

# Program Evaluation of Ukeru Systems



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# Strategic Call to Action Alignment

## Desired Outcome

High quality special education services are delivered in a consistent and collaborative manner.

HCPSS Strategic Call to Action



**Learning and Leading with Equity**  
*The Fierce Urgency of Now*

### Vision

Every student and staff member embraces diversity and possesses the skills, knowledge and confidence to positively influence the larger community.



### Mission

HCPSS ensures academic success and social-emotional well-being for each student in an inclusive and nurturing environment that closes opportunity gaps.

### Four Overarching Commitments

#### ACHIEVE

An individualized focus supports every person in reaching milestones for success.

#### CONNECT

Students and staff thrive in a safe, nurturing and inclusive culture that embraces diversity.

#### EMPOWER

Schools, families and the community are mutually invested in student achievement and well-being.

### Desired Outcomes

- Curriculum is based on standards and best practices, implemented with fidelity, and aligned with meaningful assessments that provide actionable data for instructional planning.
- Students see diversity and inclusion reflected in the curriculum, and respect the contributions of all populations.
- Staff reflect the diversity of the student and community population.
- Parents, guardians and community members trust in the integrity of the school system and are active and valued partners.
- All staff feel valued, are effective in their roles, and have equitable access to additional opportunities through professional learning and leadership development.
- Organizational culture and climate are supportive and nurturing, and provide a safe and healthy environment for all.
- All operations and practices are responsive, accountable, efficient and student-centered.

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

# Background: Restraint & Seclusion Rates

- Less than 1% of all students restrained or secluded each year in HCPSS from school year 2018-19 through 2020-21.
- Most of the restraints and seclusions in HCPSS occurred at the elementary school level.
- Restraints and seclusions were disproportionately more likely to be used for students with an IEP than for students without an IEP.
- More information can be found in the report presented to the Board of Education at the November 18, 2021 meeting.

# Additional Background

April 2021	BOE approved motion for Superintendent Martirano and staff to research and vet training on de-escalation and disabilities.
November 2021	BOE approved motion to ban seclusion in all HCPSS public schools.
April 2022	MD General Assembly passed a law to ban seclusion in all public schools beginning July 1, 2022 and required school systems further address decreasing restraints.

# Ukeru Systems



Ukeru is a safe, comforting and restraint-free crisis management program developed by and for behavioral health professionals, educators, support staff and others.

ukeru

# Timeline

Time Period	Action Steps
September 2021	Five HCPSS staff completed training for Ukeru certification. Ukeru equipment was ordered and planning meetings continued.
October - November 2021	Initiated collaboration between Department of Special Education (DSE) and the Office of Research and Program Evaluation to develop an evaluation model for Ukeru
November - December 2021	<p>Provided orientation for the Office of School Management and Instructional Leadership team and administrators of the 3 identified schools.</p> <p>Developed plan to complete training of school staff.</p>
December - February 2021	Completed 6 Ukeru training sessions for staff in all 3 schools: Hanover Hills Elementary, Thunder Hill Elementary, and Waterloo Elementary
January 2022	Began a staggered implementation of Ukeru based on staff training schedules. Assigned central office staff for implementation support and coaching. Initiated the program evaluation. Regional administrators, staff, students, and parents were surveyed about program supports and safety.
Spring 2022	Facilitated a parent session as a follow up to the initial email contact with parents, including survey, and to provide more information about the Ukeru implementation, recent changes in the laws surrounding restraint and seclusion, and required steps for conducting IEP team meetings.

# Implementation Sites and Ukeru Training

- Sites include Hanover Hills, Thunder Hill, and Waterloo Elementary Schools
- Five trainings were conducted starting in December 2021 through February 2022
- Training involved:
  - Small group, in-person instruction with video, simulations, and repetitive practice
  - Assessment for certification

# Findings from Initial Implementation

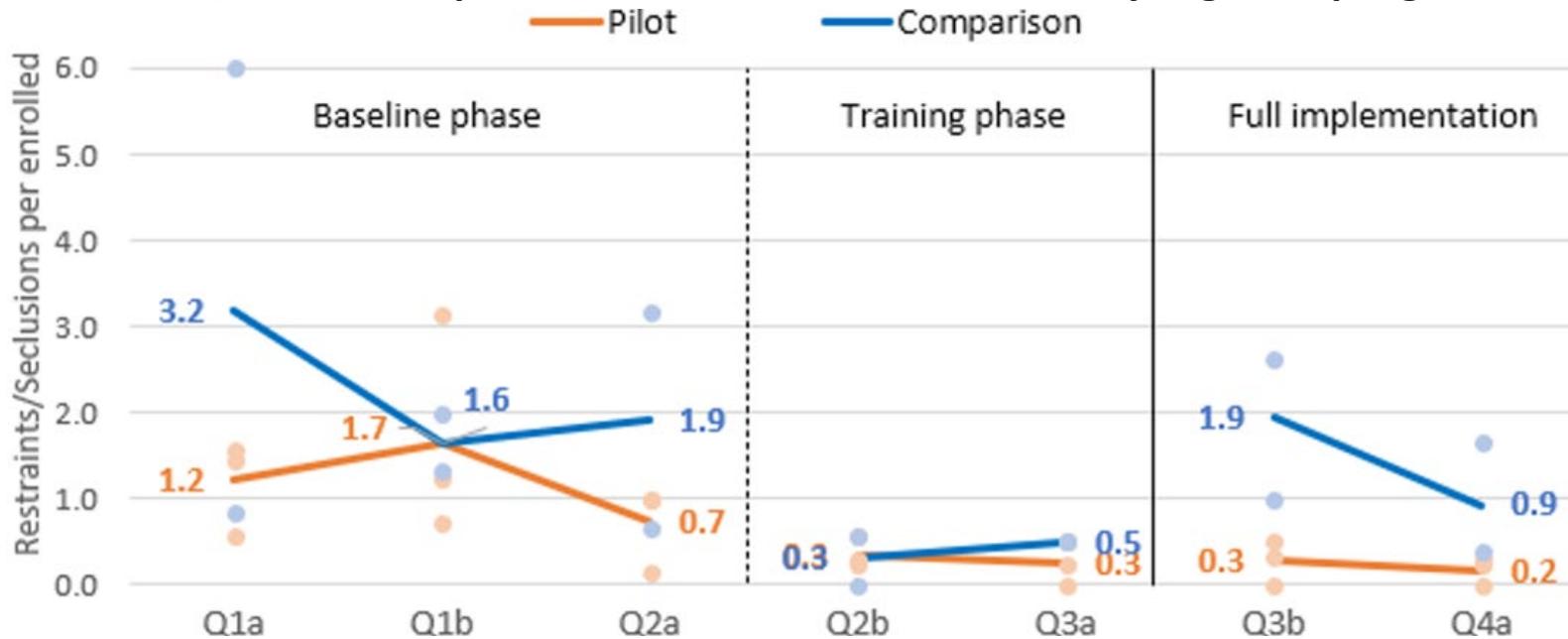
Q1) Is Ukeru implementation related to changes in staff approach toward responding to students in imminent risk of serious physical harm to self or others? Specifically, from a reliance on restraints or seclusion to a focus on comforting or de-escalation?

- Based on implementation checks conducted by DSE staff, in general, school staff were using Ukeru blocking instead of relying on restraints or seclusions in incidents of students being in imminent risk of serious physical harm to self or others.
- Pilot school staff shared that restraints were never the first response, regardless of Ukeru; however, Ukeru has given them an additional strategy to use before considering restraints.

# Findings from Initial Implementation

Q2) In a situation with the potential for restraint or seclusion usage (i.e., imminent risk of serious physical harm to self or others), is Ukeru usage related to a reduction in restraints or seclusions?

Restraints/Seclusions per student enrolled in elementary regional programs



# Findings from Initial Implementation

Q3) Compared to restraints or seclusions, is Ukeru usage more likely to be followed by positive outcomes (e.g., student is safe, maintenance of the staff-student relationship)?

- Pilot staff members did not report that Ukeru is related to the staff-student relationship because they had always prioritized the student-teacher relationship.
- Themes from focus groups also indicated that the mats may be more helpful for some students than others.

# Findings from Initial Implementation

Q3) Compared to restraints or seclusions, is Ukeru usage more likely to be followed by positive outcomes (e.g., student is safe, maintenance of the staff-student relationship)?

- Use of Ukeru blocking can prolong students being engaged in the crisis situation; however, staff also shared that Ukeru usage decreased their use of restraints and seclusions despite the longer duration of the incident, and that they felt more protected by the mats.
- Staff not putting hands on students for physical restraints was expressed as a key benefit of the Ukeru program for both students and staff.

# Future Work

- Update HCPSS Policy 9400 - Student Behavior Intervention
- Complete meetings with MSDE to confirm timeline for receiving model policy and additional guidance
- Continue with Summer 2022 training plan for staff at 2 additional elementary regional locations for special education
- Finalize plan to expand to 3 middle school regionals and Cedar Lane School by Fall 2022
- Monitor data to determine additional school sites/programs where Ukeru should be implemented

# Questions

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