

In 2020, Iowa law for Safe Classroom Learning Environments was amended with the intent to create a safe learning space for students and teachers. The amendments updated school district requirements for responding to and reporting behavioral challenges immediately. The amendments also changed the restrictions on the use of classroom clears. It now applies to all classrooms, general and special education, ages 3-21, when a child is served in a setting that is using public funds for educational purposes.

What is a classroom clear?

A classroom clear, sometimes referred to as a room clear, means removing all other students out of the classroom in order to calm a child.

What actions must the school take related to classroom clears?

The actions required by school districts in the area of response and reporting of school behavioral challenges include:

- The use of classroom clears in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs) is prohibited.
- If the classroom teacher clears all other students from the classroom, the school principal must notify the parents or guardians of all students assigned to the classroom that was cleared within 24 hours, but preferably by the end of the school day. The notification must not identify directly or indirectly, any students involved in the incident leading to the classroom clear.
- The principal must request a meeting with the parent of the child whose behavior caused the classroom clear. For a student with a BIP, but no IEP, the principal, classroom teacher and parents must review the existing BIP for potential revisions that may be needed. For a student with an IEP, an IEP meeting will be called and the team must meet to review the IEP (and BIP if the stu-

dent has one) and make necessary revisions.

- A classroom teacher must report to the Principal any incident of assault or violence that results in injury or property damage by a student enrolled in the school.
- The school district must report to the Department of Education an annual count of every individual incident of assault, or violence that results in injury or property damage, or a referral/transfer to a therapeutic classroom.

What actions may schools take related to classroom clears?

The actions permitted by school districts in the area of response and reporting of school behavioral challenges include:

- A classroom teacher may clear students from the classroom only if necessary to prevent or terminate an imminent threat of bodily injury to a student or another person in the classroom. "Bodily injury" is defined as physical pain, illness or any damage to the body. The use of a classroom clear is not permissible because a student is being disruptive or if the student is only an imminent threat to property damage.
- When the student has an IEP, during the review or possible reevaluation of the IEP, the Area Education Agency (AEA) along with the district may inform the parent/guardian of individual or family counseling services available in the area. However, if a student requires therapeutic services for a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), the IEP team must determine how this will be provided by the district.

Under the legislation, a classroom clear may no longer be considered a less restrictive alternative to seclusion or restraint.

What factors should be considered to determine if a classroom clear is needed?

The following factors should be considered in determining if a classroom clear is needed to prevent or terminate an imminent threat:

- Size and physical, mental and psychological condition of the student
- Nature of the student's behavior
- Presence of a weapon or material that can be weaponized
- Extent and nature of resulting bodily injury to the student
- Prevention of physical intervention that will likely escalate behavior and result in bodily injury

What is a therapeutic classroom?

"Therapeutic classrooms" are defined as classrooms designed for the purpose of providing support for any student whose emotional, social or behavioral needs interfere with their ability to be successful in the current educational environment, with or without supports. The student may remain in the therapeutic classroom until he or she is able to successfully return to their current educational environment, with or without supports, including but not limited to the general education classroom.

Part of the law includes an incentive grant for the establishment of therapeutic classrooms within school districts. This does not mean that all districts will have therapeutic classrooms as a placement option within the district. It is important to note that the placement of a child requiring special education in a therapeutic classroom must be the least restrictive environment.

Related Resources

Look for the following information sheets on our website:

- Seclusion and Restraint in Schools: Chapter 103
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Challenging Behavior in School
- ABC's of Behavior

Find additional information from the Iowa Department of Education at:

- [Top 10 Points about Senate File 2360](#)

ASK Essential Questions

- Was I notified of the behavior incident which required a classroom clear to calm my child?
- Was a meeting called to review my child's IEP and/or BIP to consider possible revisions to the plan(s)?
- If a therapeutic classroom is being recommended for my child, is this his/her least restrictive environment?