



Circular 0081/2024

To: Managerial Authorities, Principals and Teachers of Recognised Primary, Post-Primary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and The Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards.

Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations Guidelines for Schools in Supporting Students

1. Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this Circular is to inform schools of the publication of [“Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations Guidelines for Schools”](#) and in particular the process of recording and reporting of physical restraint in schools.

2. Background

The Guidelines are designed to develop and enhance schools’ understanding of behaviours of concern and to assist them in managing crisis situations.

The Guidelines focus on the prevention, early intervention, and de-escalation measures which schools should adopt. Additionally, the Guidelines detail how schools should respond in crisis situations where behaviours pose imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others within the school environment.

The Guidelines also address uncertainty for staff on how to respond when facing crisis situations where there are concerns regarding physical safety. The Guidelines make clear that physical intervention may be employed only as the last part of a comprehensive, positive, and planned approach by the school.

3. Recording and Reporting Process

Where a physical restraint has been used in a school, the incident must be reported to the school principal and, subsequently, to the chairperson of the Board of Management. Templates for recording, reporting and reflecting on such occurrences are provided in the ‘Resources’ section of the Guidelines.

From **September 2025**, schools are also required to report instances of physical restraint to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). However, it is open to a school to report such instances prior to that date once they have engaged with the Guidelines. A reporting template (Resource 4) is provided in the ‘Resources’ section of the Guidelines.

The purpose of reporting of such instances to the NCSE is to allow for:



- The collation of quarterly reports on the extent of the practice being deployed in schools, including incidents involving students with special educational needs.
- Engagement between the NCSE and individual schools in circumstances where a physical restraint has been used involving students with special educational needs.

The availability of this information will also inform the NCSE's overarching approach to its professional learning and training support programmes for schools.

NCSE will have no role in investigating instances of the deployment of a physical restraint in schools.

4. Training and Supports

Aligned to the publication of the Guidelines, there will be a training programme consisting of three elements.

Outline of Training Plan for Guidelines:

- Training for All Schools - Online webinars and a number of in-person information sessions will be held in Education Centres.
- Training for Some Schools - NCSE training is provided, on request, to schools on behaviour. All training programmes provided by NCSE will take full account of the key messages in the guidelines.
- Training for a Few Schools –This will comprise procured, external training which will be provided in the first instance for schools which demonstrate a clear need for this training. However, it will be ultimately available to all schools who require same.

Enquires in relation to NCSE funded CPI training can be directed to NCSEproject@crisisprevention.com or alternatively schools can complete a booking form at the following link: [Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations CPI Training.](#)

The online webinars and in-person information sessions will be available to all schools from January 2025. Schools will receive notification of these sessions separately.



NCSE Support

NCSE Behaviour for Learning and Wellbeing provides a number of supports for schools to support behaviour. The imminent release of the NCSE Relate framework will provide a comprehensive resource to proactively support students. It is also designed to support schools to implement preventative and holistic approaches to reduce the occurrence of behaviours of concern.

Schools may avail of a number of seminars to support students, including Pathways to Prevention and Understanding Behaviour. Additionally, communication, regulation and curriculum related seminars are in place to support further professional learning. Seminars can be booked at www.ncse.ie/tpj. Many seminars include follow on support through communities of practice and post-seminar workshops.

NCSE also provides a range of whole school seminars where an NCSE advisor visits your school for whole staff professional learning, please apply at <https://ncse.freshdesk.com/support/login>.

Where a school requires further advice, NCSE provides a school advisory service. Schools may submit a request for support and an NCSE advisor will be in touch. Submit a request at <https://ncse.freshdesk.com/support/login>

NEPS support

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) also provides advice and support to schools through its casework and support and development services. Schools may contact their assigned NEPS psychologist or local NEPS office in this regard ([NEPS Contact](#)).

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