

GUIDELINES FOR USE OF SECLUSION ROOMS IN SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND:

There are many ways to promote safe and caring schools and encourage responsible and respectful behaviours in students. All behavioural interventions assume a regard for the well-being and dignity of students and staff. The use of timeout procedures is well documented in the professional literature and, when implemented correctly, has been shown to be an effective method of reducing a wide variety of disruptive behaviours in children. Each child is unique and may require alternative strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviours. The use of timeout requires well-defined procedures, routines and interventions to prevent and modify problem behaviour before timeout is ever considered.

Alberta Education's [*Guidelines for Using Timeout in Schools \(2002\)*](#) include:

- Timeout is part of a continuum of behavioural interventions. The use of exclusion and seclusion timeout should occur only when less restrictive interventions are not successful. An exception is a student who presents with acting out behaviours that school personnel did not anticipate, and the safety of staff and students is in jeopardy. Subsequent to this single, unpredictable incident, a behaviour plan should be developed.
- Staff must obtain parental permission to utilize seclusion timeout as a strategy in behaviour management. If parents do not support the use of timeout, they should be involved in determining alternative strategies for dealing with their child's inappropriate behaviours.
- The administration must play a leadership role in developing, implementing and monitoring the timeout procedures and processes. The administration must also provide for regular consultation with and feedback to students, parents and staff about timeout and the school's behaviour requirements and expectations.
- Because removal from the learning environment is a restrictive and serious form of intervention, it should only be used when less restrictive interventions have proved ineffective. Timeout must be used cautiously, and the process that was followed must be carefully documented.

DEFINITIONS:

Contingent Observation or Non-exclusion Timeout — the student is removed from the reinforcing activity, but is still allowed to observe the activity. For example, a grade 4 student continues to disrupt the class by poking a neighbour and talking during a class project, despite attempts from the teacher to encourage the student to stop and focus on the task at hand. The teacher directs the student to a timeout area in the classroom where the student is able to listen to the discussion, but not allowed to participate for a period of time.

Exclusion Timeout — the student is excluded from the reinforcing activity and is not allowed to participate or observe the activity. For example, the student continues to talk while in contingent observation timeout. The student yells, throws a pencil and disrupts the class activity. The teacher asks the student to leave the timeout area and go to another supervised area until the student demonstrates appropriate behaviour and is ready to return to class.

Seclusion Timeout — the student is removed from the reinforcing activity area, placed in a separate room and is supervised during the entire seclusion timeout. For example, the student grabs a pair of scissors off the teacher's desk and runs around the room and then out of the class. The student threatens other students and is in danger of hurting self and/or others. The student is moved to a seclusion timeout room that is safe, where he or she is constantly supervised.

Suspension and Expulsion — these interventions are recognized as forms of timeout. School authorities are advised to abide by sections 24 and 25 of the *School Act* when considering suspension or expulsion procedures. See [EIPS AP 355: Suspension or Expulsion of Students](#).

PROCEDURES:

Responsibility of Schools:

- Prior to the use of seclusion timeout, other forms of timeout such as non-exclusion and exclusion *must* be tried and documented.
- If a student presents with behaviours that compromise the safety of others and the student has never presented such behaviours before, the use of seclusion timeout, for safety reasons, may occur regardless of the contents of the IPP (Individualized Program Plan) or ISP (Instructional Support Plan). This incident must be documented and reported to the parents. Revisions to the IPP or ISP are advised immediately after the incident.
- The student must be safely moved to the seclusion room whenever seclusion timeout is used.
- If exclusion and/or seclusion timeout is used as a strategy in the behavioural interventions continuum, the specific behaviour(s) resulting in timeout *must* be clearly communicated to the student, parent(s) and the administration prior to the use of exclusion and/or seclusion timeout. The plan should be documented on the student's IPP or ISP and should include specific strategies to deal with the disruptive behaviour(s).
- The planned use of seclusion timeout must be documented in the student's behaviour plan and/or on the student's IPP or ISP and must be signed by the student's parent/guardian.
- Parents must be made aware the same day that a student has been placed in seclusion timeout.
- Administration *must* be informed of the student's need for seclusion timeout and involved in providing support and assistance, if necessary.
- A staff member who is familiar with the student's behaviour plan must continuously supervise the student while in seclusion timeout.
- The supervising staff member must document, in a log available near the seclusion timeout room, the student's name, the behaviour resulting in seclusion timeout, the time of day that the student entered timeout, the time the student was released from timeout, the total time in timeout and the student's behaviour in timeout. [See sample form linked here](#).
- The effectiveness of the use of seclusion timeout should be evaluated on an ongoing basis.
- Seclusion timeout rooms *must* provide for the safety and security of the student and be shown to be effective in the reduction of dangerous behaviours and the promotion of appropriate behaviour. For example, seclusion timeout rooms must:
 - not be locked *from either the outside or inside* - Push button locks that require the supervisor to constantly hold the lock button from the outside to maintain closure are deemed acceptable
 - meet Fire Marshal standards
 - be supervised at all times
 - provide the means where adults can visually monitor the student at all times
 - not contain fixtures that may be harmful to students, such as electrical outlets, light fixtures, furniture, or breakable glass
 - be well ventilated
 - allow students to exit should there be an emergency (see Fire Marshal standards)
 - Follow EIPS Facilities [specifications for seclusion room construction](#)

Responsibility of Central Services:

- Supports for Students (SFS) will collaborate with schools that request construction of a seclusion timeout room to determine the priority of the request
- SFS will assist schools and EIPS Facilities Services to determine the appropriate location, size, etc. of a seclusion timeout room based on the school's current and future needs
- Facilities department staff will follow EIPS specifications for building of seclusion timeout rooms on a priority basis

- SFS will work with schools to ensure [Alberta Education Guidelines for the Use of Timeout in Schools \(2002\)](#) for the use of seclusion timeout rooms are followed
- SFS will provide ongoing Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NVC) training for staff as requested.

Reference:

- [Alberta Education Guidelines for Using Time Out in Schools \(2002\)](#)
- [EIPS Facilities Services Specifications for Seclusion Timeout Room Construction](#)
- [Sample seclusion timeout room log form](#)
- EIPS Policy 19: Respectful Working and Learning Environments
- EIPS AP 212: Individualized Program Plan or Instructional Support Plan
- EIPS AP 350: Student Conduct
- Section 45, School Act
- Sections 33, 36 and 37 Education Act (2015)
- [Inclusive Education Library](#) – see information on Behaviour Support Plans and IPPs
- Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools: An Intensive Individualized approach - Alberta Education 2008
<http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/inspb1/html/index.html>