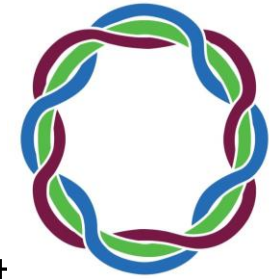

Special Education Study Updates

Tom Cosker, Advocate for Disability Rights CT

Special Education Project Overview

- Who is DRCT?
- Review of Legislation
- Project Plan
- Progress to Date
- Next Steps

Disability Rights Connecticut



- Independent, statewide, non-profit Protection and Advocacy System providing legal advocacy and rights protection to people with disabilities of all ages.
- Provide systemic and individual advocacy for people with disabilities along with monitoring and investigations.
- Completed investigations (2024 & 2026) and issued reports on special education providers both in-state and out-of-state.
- Staff includes attorneys, advocates, investigators, support staff
- Tom Cosker, advocate/parent, focused on special education, employment, and abuse/neglect

Special Education Study Intent – Legislation

- Submit a report by Jan. 1, 2027, regarding "**behavioral health issues impacting students in the state receiving special education**"
 - **Behavioral intervention methods used**- utilizing evidence-based interventions - requiring staff at such private providers to be trained in such evidence-based interventions
 - Best practices for the **monitoring and random audits** by the Department of Education **of the use of physical restraint and seclusion.**

House Bill No. 5001 - Public Act No. 25-67

AN ACT CONCERNING THE QUALITY AND DELIVERY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT.

“Sec. 14. Not later than January 1, 2027, the Transforming Children's Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and children.

Such report shall consist of the committee's examination of and recommendations for **behavioral health issues impacting students in the state receiving special education** that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

(A) *The **behavioral intervention methods** utilized by private providers of special education services and the feasibility and impact of **requiring such private providers to utilize evidence-based interventions** that are proactive and highly individualized, such as the Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems, including, but not limited to, **the feasibility and impact of requiring staff at such private providers to be trained in such evidence-based interventions** with an emphasis on problem-solving as the primary goal; and*

House Bill No. 5001 - Public Act No. 25-67

AN ACT CONCERNING THE QUALITY AND DELIVERY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT.

(B) Best practices for the monitoring and random audits by the Department of Education of the use of physical restraint and seclusion pursuant to section 10-236b for students receiving special education, including, but not limited to, best practices for

*(i) ensuring the **accuracy and consistency of the annual compilation of incidents of physical restraint and seclusions reported to the department pursuant to subsection (l) of said section,***

*(ii) **intervention by the department** in schools and special education programs **that report a high incidence of physical restraint and seclusion,***

*(iii) **enforcement of the laws relating to physical restraint and seclusion,** such as through site visits of seclusion spaces and review of incident reports and parental notifications,*

*(iv) **mandatory training** of staff and administrators to reduce reliance on physical restraint and seclusion, and*

*(v) **development of uniform rules or regulations** applicable to physical restraint and seclusion of any student.”*

Special Education Study – Project Plan

- Develop Communications Plan
- Evidence-based practices literature review
- Grey literature review
- Methodology and design of data collection tools and procedures
- Recruitment for surveys, interviews, and focus groups

Special Education Study – Project Plan

- Data requests
- Conduct interviews
- Conduct focus groups
- Survey implementation
- Data analysis
- Draft report

Special Education Study – Project Plan

- Communications Plan
 - Purpose – to provide progress updates and solicit input/feedback
 - Meetings
 - School Based Workgroup
 - Special Education subgroup
 - Information dissemination to subgroup and other stakeholders
 - Use of social media as needed

Research - Literature Review

- Evidence-based practices literature review
 - Many topics and EBIs covered
 - Considering setting, student ages, student disability, etc.
- Grey literature review
 - R/S laws (across states) including monitoring and enforcement
 - Federal and State R/S policy guidance
 - R/S monitoring and auditing practices
 - Legislation
 - Litigation
 - Commentary on the practice and impact of R/S

Special Education Study – Project Plan

- Methodology and design of data collection tools and procedures
 - Evaluation questions
 - Key stakeholder interviews
 - Focus group
 - Survey
- Recruitment for surveys, interviews, and focus groups
 - Outreach/connection with stakeholder groups
 - Social media outreach

Data Collection – Data Requests

- Type and prevalence of seclusion and restraint
- Types of evidence-based interventions used and associated training
- Requests to be made to
 - CSDE
 - Private providers
 - School districts
 - Other states
- Had meetings with CSDE

Data Collection - Interviews

- Up to 20 key informant interviews to be conducted.
 - General and group-specific questions
- Groups for interviews
 - Developers and/or trainers of evidence-based interventions
 - Educators, professionals, and/or policymakers from other states
 - CT professionals (behaviorists, educators, psychologists) overseeing or using behavior interventions
 - R/S auditors from other states
- Interviewee invitations in process
- Conduct interviews (June to September)

Data Collection – Focus Groups

- Up to five focus groups to explore feasibility and impact of requiring the use of EBIs.
- Focus group participants (4 to 8 per group)
 - Private special education providers (administrators, educators and behaviorists) including transition providers
 - CSDE staff overseeing/auditing restraint and seclusion
 - Local special education professional development providers
 - LEA administrators and/or Special Education Directors
 - Special education advocates
- Conduct Focus groups (July to October)

Data Collection - Survey

- Design survey based on input from research, interviews and focus groups
 - Recipients may include:
 - Administrators at LEAs, Special Education Directors, LEA staff
 - Private provider administrators and staff
 - Behavior specialists, teachers, professionals (BCBA technicians, behavioral consultants) and para-professionals at LEAs and private providers
 - Distribute survey – July to November
 - Wave 1 – Administrators
 - Wave 2 – Educators and other professionals
 - Collect and analyze results

Special Education Subgroup – Project Tasks

Task	Timeline	Status
Communications Plan	April	Completed
Evidence based literature review	March - June	Mostly complete – drafting literature brief
Grey literature review	March - June	Mostly complete – drafting literature brief
Methodology and Design of data collection tools • Interview tool • Focus group tool • Survey	March – July	Evaluation Protocol completed Interview scripts completed Focus group tool – being drafted Survey - not started
Recruitment • Key informants • Focus group participants • Survey recipients	April - August	Key informants identified Focus groups – categories identified Survey groups identified

Special Education Subgroup – Next Steps

Task	Timeline	Status/Next Steps
Data Requests	June – Sept.	Drafting list of requests Meet with CSDE
Interviews	June - Sept.	Inviting interviewees Scheduling interviews
Focus Groups	July – Oct.	Determining group invitees Designing script/questions
Survey	July – Nov.	Designing survey Determining recipients
Draft Report	Sept. - Dec.	Outline drafted