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# NEWS RELEASE

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## New Mexico Leads Other States in Providing Guidance to Deal with Students with Disabilities

SANTA FE - New Mexico leads many states in providing guidance, training and procedural safeguards for students with disabilities said New Mexico Education Secretary Veronica C. García.

“The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) has had policies and guidance in place since 2006 for special education and the issue of restraints of students,” said Secretary García, a former special education teacher. “Child restraints should be used as a last resort in an emergency situation after other behavior interventions have failed and the child’s safety or the safety of others is involved.”

Secretary García was responding to United States Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan’s comments to the House Education and Labor Committee on Wednesday.

Secretary Duncan promised the Committee that he would help to ensure that students are not hurt in the course of being restrained and secluded in school. He asked that every state school chief develop plans that don’t jeopardize or endanger children and ensure that restraints are used safely and sparingly.

PED provides guidance, training and procedural safeguards for special education including a training manual for school personnel and model forms identifying student behavior requirements, behavioral interventions, and Individualized Education Programs (IEP). This information can be found at: <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/guide/index.htm> . This extensive website also has a special section for parents.

Specific guidance concerning restraint, issued in 2006, can be found at <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/guide/Restraint.Policy.pdf> .

This guidance cautions, “The use of physical restraint as a behavioral intervention for students with disabilities in public schools may be justified in certain instances, but this type of intervention can pose a serious risk to the student, as well as to the person(s) applying the restraint.”

“Every student with disabilities should be treated respectfully in New Mexico schools and all reports to the contrary are investigated by school districts and the PED,” said Secretary García. “Restraints are a last resort, used by a trained professional, to protect the safety of the student, their classmates or school staff.”

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