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<b>Date of Issue</b>	September 2019
<b>Original Date of Issue</b>	February 24, 2010
<b>Subject</b>	<b>USE OF CALMING ROOMS AS A PROACTIVE SELF-REGULATION STRATEGY</b>
<b>References</b>	<a href="#">Policy 3130 – Equity and Inclusive Education</a> <a href="#">APM A1440 – Physical Containment: Guidelines for Responding to Injurious and Self-injurious Student Behaviour</a> <a href="#">APM A7630 – Code of Conduct</a> Health and Safety HS 04-01 (Fire Safety Plans)
<b>Contact</b>	Student Services - Special Education

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## 1. Purpose

The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) recognizes its responsibility to provide a safe and supportive learning and working environment for all students and staff. Staff considering the use of a calming room to support self-regulation of students with special education needs should also review Administrative Procedures Memorandums (APMs) A7630 – Code of Conduct and APM A1440 – Physical Containment: Guidelines for Responding to Injurious and Self-Injurious Student Behaviour, in order to address issues related to safety.

Calming rooms must be approved by SCDSB's Facility Services and Special Education Departments. It is imperative that school teams understand principles, teaching and data tracking that governs the appropriate use of a calming room. A student may self-elect to use this room, as predetermined by the program outlined in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). The main purpose of the room is to support the student in the implementation of self-regulation strategies, resulting in the reduction of challenging and/or unwanted behaviours. Calming rooms are not to be used as places of punishment, seclusion and/or containment.

This guideline for use of calming rooms provides a consistent approach in the use of calming rooms and their role in the prevention and de-escalation of challenging behaviours.

## 2. Interpretation/Definitions

- 2.1 **Self-Regulation:** the ability to employ a variety of strategies to regulate one's emotions and actions in response to the situation(s) occurring in the immediate environment.
- 2.2 **Calming Room:** a specially designed, designated and approved room in a school, used for the purpose of supporting a student in the implementation of self-regulation strategies, resulting in the reduction of challenging behaviours as outlined in the student's IEP. A calming room is a place of safety and comfort and may contain materials to assist the student in calming methods including soft padding on walls/doors as further protection for students who are escalated (e.g. squishy balls, visuals of deep breathing, cushions, etc.). If a student is accessing a calming room, they must always be supervised by a staff member.

- 2.3 **Sensory Room:** a room utilized for the implementation of a sensory diet/program which addresses a student's identified sensory needs. It is an expectation that a sensory diet/program involving the use of a sensory room is recommended by an occupational therapist (OT). The use and scheduling of a sensory room should be explicitly outlined in the student's IEP and must be supervised and monitored by a staff member. The sensory room may contain materials as prescribed by an OT (e.g. peanut ball, weighted blanket, etc.).
- 2.4 **Time Out Room:** the SCDSB does not support the use of any type of room as a form of involuntary isolation and/or for disciplinary purposes. As well, the SCDSB does not support physically restricting a student's ability to exit a room, except in the case of an emergency in order to protect the safety of student(s) and/or staff from risk of injury.
- 2.5 **Time Out Strategy:** a classroom management strategy whereby the staff member directs the student away from the activity or location as a temporary means of re-engaging the student. This is a short-term strategy that a staff member may employ to promote student self-reflection and self-calming. This may be part of the class rules and consequences. Time out may occur within the classroom or take place in another supervised area (e.g. the office). The student must be supervised by a staff member.
- 2.6 **Safety Plan-Notification of Worker Risk (SP-NoWR):** a plan to notify workers of a risk of workplace violence from a student with a history of or credible threat of violent behaviour which includes identification of the student, safety strategies when working with the student and how to summon immediate assistance.
- 2.7 **Behaviour Plan:** an Alternative Program page on an IEP. A behaviour plan may be titled "self-regulation," "behaviour," or another term designating its purpose. This program page is created and assessed by collecting data, outlines what skills the student needs to learn in order to reduce challenging behaviours and conveys how the staff will teach/support the student in learning the new skill. A behaviour plan is created by staff in collaboration with parents/guardians. If a child has a SP-NoWR and an IEP, they must have an Alternative Program page in their IEP.

### **3. Fire Safety and Calming/Sensory Rooms**

- 3.1 The creation of a separate, self-contained calming and/or sensory room must be first approved through the SCDSB's Facility Services and Special Education Departments to ensure the room meets building codes, fire safety regulations, as well as program requirements.
- 3.2 School fire safety protocols must be updated every year by the principal. Fire drill protocols for calming rooms and sensory rooms must be included in the school's Fire Safety Plan. These protocols should be practiced as per Health and Safety Procedure HS 04-01.
- 3.3 For calming rooms and sensory rooms, built after August 2009, occupancy lights will be installed outside the room and in the nearest hallway to indicate that a student is using the room. It is the supervising staff's responsibility to switch on and off the light to indicate use of the room.

#### **4. Calming Room Principles**

In this APM, the term calming is used synonymously with the term self-regulation. Some students may experience high levels of frustration, anger and anxiety while at school as a direct outcome of their exceptionality. Teaching self-regulation strategies to these students is a proactive means of addressing safety issues and also providing the student with an increased opportunity for success.

- 4.1 The use of calming rooms in SCDSB schools is a proactive self-regulation strategy and will be guided by the following principles:
  - 4.1.1 In all situations, it is the intent of the SCDSB to provide the best possible care and to ensure the welfare, safety, and security of all involved;
  - 4.1.2 Students will access calming rooms voluntarily as part of a predetermined and documented plan, as outlined in their IEP. Students accessing a calming room will not be transported physically into or out of the room by staff;
  - 4.1.3 Calming rooms will not be used as a disciplinary measure or as punishment for inappropriate behaviour;
  - 4.1.4 Students will not be restricted in their ability to leave calming rooms through the use of locks on the door or restricting the student's exit (e.g. holding the door, barring the door way, etc.), unless doing so is done as a temporary safety measure to protect from imminent risk of injury to self or others;
  - 4.1.5 Calming rooms must have a window. If the student chooses to close the door, the window must allow the student to look out and staff members to observe the student at all times;
  - 4.1.6 Students must be supervised and never left unattended in a calming room under any circumstances;
  - 4.1.7 Calming rooms will not be used during an Emergency Lockdown. If a student is in the calming room and a Lockdown is implemented, the student should be directed to the nearest safe location, as determined in the school's Emergency Response (Lockdown) Plan;
  - 4.1.8 If a student escalates and begins to engage in behaviours which pose a safety risk to themselves or others while in a calming room and/or upon exit, the procedures as outlined in Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) training and APM A1440 – Physical Containment: Guidelines for Responding to Injurious and Self-Injurious Student Behaviour, should be implemented;
  - 4.1.9 The use of a calming room must be tracked via the “Calming Room Log” (FORM A8525 - 1) to refine and determine the effectiveness of the strategy. Please refer to the documentation in section 7 for more information; and,
  - 4.1.10 The use of a calming room may not be appropriate for all students. This de-escalation strategy should only be employed after less restrictive strategies have been trialed in the classroom and school.

#### **5. Guidelines**

- 5.1 Staff training/professional development on self-regulation and de-escalation.
  - 5.1.1 Professional development related to self-regulation offers learning opportunities to assist in the development of preventative strategies and de-escalation interventions. Staff providing direct support and/or supervision to students accessing a calming room as part of their IEP are

expected to be aware of and follow guidelines of appropriate use as outlined in this APM. These professional development opportunities are offered throughout the year and include; Mind up Curriculum, The Incredible 5 Point Scale and/or Zones of Regulation which helps students recognize their emotional state, develop and implement strategies that support with self-regulatory skill development. Specific teaching strategies may be combined with sensory equipment/diets (as prescribed by an OT) and/or social narratives to support students in the process of self-regulation.

- 5.2 Self-regulation tiered intervention and support.
  - 5.2.1 Self-regulation strategies that assist students to remain in their regular classroom should be the first priority. These strategies are best employed as part of a systematic and comprehensive program such as Mind Up Curriculum, The Incredible 5 Point Scale and/or Zones of Regulation.
  - 5.2.2 Where these in-class strategies are not entirely successful or where they need to be supplemented, the focus moves to providing the student with opportunities to self-regulate through movement or deep pressure activities such as, walking in the school or school yard, performing physical tasks or moving to a different classroom or other learning space. The student should be supervised during these activities.
  - 5.2.3 Only after these strategies have been attempted and behaviour tracking demonstrates that they are not entirely successful, should a calming room be considered as part of a self-regulation strategy.
    - 5.2.3.1 Staff considering the use of a calming room, should refer to APPENDIX A, **Questions to Consider before Teaching the Independent Use of a Calming Room**. If the majority of the questions can be answered in the affirmative, a calming room may be used as a self-regulation strategy. For students with significant cognitive and/or communicative impairments, special education staff should be consulted during the process.
    - 5.2.3.2 The use of a calming room as a proactive strategy should only be used as part of a comprehensive self-regulation plan and be supported through behaviour tracking (e.g. ABC and/or frequency tracking).
- 5.3 The IEP should explicitly state when and for what purpose the calming room will be used by the student. The IEP and SP-NoWR should document how and when the student will access and leave the calming room, including clear and consistent language to be used by all staff who are instructing the student.
- 5.4 Self-regulation strategies, including the use of a calming room, are implemented with the knowledge, understanding and support of the student. The student must understand the purpose of the calming room, how to request the use of the room and how to communicate needs and wants while in the room.
- 5.5 The parent/guardian must be informed and agree to the use of the calming room for the student. The parent/guardian should be given the opportunity to see the calming room if requested.

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- 5.6 The Calming Room Log (FORM A8525 - 1) must be completed for all students who use the room, regardless of the reason for use (e.g. sensory or calming) in order to inform instruction.
  - 5.7 The use of a calming room is not a long-term strategy and needs to be re-evaluated in each assessment cycle.
    - 5.7.1 The Calming Room Log and the behaviour tracking data should be reviewed to determine the success of the calming room and other strategies. Where the data shows that the use of the calming room is not successful, after a reasonable trial, it should be discontinued.
    - 5.7.2 Where the data determines that the calming room is successful, after a reasonable period of time, the Strength and Needs Committee (SNC) should focus on long-term goals to reduce the use of the room. SNCs, in conjunction with parent/guardian consultation, should consider the amount of time the student uses the room, the impact on other learning goals, the impact on social interaction and transitions to a school or program that does not have a calming room.
  - 5.8 Type of space.
    - 5.8.1 Self-regulation strategies can be applied in many environments. Ideally, they are implemented in the classroom. As noted above, it may be necessary for the student to be taught self-regulation strategies that are implemented in spaces other than a classroom.
  - 5.9 Where a separate room is used as a calming room, the following considerations must apply. The room should:
    - 5.9.1 be a space that does not cause any further emotional or behavioural escalation;
    - 5.9.2 not contain items or fixtures that may be potentially harmful to students in an escalated emotional state;
    - 5.9.3 provide a means by which staff can monitor the student at all times;
    - 5.9.4 be well ventilated, clean and well lit;
    - 5.9.5 be available to designated students as outlined in their IEP; and,
    - 5.9.6 not be scheduled for other uses throughout the day (e.g. sensory room) where such use would create a conflict.
  - 5.10 Logging use of the calming room.
    - 5.10.1 The Calming Room Log (FORM A8525 - 1) needs to be completed during/post each use of the calming room. It is acceptable to add individualized items to the Calming Room Log. A sample individualized Calming Room Log is attached as APPENDIX B.
    - 5.10.2 Calming Room Logs should be reviewed on a continual basis to inform instruction and effectiveness of the strategy in SNC format.

## **6. Parent/Guardian Involvement**

- 6.1 Prior to a calming room being used as a part of a student's program, as outlined in an IEP, the parent/guardian of students under the age of 18 will be consulted and informed through:
  - 6.1.1 IEP development;
  - 6.1.2 SP-NoWR development; and,

- 6.1.3 SNC meetings and documentation that indicates an increase or change in the frequency of use of the calming room.
  - 6.2 In addition, professional judgment should be used to determine if any of the following might be appropriate:
    - 6.2.1 contact the principal(s) of special education for proactive programming support;
    - 6.2.2 referral to the Family of Schools (FOS) Special Education Consultant for assistance in assessing the situation; and,
    - 6.2.3 involvement of community agencies for assistance in creating a proactive behaviour plan.
- 7. Documentation**
- 7.1 Documenting the use of the calming room is necessary for planning, effective usage and accountability. The Calming Room Log (FORM A8525 - 1) will be completed for all situations in which the calming room is used.
  - 7.2 The Calming Room Log should be individually completed for each student who uses the room and kept in a secure location to ensure privacy.
  - 7.3 The Calming Room Log should be reviewed based on the continuous cycle of assessment in SNC format, monitored by the school principal to discuss the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the proactive strategy and should be shared with the parent/guardian.

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**Questions to Consider Before Teaching the Independent Use of a Calming Room**

Before a student is taught to proactively use a calming room as part of their Individual Education Plan (IEP) program, it is important for a school team to discuss the following questions.

**Emotions**

- Is the student aware of their emotional states (e.g. tired, frustrated, happy, sad, angry, etc.)?
- Can the student recognize when their emotional state is escalating or de-escalating?
- Can the student express that their emotional state is escalating or de-escalating?

**Self-Regulation Strategies**

- Has the student been directly taught self-regulation strategies and had opportunities to practice?
- Does the student have a calming routine they engage in independently and successfully?
- Does the student have a “toolbox” of strategies to use for calming?
- Can the student perform the calming routine in a variety of environments?

**Transitions**

- Is the student able to transition between environments independently?

**Visuals**

- Does the student use visual supports to transition between environments?
- Does the student use visual supports to engage in a calming routine?

**Documentation**

- Does the student have an IEP program page (e.g. Self-Regulation) outlining what they will learn in order to self-regulate?
- Does the IEP tracking demonstrate that the student is learning a calming routine and has begun to generalize the skill to different environments?
- Has a Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA) been completed to determine the function of the student’s behaviour? Does the FBA support that the student needs a separate environment in order to calm?
- Does the student have a Safety Plan-Notification of Worker Risk (SP-NoWR) outlining proactive strategies to ensure the student’s behaviour does not escalate?
- Has the Family of Schools Consultant and/or Complex Needs Special Education Team(s) been involved, and suggestions followed?
- Have suggestions from a health professional (e.g. occupational therapist, physical therapist, psychologist) been implemented to aid the student in calming?

**Calming Room**

- Has the student used the calming room to practice a calming routine (e.g. deep breathing) when in a calm emotional state?

**Calming Room Log (Sample) – This is an example form only, showing how the Calming Room Log may be individualized.**

The Calming Room Log is intended to be used to track individual student's use of the calming room as outlined in a predetermined program plan. This designated space is for a student to implement calming strategies so that they are able to successfully return to classroom activities. A staff member must monitor the student continually while they are in the calming room and record their observations. This record is to be retained as part of ongoing assessment.

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:	Observations of student's physical and verbal state prior to entry	Time Entered:	Observations of student's physical and verbal state when in room	Strategies implemented by staff to support student	Time exited:	Observations of student's physical and verbal state when exited room	Staff initials
	<input type="checkbox"/> Zone <input type="checkbox"/> Swearing <input type="checkbox"/> Crying <input type="checkbox"/> Agitated <input type="checkbox"/> Hitting/kicking walls		<input type="checkbox"/> Screaming <input type="checkbox"/> Talking to self <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet <input type="checkbox"/> Pacing	<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory items <input type="checkbox"/> Square breathing		<input type="checkbox"/> Calm <input type="checkbox"/> Responsive to staff	



