



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: June 5, 2024
To: Local Educational Agency Leads
Route To: Principals, School Safety Specialists, Directors of Special Services
From: Kathy Ehling, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Services

The Commissioner's Annual Report to the Senate and General Assembly on Student Safety and Discipline in New Jersey Public Schools for the 2022-2023 School Year

As mandated by N.J.S.A. 18A:17-46, all school employees are required to report incidents of violence, vandalism, weapon-related offenses, and alcohol or drug-related offenses that they observe or are made aware of directly on school grounds. These reports must be submitted to the principal using a district-approved form, designed to ensure complete and accurate data entry into the Student Safety Data System (SSDS). Each submission must be verified for accuracy before being reported. Additionally, the chief school administrator must report all such incidents during a public hearing to the district board of education biannually.

The data collected via the implementation of N.J.S.A. 18A:17-46 is used to inform a report required to be provided by the Commissioner of Education to the Legislature detailing the extent of violence, vandalism, harassment, intimidation, or bullying in public schools.

In January 2022, the statute was amended to require the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to develop a statewide database that at minimum includes all student disciplinary actions, the use of physical restraint or seclusion techniques, referrals to law enforcement, and arrests, as well as demographic information of the students who received the disciplinary action.

In accordance with the law's requirements, the NJDOE has developed and published two [databases](#):

1. Disciplinary Actions, which provides school-, district-, and state-level information about the students reported as having been removed through in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions and arrests; the students linked to police notifications; and the types of incidents leading to student arrests; and
2. Restraint and Seclusion, which provides school-level information about the students who were reported as having been restrained and/or secluded during the 2022-23 school year.

The 2022-2023 report to the Legislature will provide additional information describing the demographics of students affected by student removals, police notifications, arrests, restraint, and seclusion. The 2022-2023 report is now available on the [NJDOE's website](#).

Restraint and Seclusion

The NJDOE does not classify the use of restraint and seclusion as a disciplinary method. These measures are strictly employed in scenarios where a student poses an immediate threat to themselves or others. The NJDOE's analysis of the 2022-2023 data reveals a disproportionate use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities. The disproportionate use of restraint and seclusion on students with disabilities is consistent with national trends. It is important to acknowledge that students with disabilities may have complex needs, where in specific circumstances, restraint or seclusion may be necessary to avert serious harm. The NJDOE is actively

analyzing the data and is committed to developing enhanced support strategies for schools and local educational agencies that report higher incidences of these practices, aiming to ensure the safety of all students.

Next Steps

- Review the [joint guidance](#) issued by the NJDOE and the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General to eliminate any forms of discrimination in the enforcement of school discipline policies.
- Analyze current data to identify specific needs for professional development among educators and staff. Focus these trainings on enhancing school climate and improving conditions for learning.
- Consider administering the [New Jersey School Climate Improvement Survey](#) to conduct a thorough assessment of your school's climate and culture. Use the insights gained to develop focused strategies that enhance the overall school climate.

For questions, contact the Office of Fiscal and Data Services via email at SSDS@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group