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2020-21 data on seclusion and restraint now available

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction today published information reported by Wisconsin schools on incidents where seclusion and/or physical restraint was used during the 2020-21 school year.

Pursuant to [2019 Wisconsin Act 118](#), Wisconsin schools are required to submit a report containing information on the use of seclusion and restraint in schools to the DPI annually by December 1. The 2020-21 school year is the second year this information is required to be submitted to the DPI. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and some Wisconsin schools shifting from in-person instruction to virtual instruction, the DPI urges caution when comparing incident rates across schools and to the previous academic year.

“These figures represent the lived experiences of students and staff in our state, and we must use this information to improve our systems and practices to reduce the frequency and need for these events,” State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly said. “That is especially true for our students with disabilities, who are far more likely to be subjected to these practices than their peers.”

Statewide, schools reported 4,314 instances of seclusion and 4,949 instances where physical restraint was used. Among those instances, 1,288 students were involved in seclusion incidents, and 1,649 were involved in physical restraint instances. Data does not indicate whether incidents of seclusion and restraint occurred simultaneously. Students with individualized education programs (IEPs) were involved in instances at a higher rate than other students, comprising 85 percent of all seclusion incidents and 84 percent of all physical restraint incidents reported for the 2020-21 school year.

“The department is committed to supporting schools, educators, and children in prioritizing mental health and social-emotional learning, as well as using positive behavior interventions and culturally responsive practices,” Dr. Underly said. “But the fact of the matter is, our educators continue to see the stark impact of the social and emotional turmoil experienced by learners and their families, and we need to do more to address why seclusion and restraint must be used – even as a last resort. Our schools need

(more)

meaningful, ongoing investment of resources beyond one-time, federal relief dollars to meet these challenges for us to see a reduction in the use of these practices.”

Reported data shows that 1,654 public and private Special Needs Scholarship Program schools (64 percent of the total number) reported zero seclusion or physical restraint instances for the 2020-21 school year. [Visit the DPI’s website for 2020-21 seclusion and restraint data.](#)

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