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Changes to Massachusetts Law on Time Out and Seclusion Regulations

We are writing to share important updates regarding new safety regulations from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) that will take effect on **August 17, 2026**. These changes involve how we use and talk about certain behavioral supports, and we want to ensure you are fully informed as we align our practices with these new requirements.

Our Approach at LABBB

First and foremost, it is important to understand: Emergency seclusion is not a routine practice at LABBB.

Our approach is grounded in:

- Strong, trusting **relationships with students and families**
- **Prevention and early intervention**
- **Teaching co-regulation and calming** strategies
- Individualized supports, including **Behavior Support Plans (BSPs)**

We work hard to help students develop skills to manage emotions and behavior, and to avoid crisis situations whenever possible.

We prioritize **proactive support**, including individualized behavior plans, sensory strategies, and strong relationships with trusted adults. Our goal is always to help students return to learning as quickly and safely as possible.

What Has Changed?

The state has updated the terminology for how students are supported during moments of dysregulation:

- **Time Out:** A behavioral support strategy in which a student temporarily separates from the learning activity or the classroom, either by choice or by direction from staff, for the purpose of calming and is permitted to leave at any time.
- **Emergency Seclusion:** This is a last-resort intervention involving involuntary confinement when a student poses an **imminent threat** of harm to themselves or others.

It is important to note that what was previously called "Time Out" during intense escalation will now be officially termed **Emergency Seclusion**. While the name has changed, our practice remains the same: it is only used when there is an imminent risk of assault or serious physical harm.

As always, these procedures are only used:

- In **emergency situations** to ensure safety for the student and others.
- For the **shortest time possible to maintain safety.**

- Under the **direct observation of a staff member** who constantly monitors your child's well-being and signs of calming.

What This Means at LABBB

For most students and families, this regulation will not result in meaningful changes to daily practice at LABBB.

That's because:

- Our approach already emphasizes **prevention, teaching calming strategies, and relationship-based support**
- We do **not use time-out as punishment**
- We focus on helping students regulate with the support of trusted adults
- We aim to **minimize and avoid restrictive interventions whenever possible**

When Families May Be Involved

For a small number of students with more complex needs, the new regulations require additional steps if certain emergency interventions could ever be considered. In those cases, LABBB will:

- **Partner closely with families** to discuss the student's needs
- Review and update the student's **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** and/or **Behavior Support Plan (BSP)**
- Obtain **parent/guardian consent** if required
- Complete any DESE required **documentation and planning**

These conversations are individualized and focused on ensuring the **safest and most supportive approach** for each student.

Our Commitment

- Provide the least restrictive supports possible while keeping every student safe
- Treating every student with **dignity and respect**
- Using **evidence-based, trauma-informed practices**
- Maintaining strong **communication and partnership with families**
- Continuously improving our practices to support **safe, inclusive learning environments**

If you have any questions regarding these changes, please contact your child's program coordinator, director, or our nurse leader. We are here to partner with you to ensure that your child receives the safest and most supportive care possible. We invite you to join a special Dialogue with the Directors on September 11th at 9:00 a.m. [via zoom](#) to answer any questions regarding this updated regulation.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Sincerely,

The LABBB Administration