

## **Position on the Use of Personal Control, Defensive Techniques and Mechanical Restraints for Adults with IDD**

### **Issue**

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities should be offered the opportunity to live, learn, work and socialize in an environment that is the least restrictive of their personal liberties and free from harm and abuse. In addition, this environment should be positive and fostering. It should provide adequate and appropriate supports, stimulation and services. We recognize, however, that even in the most supportive environment, some individuals may exhibit behaviors which present a clear, significant physical threat to the individual or another person. In these situations, steps need to be taken to protect individuals from harm.

### **Position**

- The Arc of New Jersey believes that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who exhibit significant behavioral challenges can live in community settings, when there are appropriate services to successfully address their needs.
- The Arc of New Jersey believes that the use of personal control or defensive techniques, or mechanical restraints must only be used in an emergency, as a last resort crisis intervention to protect the individual and/or other individuals in the immediate environment when there is a clear, significant physical threat to an individual.
- Personal control or defensive techniques, or mechanical restraints must never be used for punishment, convenience of staff or as a substitute for adequate and appropriate supports, stimulation and services.
- Personal control or defensive techniques, or mechanical restraints should never be used if medically contraindicated.
- Staff who provide services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities must be trained, and retrained as needed, in the areas of emergency procedures, positive behavioral supports, crisis intervention, and informed consent. In addition, staff should not be permitted to utilize personal control or defensive techniques, or mechanical restraints unless they have been thoroughly trained in their use.
- The use of personal control or defensive techniques, or mechanical restraints must terminate immediately upon the end of the imminent threat to the physical safety of the individual or other persons.
- Families and/or guardians must be informed of an agency's policies regarding the use of personal control or defensive techniques, and mechanical restraints upon admission to the service or support system, and again if the need for intervention is necessary. Families and/or guardians must be notified immediately, and no later than 24 hours after an emergency occurs requiring the use of personal control or defensive techniques, or mechanical restraints.
- The Arc of New Jersey believes that any and all abuse of personal control or defensive techniques, or mechanical restraints must be acted upon immediately with severe consequences for the persons and agencies involved in the abuse.

- Personal control or defensive techniques, or mechanical restraints used upon individuals receiving Division of Developmental Disabilities services must be carried out and reported on in accordance with Division Circulars, the Community Care Program Manual and the Supports Program Manual.
- The use of safeguarding equipment shall be initiated on the prescription of a physician and be carried out and reported in accordance with Division Circulars, the Community Care Program Manual and the Supports Program Manual.

## **Definitions**

### **For the purposes of this position statement:**

- **Emergency** is defined as a situation in which an individual exhibits or engages in behaviors which present a clear, significant physical threat to the individual or another person.
- **Mechanical restraint** means a device utilized by staff to intervene when a behavior will likely endanger the health or safety of the individual or others and less restrictive techniques have proved ineffective or not feasible. The device is attached or adjacent to an individual's body and restricts freedom of movement either partially or totally. If a device can be released voluntarily by the individual, it is not a restraint.
- **Personal control technique** means physical contact by staff in an emergency situation to control a dangerous behavior, which restricts the individual's freedom of movement either partially or totally. Personal control techniques are considered distinct from physical prompting which is a procedure involving physical contact for the purpose of facilitating acquisition of a specific skill or behavior.
- **Defensive Technique** means maneuvers used to avoid or deflect injury from assault by an individual or to escape from a physical hold placed on staff by the individual.
- **Safeguarding Equipment** means devices that restrict movement used to provide support for the achievement of functional body position or proper balance; devices used for specific medical, dental or surgical treatment; and devices to protect the individual from symptoms of existing medical conditions, including but not limited to, seizures and ataxia.

Adopted by The Arc of New Jersey Board of Directors November 6, 2025

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