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Report Reveals Severe Cases of Abuse and Neglect of Schoolchildren

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Schoolchildren around the country have been subject to abusive – and in some cases fatal – uses of seclusion and restraint by school administrators, teachers and staff, according to a new report released today by the National Disability Rights Network. The report, the first national effort to examine these practices in both public and private schools identified hundreds of cases where the abusive and negligent use of seclusion and restraint injured or traumatized students, many of whom were disabled. In several cases, students died.

In light of this report, U.S. Rep. George Miller, the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, announced the committee will hold a hearing on these abuses.

“These abuses are a shocking and disturbing betrayal of the trust that families and communities place in our schools. School administrators and teachers are tasked with providing not just productive and encouraging learning environments for students, but with keeping them safe. It is wholly unacceptable for children to be locked up in closets or for any staff member to use overwhelming – and in some cases deadly – force against their students.

“This report raises serious questions about the treatment of schoolchildren, the qualifications and training of staff, and what actions have been taken to address these unconscionable practices. No child should be at risk or in danger while at school, no matter what the circumstances. Our committee will hold a hearing to look at how we can address and hopefully end these horrific acts.”

The report, “School is not supposed to hurt: An investigative report on abusive seclusion and restraint in schools,” provides an unprecedented look at the tactics used to isolate or restrain students. In one case, a seven-year old girl was killed in a special day program when four adult staff pinned her small body face down. The student had been blowing bubbles in her milk and would not follow directions to sit still. In another example, a thirteen year old boy committed suicide in a locked concrete seclusion room, hanging himself with a cord provided by staff to hold up his pants, after pleading with his teachers that he could not withstand the isolation in the small room for hours at a time.

For a full copy of the report released today, [click here](#).

Investigations conducted by the Government Accountability Office at Miller’s request have uncovered thousands of cases and allegations of child abuse at teen residential treatment programs around the country, including similar abusive uses of seclusion and restraint highlighted by today’s report. In June the House passed legislation authored by Miller and U.S. Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), to protect teens attending these programs from physical, mental and sexual abuse. For more information on the bill, the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act of 2008, [click here](#).

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