

21: Restraint and Seclusion

Most people with a mental illness or mental disorder willingly and actively seek help and can make decisions about their treatment, care and support they want. There may however be times when, due to your mental illness or disorder, you may become a threat to yourself or others. In these situations, you may need to be secluded or restrained.

What is seclusion?

If you require seclusion, you will be confined alone in a room from which free exit is prevented. Seclusion can only be used in an approved mental health facility in a purpose designed room.

What is restraint?

Restraint refers to the use of physical holds or mechanical restraint. It is used on very rare occasions and only when all other strategies to minimise the risk of harm to you or others have been tried. If there is a requirement for you to accept medication as part of your treatment plan under the Act but you refuse, restraint may have to be used to administer medication. Only staff trained in approved restraint techniques may restrain you.

When can I be secluded or restrained?

You can only be secluded or restrained if you are on a mental health order; this means if you have been detained for assessment or are on a Psychiatric Treatment Order or a Forensic Psychiatric Treatment Order.

If you are very distressed, need a quiet environment and time to reduce your distress

or are aggressive and threatening towards yourself or others, you may be secluded.

It may be necessary to restrain you to help you get to the room or to keep you safe while you're in the room.

Who can approve seclusion?

Members of your treating team may place you in seclusion but only if your seclusion has been approved by a psychiatrist.

How long can I be in seclusion?

Seclusion must be used for the minimum time necessary and should end as soon as the danger to yourself or others has passed. Seclusion can only be approved for four hours. If your team feel you need further seclusion, you must be assessed by a doctor and a new period of seclusion must be approved. If this is not approved, you must be allowed to leave the room.

Who is told if I am restrained or secluded?

Your treating team must tell the Public Advocate if you are secluded or restrained.

What happens after I am secluded or restrained?

After your restraint or seclusion, you will be offered a chance to talk to your treating team about why you are restrained or secluded and what may be different if you are similarly unwell in the future.