

Aspect Positive Behaviour Support Restricted Practices Information Sheet

aspect
practice

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is Australia's leading service provider for autism and other disabilities. Our specialised, evidence informed schools program is the largest in the world, with additional services that include information and advice, diagnostic assessments, behaviour support, parent and family support, and adult programs. We share evidence-informed Aspect practice and applied research nationwide.

Aspect recognises the strengths and positive characteristics of all those on the autism spectrum and our vision is to provide the best possible opportunities for people with autism and other disabilities. Aspect uses a comprehensive approach in our services developing individualised person centred support plans.

Aspect understands that there are many reasons for challenging behaviour and uses a Positive Behaviour Support approach to design autism-friendly environments, work proactively to prevent challenges, teach new behaviours and skills and to respond positively if challenges do occur. Aspect collaborates with families and others at the first sign of any difficulties to ask for information, advice and to develop a mutually agreed plan (even before the use of any restricted practices may be necessary).

Sometimes Aspect staff need to use different crisis strategies to keep a person safe. This might be holding them so they don't run out into the road or moving them away from an area to somewhere calm and safe so they do not injure themselves. Aspect has a duty of care to ensure that we protect all of the people who use our services and always works within a culture of safety to protect staff and service users.

Unfortunately, these safety strategies have the potential to be misused by:

- being used as an immediate quick fix rather than only as the last resort in a crisis
- becoming overused and relied on
- being used as a substitute for positive behaviour support strategies
- becoming a permanent part of a person's support, even when they might not be needed

When strategies are misused, there are often profoundly negative consequences for the people these strategies are meant to help. There are reports every year in the media where children, young people and adults with a disability have been left unsupported for long periods in isolation, been traumatised or injured by being restrained or moved inappropriately or been denied access to what are basic human rights. Additionally there is the potential for staff to be injured if they are not supported to manage crisis safely. Georgina (not her real name) is one such example:

Georgina was 9 years old and in a support class at a mainstream school in Australia. She was scared about another student taking her sensory toy at recess and hit out to make the student go away. The other student tried to fight with Georgina, so Georgina was escorted back into class to stop her being hurt. The other student harboured a grudge against Georgina. The school decided that Georgina had to stay inside the school hall every recess to avoid the difficulty happening again. Two months later, Georgina's mother visited the school by chance and couldn't see her daughter at play. Georgina's mum was furious that she hadn't been told about this isolation...

Because safety strategies can have the potential to be misused, State and Territory Governments place some restrictions on their use.

Aspect will ensure duty of care but where we can predict that a safety strategy might need to be used, Aspect adheres to Government Restricted Practice guidelines. This includes holding or submitting information to a restricted practice authorisation (RPA) panel. Aspect's RPA panel includes executive staff from Aspect's community and school services, positive behaviour support staff and service representatives as well as someone independent from Aspect (such as government staff or NGO clinician) with experience in panel authorisation.

All applications to the panel need to include:

1. Signed consent from a parent or Guardian and agreement from Aspect site manager so we can be sure that parents are informed and involved
2. Evidence of an overall positive learning and support environment (such as an Individual Education Program or Person Centred Plan)
3. A Positive Behaviour Support plan that shows how services are working proactively to support the person and to prevent challenges from occurring including a crisis plan that aims to minimise any difficulties that do occur.
4. Data on every time that restricted practice is used.

Restricted Practices can only be authorised for a maximum of 6 months before they are reviewed again. Our goal is to remove the use of these practices over time with improved support and increased positive behaviours and skills for our clients.