



External Program Review Committee: Annual Evaluation Report

Positive Supports: Strategy 2C

10/01/2017

Positive Supports, Strategy 2C:

Annually evaluate progress and determine if there are additional measures to be taken to reduce the use of mechanical restraints to prevent imminent risk of serious injury due to self-injurious behaviors.

Disability Services Division
External Program Review Committee
540 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651) 431-4974
positivesupports@state.mn.us

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About the External Program Review Committee

Purpose

The External Program Review Committee monitors the implementation of [Minn. R. 9544.0130](#). The committee also makes recommendations to the commissioner to:

- Make policy recommendations related to Minn. R. 9544.0130 requirements
- Approve or deny requests for emergency use of procedures in accordance with [Minn. Stat. §245.8251, subd. 4.](#)

Background

Over the last several decades, models of care for people with disabilities have shifted from focusing on institutional-like care toward positive supports that encourage full participation in a life the person desires and values. The trend toward positive supports and person-centered approaches is occurring all over the country. People with disabilities have expectations for meaningful jobs, connections with others, community participation and independent living. Service providers are getting better at understanding how to support choice, control and direction.

The State of Minnesota recognized previous protections for people with disabilities were not adequate and changes were needed to reflect current best practices. In 2009, a class action lawsuit was filed against the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) alleging that residents of the Minnesota Extended Treatment Options program had been unlawfully and unconstitutionally restrained. Under the conditions of a settlement agreement—known as the Jensen Settlement Agreement—Minnesota agreed to modernize its requirements surrounding restrictive interventions and the use of positive supports.

In 2012, the State passed [Minn. Stat. Chapter 245D](#) to offer several positive supports protections to people who receive services. However, these actions did not cover all people with a developmental disability or related condition. To fulfill the State's agreements for those not covered under Minn. Stat. Chapter 245D, the State established the Rule 40 Advisory Committee, whose work resulted in the Positive Supports Rule, [Minn. R. 9544.](#)

The Positive Supports Rule incorporates best practices identified by the Jensen Settlement, national trends, lessons learned from the past and the Americans with Disabilities Act for serving people with disabilities in the most integrated setting. The Positive Supports Rule ensures all DHS-licensed services and facilities that serve people with developmental disabilities or related conditions follow the prohibitions and limits in Chapter 245D. As a result, no DHS-licensed service or facility is permitted to use clinically contraindicated practices on people who receive services governed by either 245D or the Positive Supports Rule.

The State recognizes providers face challenges while learning to support people with only positive support strategies after being allowed to use restrictions and restraints. Therefore, 245D and the Positive Supports Rule

outline some situations in which a provider may use a prohibited procedure for a limited time to phase out the procedure.

One situation in which a provider might use a prohibited procedure is when the provider begins services for a person whose previous caregiver used prohibited procedures. If the person and his/her care team determines immediately ending the use of the procedure may cause serious harm to the person or others, the team may use the procedure for up to 11 months. The care team must incorporate the use of this procedure into a [Positive Support Transition Plan \(PSTP\), DHS-6810 \(PDF\)](#) and regularly report its use to DHS via the [Behavior Intervention Reporting Form \(BIRF\), DHS-5148](#). The care team has 30 days after the start of services to develop the plan and 11 months after the plan's implementation date to phase out the use of the prohibited procedure.

A second situation in which a provider might use a prohibited procedure is when a person continues to engage in interfering behavior beyond the 11-month phase-out period. If the person displays behavior that could cause serious harm and the care team determines a prohibited procedure may be necessary to safeguard the person and others, the commissioner may grant approval for a limited time while the care team develops effective positive support strategies to phase out the procedure. For these situations, the commissioner established the Interim Review Panel to review and grant approval for the emergency use of procedures (procedures are defined in [Minn. Stat. 245D.06, subd. 5](#)). The Interim Review Panel started reviewing and denying or approving requests in late 2014.

In February 2017, the Interim Review Panel transitioned to the External Program Review Committee. The functions of the External Program Review Committee continue to include those outlined in the Interim Review Panel process. Additionally, the committee reviews Behavior Intervention Reporting Forms for all emergency use of manual restraints, evaluates provider responses following the emergency use of manual restraints and assesses the competency of qualified professionals who develop and implement Positive Support Transition Plans.

Current task

The current task of the External Program Review Committee includes evaluating progress and determining if providers need to take additional measures to reduce the use of mechanical restraints. Mechanical restraints are only allowed beyond the 11-month phase-out period as an emergency procedure for those who have submitted a [Request for the Authorization of the Emergency Use of Procedures, DHS-6810 \(PDF\)](#) form and have received approval from the committee and the commissioner. The commissioner grants approval for emergency use of procedures on a case-by-case basis. The length of approval ranges from 30 days to one year.

Table 1: Data on new approvals, renewed approvals and phased-out requests for mechanical restraints

| Year | Total yearly approvals | New approvals | Renewed approvals | Phased-out |
|------|------------------------|---------------|-------------------|------------|
| 2014 | 28 | 28 | 0 | 0 |
| 2015 | 23 | 4 | 19 | 9 |
| 2016 | 18 | 5 | 13 | 10 |
| 2017 | 13 | 2 | 11 | 4 |

Over time, members of both the Interim Review Panel and External Program Review Committee noticed teams struggle more with phasing out the seat belt harnesses/guards than phasing out mitts, arm splints or helmets. For example, of the seven people who had approval for a seat belt harness/guard in 2014, six still had approval in 2017. In comparison, of the 21 people who had approval for other types of mechanical restraint in 2017, only five still had approval in 2017. One explanation for this observed difference is the contrast between the type of self-injurious behavior that requires a seat belt harness/guard versus the type of self-injurious behavior that requires the use of mitts, arm splints or helmets. Specifically, seat belt harnesses/guards typically address self-endangerment behaviors (behaviors that increase the potential for harm) whereas mitts, arm splints and helmets address self-injurious behaviors (behaviors that result in immediate harm).

Evaluation of progress

Providers with approval for emergency use of procedures must submit summation data to DHS on the use of mechanical restraints every seven days through the [Behavior Intervention Reporting Form \(BIRF\), DHS-5148](#). Regardless of the frequency of mechanical restraint usage, each provider who has approval must submit one Behavior Intervention Reporting Form per week, per person. For example, a provider who uses mechanical restraint once a week with a person and a provider who uses mechanical restraint 100 times a week with a person both must submit only one Behavior Intervention Reporting Form for that person. Therefore, to determine if a team is making progress toward reducing the use of restraints, it is necessary to review the person's individual reports, which may include the Behavior Intervention Reporting Forms, Positive Support Transition Plans, quarterly Positive Support Transition Plan reviews or other data that care teams submit to DHS or the External Program Review Committee. The committee weighs and considers information from these reports within the context of the person's quality of life.

Successes

The External Program Review Committee has achieved success in increasing capacity of the State system and creating a culture of positive supports. Specifically, the committee regularly provides technical assistance to care teams in areas where teams have self- or committee-identified needs. For example, the External Program Review Committee:

- Meets with teams to review functional behavior assessments, data patterns and Positive Support Transition Plans
- Maintains a webpage to provide resources for positive supports and an outline of information typically gathered during the phase-out period
- Partners with providers and case managers to locate external positive support behavior specialists as needed
- Connects teams with other programs or specialists (e.g., deafblind communication experts, pharmacologists).

Future recommendations

Given the work of the Interim Review Panel and External Program Review Committee, much has been learned about what strategies work best. The committee will continue to expand on effective strategies. For issues that need to be addressed, the committee has the following recommendations to guide its future work:

- The committee will track data for seatbelt harnesses/guards separately from other types of mechanical restraints (e.g., mitts, arm splints, helmets). The committee will review this data in fall 2018 to identify similarities and differences between the two groups.
- The committee will provide additional technical assistance to teams for cases that have had little movement toward phasing out mechanical restraints. The committee encourages evidence-based practices and places an emphasis on quality-of-life measures that align with the person's values.
- The committee will continue conversations with teams and help them improve their data collection and analysis methods.