

NYPD okays Velcro handcuffs for use on unruly children

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Nothing says tough love like Velcro handcuffs.

Cops trying to restrain children will have a softer alternative than metal handcuffs under a new program the [NYPD](#) is testing in nearly two dozen schools.

Starting next month, officers will use Velcro handcuffs instead of the tougher steel model to subdue disturbed or unruly children in 22 schools in northern [Queens](#), according to a draft NYPD operations order obtained by the Daily News.

"We would prefer never to use restraints of any kind, but in those rare instances where it may become necessary, we want a softer alternative to conventional handcuffs," [Deputy Police Commissioner Paul Browne](#) said.

Cops are expected to use the cuffs no more than once or twice a year, Browne said, and only when a kid is at risk of hurting himself or others. One of the targeted schools is Public School 81 in [Ridgewood](#), where a school safety agent handcuffed 5-year-old [Dennis Rivera](#) and brought him to a psych ward after what school sources called a violent tantrum in January 2008.

That child's father, Dennis Sr., said Friday police policy on cuffs was wrong. "They could be made of teddy bear material," he said, "but they still would be handcuffs. It is still police tactics on children who have committed no crime." In a separate instance, the family of a 10-year-old girl filed a federal lawsuit against the city last August, claiming police handcuffed her on a school bus because she wouldn't sit still.

[Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly](#) asked the department to look at alternatives to metal handcuffs, but Browne would not say what case triggered the review.

NYPD school safety officers in the schools are expected to receive the alternative handcuffs at the end of next week, and then get two weeks of training - not only on how to use the new cuffs, but when.

The new handcuffs would be used on youngsters under age 16. The restraints are 22-inch-long strips of cloth with Velcro fasteners that can be adjusted to fit a child's wrist.

"Handcuffing by any other name is still handcuffing," said [Donna Lieberman](#), executive director of the [New York Civil Liberties Union](#).

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