

# HOW SCHOOLS USE FORCE

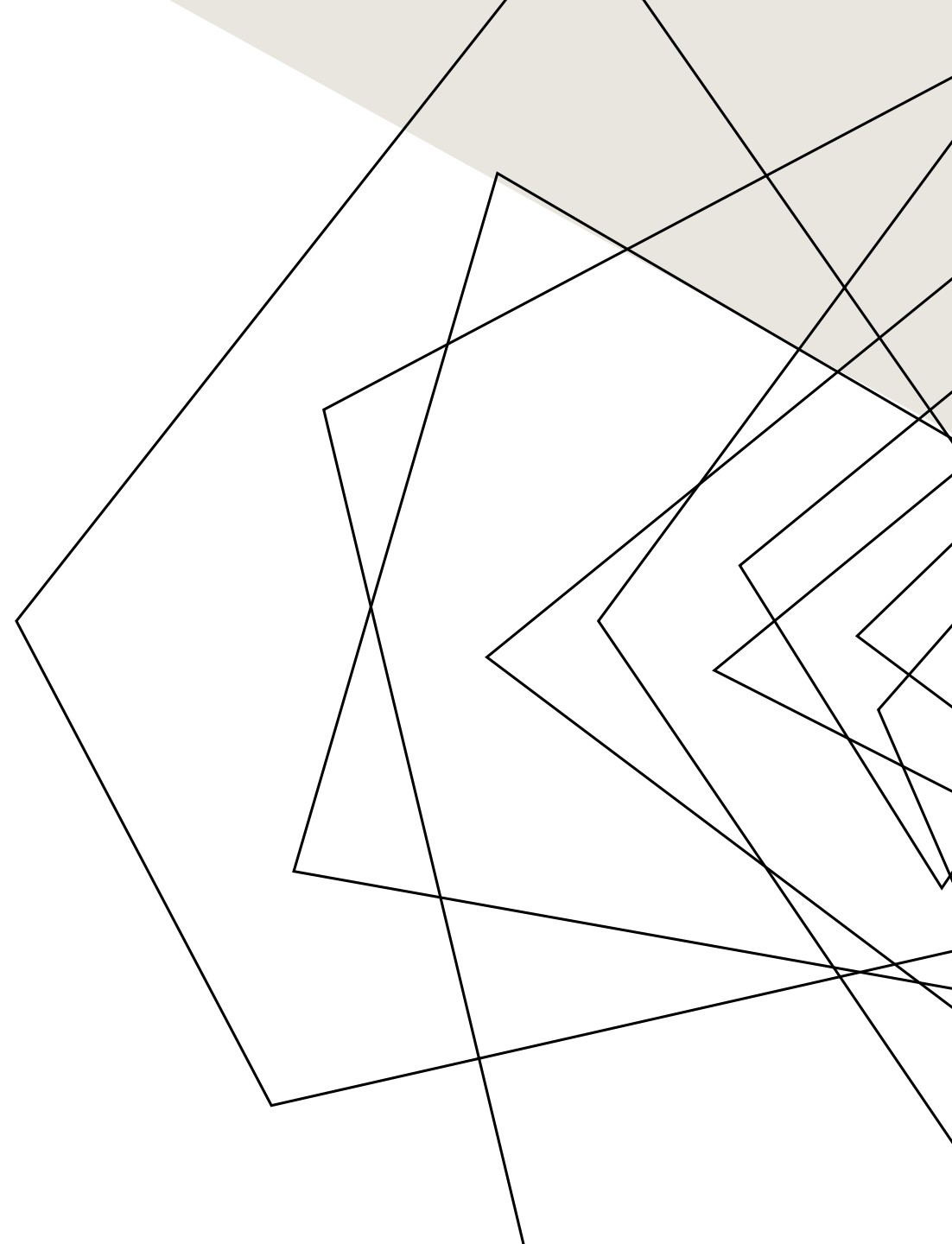
A YEARLONG INVESTIGATION BY HEARST NEWSPAPERS

EMILIE MUNSON, DATA REPORTER, TIMES UNION

# ABOUT THE PROJECT

The most comprehensive look to date at how often restraint and seclusion are used in America's schools – and how often children are harmed or die as a result.

- A team of reporters around the U.S.
- Requested data from all 50 state education agencies to build on outdated federal numbers
- Analyzed laws in every state
- Spoke to families, teachers, educators around U.S. and visited schools





# WHAT ARE THESE TECHNIQUES?

## **Restraint:**

Techniques used to physically hold a student, often on the ground. Mechanical restraint involves devices such as straps or handcuffs.

## **Seclusion:**

The act of confining a student alone in a room they cannot get out of.

Both are legal in many states nationwide. They are commonly used when students with disabilities are in distress, engaging in self-harm or acting in ways that could cause injury to themselves or others.

# KEY FINDINGS:

1. RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION TECHNIQUES HAVE RESULTED IN THOUSANDS OF INJURIES AND DOZENS OF DEATHS IN U.S. SCHOOLS
2. WHAT'S ALLOWED VARIES STATE TO STATE
3. OFTEN IT'S HAPPENING WITH SCANT OVERSIGHT AND WITHOUT PARENT KNOWLEDGE



# THESE “LAST RESORT” MEASURES ARE WIDELY USED



- These practices are used thousands of times per school day nationwide.
- Some students are subjected to the practices hundreds of times in a school year, or held in restraints and kept in seclusion rooms for hours at a time, records show.
- In some cases, children are restrained or secluded not as a safety measure but as a form of discipline.
- Schools use techniques like prone restraints that federal officials say should never be used
- Staff members who use these interventions are frequently overwhelmed and under-trained, facing regular crises in the classroom that might be avoided with more resources or alternative methods.



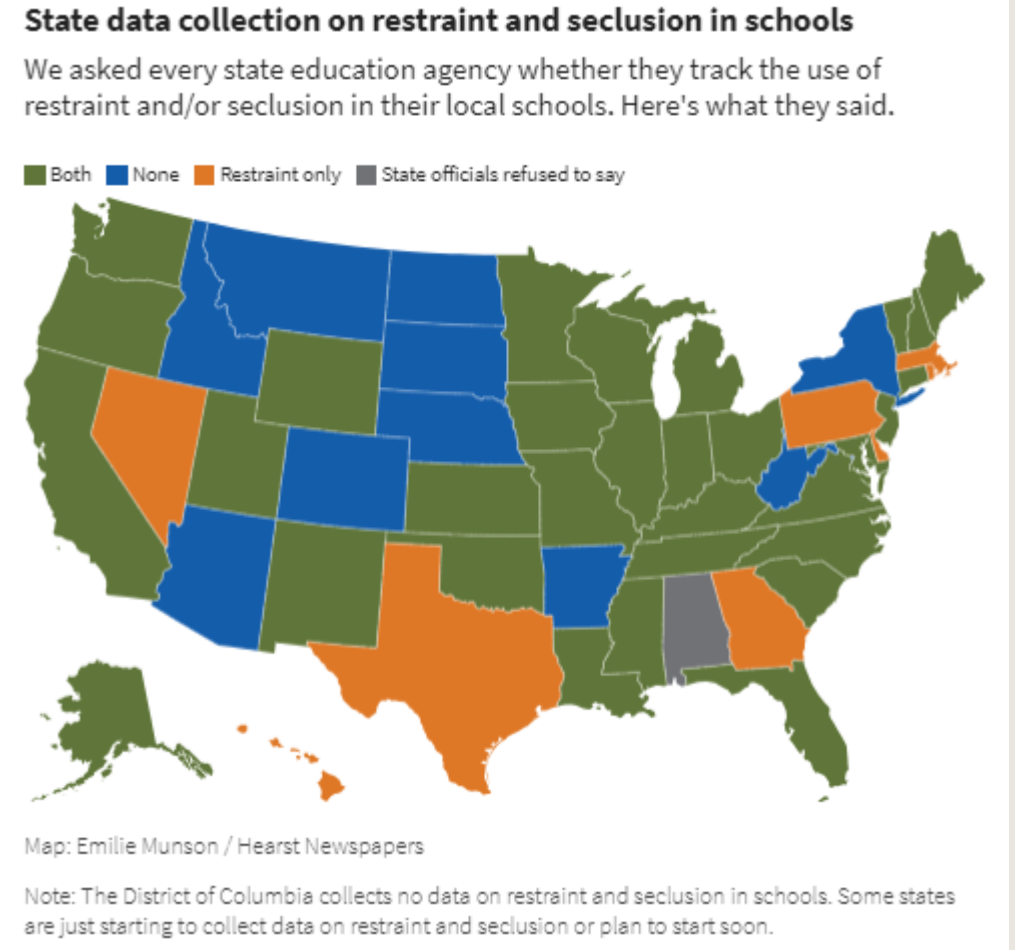
# INJURIES, TRAUMA, DEATHS

- Since 1989, at least 85 children, teenagers and young adults age 21 and younger have died after being restrained or kept in seclusion in public and private schools, juvenile justice centers, residential facilities or other settings that cater to people with special needs, our investigation found.
- Restraint and seclusion cause thousands of injuries to students and staff members each year. Data suggests staff are injured more often than students.
- Experts and students who experienced these practices said they caused lasting trauma, in some cases contributing to behavioral issues.



# THE U.S. REGULATES HOW HOSPITALS USE RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION. WHY NOT SCHOOLS?

- The Keeping All Students Safe Act would ban seclusion, prone restraints, mechanical and chemical restraints in schools receiving federal money. A bill passed the U.S. House in 2010, but legislation has never come that close again.
- Restraint and seclusion are regulated by states. Four states have no law at all.
- As of 2022, 37 states banned the use of prone restraints, or any type of restraint that restrict breathing, Hearst Newspapers found. Another 27 states banned the use of chemical restraints and 30 banned the use of mechanical restraints.



# ALTERNATIVES TO RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION

- Ukeru
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- Collaborative and Proactive Solutions







# THANK YOU!

Read our [full investigation](#) for more.

[Search the data](#) on restraint and seclusion at your school.

Explore the [laws and data](#) for every state.

Email me with your comments and questions:

[Emilie.munson@timesunion.com](mailto:Emilie.munson@timesunion.com)

Follow me on X for more investigations:

@emiliemunson