The Residential Care Regulation now includes “secure unit” in the definition of a restraint.

**What is a “secure unit”?**

Most care facilities for seniors have general security measures in place using a number coded key pad or lock. Visitors, and persons in care that are capable are provided with the code so that they can safely and independently enter and exit the general facility as well as any other authorized areas within the facility. This is not considered to be a restraint.

Some care facilities employ a “WanderGuard” alert system, which essentially alarms specific exits (e.g. doors, stairwells). This type of system is person specific in that a person in care identified as at risk for wandering and/or elopement will wear a bracelet that will trigger an alarm should they leave the facility through an alarmed exit. This alarm will initiate a facility response or intervention. WanderGuard does restrict the person in cares movement within the facility and is not considered a restraint.

Some care facilities provide care and accommodation to persons with cognitive impairment, with an increased risk for wandering/elopement and/or display behaviour that must be managed in a more secure environment. This type of care is often provided in a Special Care Unit and/or a Secure Unit.

These units:

- Are designed with increased security to enhance supervision and keep persons in care safe by restricting their movement within a defined area of the care facility.
- Have a separate (different from the general facility) number code or key to enter or exit the area. Persons in care residing in this type of unit do not have access to the code and cannot exit the area unaided. Only authorized visitors and personnel are provided with the code.

The increased security to restrict the person in care’s movement within the facility is part of a behaviour management strategy and is considered a restraint.

**‘restraint’** means any chemical, electronic, mechanical, physical or other means of controlling or restricting a person in care’s freedom of movement in a community care facility, including accommodating the person in care in a secure unit.
How do I know if a secured area meets the definition of a restraint?

To determine if a secured area meets the definition of a restraint, consider the following:

1. Is the security code/key pad different from the general security code/key pad found in the communal areas of the facility (e.g. front door, patio doors, etc.)?

2. Are all persons in care in the secured unit able to independently use the keypad to enter and exit the area and accompanying outside activity areas, or do they require supervision to do so?

3. Are all persons in care residing in the secured area at risk for wandering/elopement, or display behaviour that warrants increased security?

4. Is the secure area needed to manage a person in care’s behaviour in order to minimize the risk of harm to self and/or others?

Is consent required to place a person in care in a secure unit?

Yes, section 74 of the Residential Care Regulation requires that consent be obtained when a restraint is used other than in an emergency.

- If a person is admitted to a ‘secure unit’ or ‘special care unit’ (that is secured), consent or agreement may be addressed as part of the admission procedure.

- If a transfer of a person in care is required after admission to the care facility, due to a deteriorating condition, there needs to be a documented agreement in writing from the person in care, the parent/representative or person closest to and actively involved in the life of the person in care. In addition, written agreement from a physician or nurse practitioner who is responsible for the health of the person in care must be obtained. This may be addressed at care conferences. The intent is to prevent the sudden and uninformed move of a person in care from the general care population to a secure unit (which will further restrict their freedom of movement) without there being consultation and agreement from involved parties, and to ensure that the move is not being done for the purpose of punishment or for the convenience of facility staff.

If you have any questions/concerns contact your local Licensing Officer.
- www.healthspace.ca/fha
- www.fraserhealth.ca/fha

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