

BEST PRACTICES IN THE USE OF RESTRAINTS WITH PREGNANT WOMEN AND GIRLS UNDER CORRECTIONAL CUSTODY

ABSTRACT

The *National Task Force on the Use of Restraints with Pregnant Women under Correctional Custody* has developed a set of principles and best practices to guide policy and practice regarding the use of restraints with pregnant women and girls under correctional custody. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, the Task Force and its members represent a variety of national, state and local corrections, medical and advocacy agencies. The following is a brief summary of the Task Force's key findings.

PRINCIPLES

1. All service settings should have written policies and procedures on the use of restraints on pregnant, laboring, birthing, and post-partum women and girls.
2. Policies and procedures on the use of restraints should be developed collaboratively by correctional leaders and medical staff.
3. Policies and practices specific to the needs of pregnant women and girls are necessary to ensure health and safety for pregnant women and girls and their fetuses/newborns.
4. Policies and their associated procedures should clearly reflect the need to balance the safety, health, and well-being of pregnant women and girls and their fetuses/newborns with that of all other parties involved, and should be gender responsive.
5. The use of restraints on pregnant women and girls under correctional custody should be limited to absolute necessity.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Abdominal, leg and ankle, behind-the-back wrist, and four-point restraints are expressly prohibited under any circumstances due to risk of injury to the pregnant woman or girl and fetus/newborn.
2. Wrist restraints may be used only in a manner that allows the pregnant woman or girl to protect herself and her fetus in the event of a forward fall.
3. Restraints should never be used during labor and delivery.
4. The use of restraints should be avoided during the post-partum period; if restraints are deemed absolutely necessary, they should not interfere with the pregnant woman's or girl's ability to safely handle and promptly respond to the needs of her newborn.
5. When transporting a pregnant woman or girl, restraints should not be used except where absolutely necessary.
6. Standard operating procedures should outline a clear process and frequency for reassessing the use of restraints when they have been deemed absolutely necessary.
7. Standard operating procedures should be in place to address emergency and non-emergency decisions around the use of restraints.
8. All uses of restraints should be documented thoroughly.
9. A debrief should occur following any use of restraints to review documentation and determine whether proper procedures were followed.
10. Correctional staff should universally receive training on restraint policy, procedures, and specific variations for use with pregnant women and girls in custody.
11. Quality control and assurance methods should be in place to track adherence to policy and procedure, the impact/effectiveness of the restraint policy, and the need for adjustment in policy or practice over time.

The best practices statement identifies the underlying research for these principles and recommendations and provides a summary of significant legal considerations.

The complete text of *Best Practices in the Use of Restraints with Pregnant Women and Girls under Correctional Custody* is available at www.cjinvolvedwomen.org.

