

Fact sheet

Child injury prevention measures and restrictive practices

In Australia, injury is the leading cause of death in children aged 1–14 years (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020). In response, child safety and injury prevention measures are an essential part of protecting children both with and without disability. Sometimes these measures are referred to as ‘child-proofing’.

This fact sheet supports principals and state school staff to distinguish between universal child safety and injury prevention measures¹ and restrictive practices as defined in the [Restrictive practices](#) procedure.

This document should be read in conjunction with the [Restrictive practices](#) procedure.

The table² below describes examples of similar actions which relate to child safety, injury prevention and/or restrictive practices. The examples demonstrate what the use of restrictive practices with a student could look like, however should not be taken to imply that the use of these practices is appropriate in all circumstances.

Determining whether a restrictive practice is the least restrictive option possible and proportionate to the potential risk of harm, needs to be made on a case-by-case basis. This should be determined in the context of a positive behaviour support framework, which promotes the student’s development and their right to take reasonable risks (i.e. dignity of risk).

Child safety and injury prevention measure	Restrictive practice
Using hand over hand physical guidance to teach a student a new skill	Pulling a student by the hand to move them in a direction they do not want to go (physical restraint)
Holding the hand of a student in Prep while crossing the road	Using a two-person escort to prevent a student exiting the school (physical restraint)
Holding a student’s hands, at their request, to guide them while learning to swim	Holding a student’s hands to prevent them from interfering with the safe application of their gastrostomy tube at mealtime (clinical holding)
Using a splint to provide temporary support when a student is injured and awaiting medical attention	Using a splint to prevent a child or young person from self-injuring (mechanical restraint)
Applying the brakes on a student’s wheelchair when they are transferring to another chair	Using the brakes on a student’s wheelchair to prevent them from moving away from their desk (physical restraint)
Using a prescribed lap belt to provide postural support for a student with physical disability to sit comfortably in class	Using a lap belt to prevent a student from moving from their chair during a class activity (mechanical restraint)
Using a gate to prevent a child in an Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP) from exiting onto a busy road	Using a gate or person as a barrier to confine a student in Year 7 to a space (seclusion)
Wearing a helmet when riding a bike	Wearing a helmet to reduce the impact of self-injurious behaviour (mechanical restraint)
Fencing a playground adjacent to a driveway	Using a fenced play area to isolate a student who displays risk behaviours of concern (seclusion)

1 [Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia](#)

2 Adapted from NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission [Regulated restrictive practices with children and young people with disability – Practice guide March 2021](#)

