

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

Committee on School Health

Corporal Punishment in Schools

ABSTRACT. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that corporal punishment in schools be abolished in all states by law and that alternative forms of student behavior management be used.

It is estimated that corporal punishment is administered between 1 and 2 million times a year in schools in the United States.¹ Increasingly, states are abolishing corporal punishment as a means of discipline, but statutes in some states still allow school officials to use this form of discipline.²⁻⁴

The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that corporal punishment may affect adversely a student's self-image and school achievement and that it may contribute to disruptive and violent student behavior.^{1,5-7} Alternative methods of behavioral management have proved more effective than corporal punishment and are specifically described in the reference articles.⁵⁻⁷ Physical force or constraint by a school official may be required in a limited number of carefully selected circumstances to protect students and staff from physical injury, to disarm a student, or to prevent property damage.

The American Academy of Pediatrics urges parents, educators, school administrators, school board members, legislators, and others to seek the legal prohibition by all states of corporal punishment in schools and to encourage the use of alternative methods of managing student behavior.

COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL HEALTH, 1999-2000
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The recommendations in this statement 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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