

Committee on School Health

Corporal Punishment in Schools

It is estimated that corporal punishment is administered between 1 and 2 million times a year in schools in the United States.¹ Thirty states have statutes that allow school officials to use corporal punishment.

The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that corporal punishment may affect adversely a student's self-image and his or her school achievement, and that it may contribute to disruptive and violent student behavior.²⁻⁴ Alternative methods of behavioral management have been shown to be more effective than corporal punishment.²⁻⁴ It is also recognized that physical force or constraint by a school official may be required in selected situations to protect students or staff from physical injury or to disarm a student. In carefully selected circumstances, the use of physical force or constraint may also be justified to prevent property damage.

The American Academy of Pediatrics urges parents, educators, school administrators, school board members, legislators, and other adults to seek (1) the legal prohibition by all states of corporal punishment in schools and (2) the employment of alternative methods of managing student behavior.

COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL HEALTH, 1990 to 1991

This statement has been approved by the Council on Child and Adolescent Health.

The recommendations in this publication do not indicate an exclusive course of treatment or serve as a standard of medical care. Variations, taking into account individual circumstances, may be appropriate.

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