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National Disability Rights Network Releases Follow-up Report on Seclusion and Restraint in Schools

WASHINGTON – The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) today released a follow-up to its January 2009 report *School is not Supposed to Hurt*. The report, a shocking investigation chronicling the abusive use of seclusion and restraint on schoolchildren and a lack of state and federal regulation is updated with progress made in 2009. The NDRN update shows grassroots efforts are soaring and the federal government is beginning to take action, but states have been slow to combat abusive seclusion and restraint practices.

Each of NDRN's 57 Protection and Advocacy agencies in the nation was involved in grassroots efforts to prevent and reduce abusive restraint and seclusion practices. The efforts included working in coalitions to influence state legislatures, performing individual casework and publishing reports, which documented conditions in specific states.

Yet, throughout the year, there continued to be numerous alarming cases of severe physical and emotional harm, and parents who had not come forward began to tell horror stories of harm to their own children in schools. Curt Decker, Executive Director of NDRN, noted a phenomenal advocacy response to the initial report and throughout the year, but went on to say that "while there is a consensus that seclusion and restraint are not forms of treatment, children continue to be harmed because some states still have no laws or policies and school personnel lack necessary training."

Only two states, Minnesota and Missouri, which had no existing state law last year, took legislative action. Many states still have no restrictions on seclusion and restraint in schools, including Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, District of Columbia, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, West Virginia and Wyoming.

On the federal level, the report applauds the hard work of Congress, which included requesting a General Accountability Office report, holding a hearing in the House Education and Labor Committee, and legislation introduced in the House (H.R. 4247) by Representatives George Miller (D-CA) and Cathy McMorris Rodger (R-WA) and by Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) in the Senate (S. 2860).

"Federal minimum standards are needed so that school children are protected from abusive seclusion and restraint practices, regardless of where they live," Decker said.

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The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) is the nonprofit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Systems and the Client Assistance Programs (CAP) for individuals with disabilities. Collectively, the Network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the United States.