

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTRAINT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Environmental Restraint is a type of Restrictive Practice defined in a law called the Senior Practitioner Act 2018. This law applies to providers.

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Environmental Restraint is an action or system that stops or restricts a person from freely accessing things or areas in their environment or stops them from doing an activity because of behaviours of concern.

Behaviours of concern are behaviours that hurt the person or any other person.

Reasonable safety measures like fences around playgrounds are not environmental restraint.

My early learning centre has a lock on the room, is this an environmental restraint?

No. Rooms in early learning settings have locks in place to ensure that property remains safe after hours and that unauthorised people do not have access. Locks to ensure that small children remain at the centre in line with community norms.

While at the early learning setting it is expected that children are taught the skills they need (e.g., road safety) so that when they move to other settings the locks are no longer needed.

Locks in place for a specific person in response to a behaviour of concern would be considered an environmental restraint.

The person I support is overweight, is the lock on the fridge an environmental restraint?

Yes. You are restricting the person's free access to their food. Think about developing strategies to support the person and build their skills which are less restrictive.

The front door is locked, is this an environmental restraint?

It can be. Many people lock their front and back doors in their homes to keep unwanted people out. When the person does not have free access in and out of their home and this access is controlled by another person in response to behaviour of concern, this would be an environmental restraint.

I'm worried that a communication device will get broken, can I put it out of reach of the person I support?

When you put a device that is the person's primary method of communication out of reach or access of the person you are taking away their voice. Worry that something will be damaged or broken does not justify this.

I supervise a person in the community. Is this an environmental restraint?

It can be. Some people need the support of others to help access the community or activities. This is not restrictive. Other people may engage in behaviours of concern when in the community or during activities. When staff are there to prevent or respond to behaviours of concern this is an environmental restraint.

A person is not able to be with the others in their group because of behaviours of concern and is provided support separately. Is this an environmental restraint?

Yes. When you limit a person's ability to access their surroundings or engage in an activity due to a behaviour of concern this is an environmental restraint.

To understand more about the Senior Practitioner Act 2018, go to:

<https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/quality-complaints-and-regulation/office-of-the-senior-practitioner>