

Reduce Restraint and Eliminate Isolation in Washington Schools

The physical restraint and forced isolation of Washington K-12 students is a dangerous and traumatic practice which results in significant physical and emotional harm to students and school employees across Washington state.

Student and Staff Injuries in Washington

Injuries frequently occur during restraint and isolation incidents. The lack of a formal definition or procedure to assess injuries suggests that student injuries are under-identified and under-reported, especially among disabled students.

- Restraint and Isolation Injuries (2023-2024)**
- 673 student injuries reported
 - 2,457 school staff injuries reported

Abuse of Isolation and Restraint in Washington Schools

Washington state law currently permits restraint or isolation during an emergency situation in which a person is in danger of imminent serious harm. Investigations by Disability Rights Washington, The ACLU of Washington and U.S Department of Justice have found egregious abuse of restraint and isolation in Washington schools as a result of poor training and oversight. A 2020 U.S Department of Justice investigation determined Spokane Public Schools had systematically violated the civil rights of students with disabilities with excessive isolation and restraint practices.

Washington State Restraint and Isolation Statistics (2023-2024)

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reported the following data:

- 23,677 cases of isolation or restraint
- 93% of Students restrained or isolated have a disability.
- 80% of Isolation cases involve K-5th grade students

Reducing Restraint and Eliminating Isolation Project (RREI)

In 2024, OSPI selected 22 school districts across Washington State to implement new professional development training and provided technical assistance to prepare school employees to utilize alternative methods to restraint and isolation. 71% of project sites reduced incidents of restraint and isolation in their schools and the number of students with disabilities impacted by restraint or isolation decreased.

ACT NOW: Reduce Restraint and Eliminate Isolation in Washington Schools

- ✓ Require every Washington school district to provide annual professional development trainings on evidence-based alternatives to physical restraint
- ✓ Prohibit the use of isolation in K-12 schools
- ✓ Improve oversight, tracking and reporting of restraint incidents in schools



Isolation: Restricting a student alone within a room or enclosure from which the student may not leave. Often referred to as "seclusion".

Excluded: Quiet spaces and behavior intervention plans



Restraint: physical force used to control a student, including the use of a restraint device to restrict a student's freedom of movement.

Excluded: medical, orthopedic, or therapeutic devices



Expand Language Access in Washington State Services

Washington State's public services and programs are essential for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to access education, healthcare, behavioral health services, supported employment, and more. However, these services are often inaccessible to individuals with IDD who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrants and refugees. Language barriers, cultural misunderstandings and systematic inequities create compounding challenges that prevent people from equitably accessing services they need.

Language Access Needs in Washington

The Washington State Office of Financial Management estimated in 2024 that more than thirty-one language groups in Washington include 1,000 or more limited English proficient (LEP) individuals who would require language access services to effectively use public services and programs.

Language Access Statistics

- 1.6 million Washingtonians speak a language other than English at home¹
- 8.1% of Washingtonians are considered limited English proficient²
- 166,000 Washington Students in K-12 are English Language Learners (ELLs)³

Compounding Challenges for People with IDD

A lack of robust language access support in Washington state delays the diagnosis and treatment of intellectual and developmental disabilities and results in poorer long-term outcomes for Washington's most vulnerable populations. A 2024 Developmental Disabilities Community Services (DDCS) Report found that 16% of clients receiving services relied on non-profit partners to engage in support services. Furthermore, the study found that individuals who did not speak English as a first language were disproportionately receiving no paid services.

Lapsing Federal Language Access in Support Services

Federal policy changes have rolled back language access protections for LEP individuals. Agencies such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development no longer offer language access services. The lack of federal language access support deepens the inequities and barriers experienced by culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Washington State must expand language access to help close these increasing gaps in access to services and supports for people with IDD who are BIPOC, immigrants and refugees.

ACT NOW: Guarantee Language Access in Washington State Services

- ✓ Codify the right to Language Access in Washington State Services.
- ✓ Require support for small language groups and regional dialects.
- ✓ Support the expansion of the interpreter and translator workforce.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. "Characteristics of People by Language Spoken at Home." *American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1603*, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSS1Y2024.S1603?q=Language&g=040XX00U553>

² U.S. Census Bureau. "Selected Social Characteristics in the United States." *American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP02*, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2024.DP02?q=DP02:+Selected+Social+Characteristics+in+the+United+States&g=040XX00U553>.

³ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. "Washington State Report Card: Capital High School (OSPI 103300)." *OSPI Report Card*, <https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>.