

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Surveyor's Definition of Physical Restraints:

"Any manual method or physical or mechanical device, material or equipment attached or adjacent to the resident's body that the individual cannot remove easily, which restricts freedom of movement or normal access to one's body."

"Side rails sometimes restrain residents. The use of side rails as restraints is prohibited unless they are necessary to treat a resident's medical symptoms. Residents who attempt to exit a bed through, between, over or around side rails are at risk of injury or death. The potential for serious injury is more likely from a fall from a bed with raised side rails than from a fall from a bed where side rails are not used. They also potentially increase the likelihood that the resident will spend more time in bed and fall when attempting to transfer from the bed. As with other restraints, for residents who are restrained by side rails, it is expected that the process facilities employ to reduce the use of side rails as restraints is systematic and gradual to ensure the resident's safety while treating the resident's medical symptom. The same device may have the effect of restraining one individual but not another, depending on the individual resident's condition and circumstances. For example, partial rails may assist one resident to enter and exit the bed independently while acting as a restraint for another."

Source: State Operations Manual, Appendix PP -- Guidance to Surveyors for Long Term Care Facilities, pg. 55.