.

12. Training and support for staff

Every employer must ensure:

- (a) Teachers and authorised staff members have completed the [online module](#) on the content of the Guidelines issued under section 101 of the Act [within 10 weeks of starting employment at the school](#);
- (b) from 7 February 2025, teachers and authorised staff members are supported and trained in identifying stress triggers, understanding unmet needs and preventing, minimising and responding to student distress;
- (c) teachers that the employer identifies as having a high likelihood of needing to use physical restraint are trained in appropriate physical holds by accredited physical restraint practitioners;
- (d) every authorised staff member (who is not a teacher) has been trained in appropriate physical holds by accredited physical restraint practitioners prior to their authorisation.

- Use [this form](#) to record completion of training modules.
(Staff access only)
- View training register [here](#).
(Staff access only)