CEC Weighs in on National Discussion about Use of Restraints and Seclusion

On Tuesday, the House Committee on Education and Labor held a hearing about the use of restraints and seclusion in public schools. Witnesses included two parents of children who had been harmed by improper use of restraints, the Director of Special Education for the Illinois State Board of Education, who discussed the state's implementation of positive behavioral supports, CEC/CCBD member, Dr. Reece Peterson of the University of Nebraska, and a representative from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), who reported on an investigation it conducted at the request of Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA).

The GAO report included detailed disturbing information about thirteen incidents nationwide where students were harmed or killed by the improper use of restraints and seclusion in public schools. Dr. Peterson testified about CCBD's extensive research and recent position statements on the use of restraint and seclusion and emphasized that restraints should be used “rarely in school settings . . . [only] when there is immediate danger of physical injury to someone.” Moreover, he advocated for school-wide positive behavior supports and other evidence-based practices. Read CCBD's position summary on restraint and seclusion procedures in schools.

Dr. Reece L. Peterson, a CEC/CCBD member meets with Representative George Miller, Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee after the Tuesday's hearing

On Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan expressed his grave concern about the information revealed in the hearing, and asked all Chief State School Officers to develop and present him their plans to prevent these incidents before the start of the next school year.

This hearing sparked a much needed national discussion on the use of restraints and seclusion. CEC's Associate Executive Director, Deborah Ziegler, contributed to this by speaking with NPR, CBS News, and The Washington Post about the appropriate use of restraints and seclusion in schools, and ways to properly manage and prevent challenging behaviors. CEC, along with representatives from its divisions CCBD and CASE, will join other leaders in the field to discuss this issue with the Obama Administration at the White House next Tuesday. CEC looks forward to continuing to work with its divisions and the community at large on this important topic.