



**HOWARD  
CENTER**  
Help is here.



## About Howard Center

Located in Burlington, Vermont, Howard Center serves children, adults, families, and communities in a range of settings with a broad array of services for mental health, substance use, and developmental needs. The Baird School is one of several Independent Therapeutic Schools in Vermont that operate through the Howard Center.

The Baird School offers multi-faceted academic, social, emotional, and behavioral programming to students in grades K-8 (ages 5-14), who have significant challenges in these areas. Students of the Baird School are often referred by their local education agency. Professional educators, clinicians, and support staff assist students in developing skills and strategies to help them thrive at school, home, and in their communities. Their special education team provides transition support for students returning to a public school setting.

**Ukeru has been transformational for an  
alternative special education school that relied  
on restrictive interventions for decades.**

**Kristie Reed / Director of the Baird School**



# Looking for Solutions

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The Baird School recognized a need for change. In an effort to increase safety within their school, they sought to reduce their use of restrictive practices. For years, they often resorted to restraint and seclusion as a way to keep both themselves and their students safe. However, their data indicated that the more they used these restrictive practices, the more staff were getting injured. They knew there had to be a better way, so they began researching other options.

In the midst of their search, they stumbled across Ukeru - a training program that was developed out of necessity for their own programs at Grafton Integrated Health Network. Ukeru was appealing to them as a partner due to their real-life experience and results. Being a similar organization to Grafton, they liked that the Ukeru team could share their own experience implementing Ukeru in both residential and school programs, and learn from both their success and failures. In addition, it was tremendously appealing to their team and all stakeholders that Ukeru would be an addition to their staff's toolbox and work in tandem with their other system. This way staff could focus on what tool they were gaining versus removing a tool that they had relied on for so long.

## Working with Ukeru

The Baird School began using Ukeru in late August of 2022. They began with having 14 staff trained as trainers. Those trainers then conducted eight user trainings in their first year, as well as championed the program throughout their organization. In addition to training, they also utilized Ukeru's consultation services to assist them in the implementation phase. "Ukeru's direct consultation in the first year of implementation was critical in supporting our school through the transition process. Moving from interventions focused on control to those focused on comfort was crucial to our success, and the Ukeru team understood this and reinforced us for making the necessary shifts" shared Kristie Reed, the Director of the Baird School and INCLUSION Program.



To further support their efforts, their leaders met with small teams across their school to introduce Ukeru, discuss its benefits, how it can help them reach their goals of reducing their use of restrictive interventions, and explain their timeline for implementing the new model.

Reed and her team knew they needed to change their school's culture to ensure this change would be successful. "We used an educational approach. Data and the stories of children and families who were unhappy with the use of restrictive interventions supported the effort to change our school's culture" Reed explained.

The full implementation process took them about 18 months to complete. During this time, they trained upwards of 70 staff members. Their trainers now conduct trainings every other month, in addition to two annual refresher trainings. Ukeru's philosophy of Comfort vs. Control is now embedded into their school's culture and helped them to make the shift that they were looking for.

**70+ staff  
members trained  
in Ukeru**

**Meetings with  
staff and  
stakeholders**

**Data-driven/  
educational  
approach**

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**The Ukeru team is exceptional. They are reachable, responsive and able to answer any questions. The Ukeru team wants your school or program to succeed and they do everything possible to ensure your success.**

**Kristie Reed**  
***Director of the Baird School***



# Results

The Baird School's efforts have significantly paid off and the results have been incredible. They have drastically reduced their number of client-related staff injuries by over 78% and have reduced their use of restrictive interventions by nearly 67%. In addition, their culture has transformed into one that is safe and comforting for both staff and students.

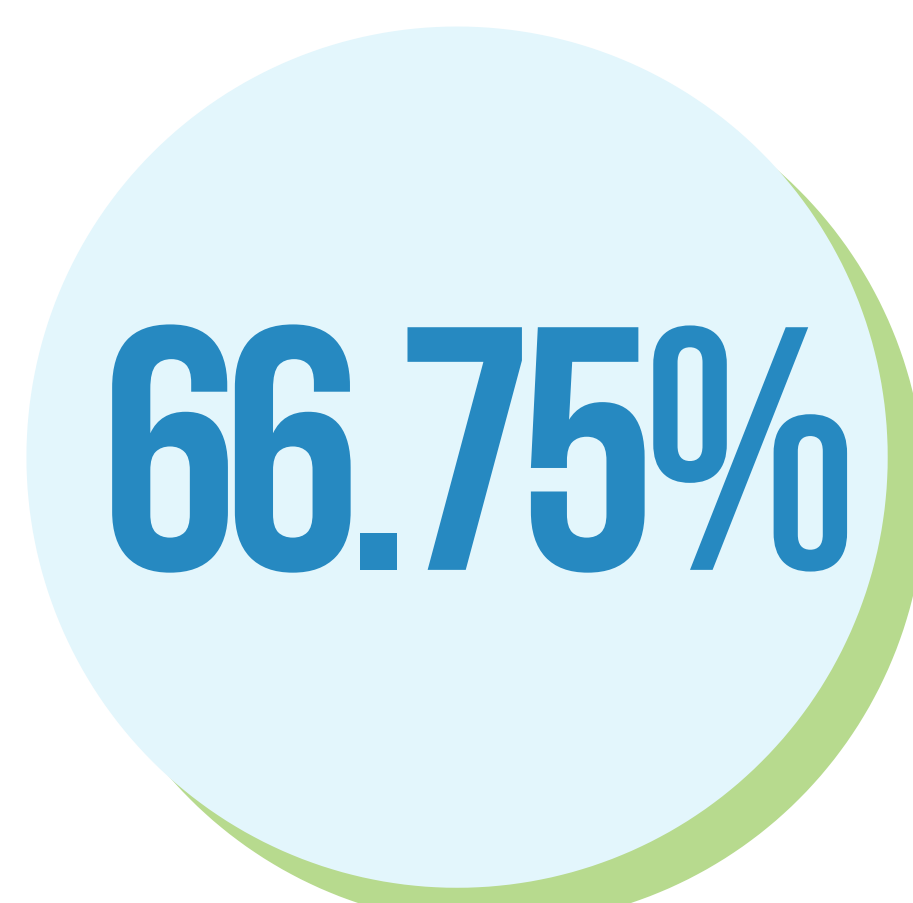
Baird School staff have expressed that they feel empowered and safer with Ukeru. Because they feel safer, they are able to be behavior detectives and prevent situations from escalating further. In addition, Ukeru has strengthened their de-escalation skills, making it easier to diffuse a situation without having to physically intervene. "Many staff are amazed by how little we need to use the Ukeru protective interventions now in year two. **Our team is feeling the rewards of limited use of restraint and seclusion**" Reed proudly shared.

Another huge win is that students feel safer as well. "Students have said their school feels safe. One student shared, 'I like school a little more since you stopped putting your hands on kids. I didn't like having adults put their hands on me. Now staff give me space which makes me feel better about coming to school'" added Reed.

Reed has been a driving force in the Baird School's transformation. Not only did she believe in Ukeru and advocated for change, but more importantly she believed in their staff and knew that they were capable of making this shift. **"Ukeru has been transformational for an alternative special education school that relied on restrictive interventions for decades"** Reed passionately shared. Reed's passion doesn't stop with their own success. In addition to exploring areas within their larger organization that would benefit from Ukeru, she is also determined to share their success vastly and spread awareness in hopes that other schools in Vermont and beyond adopt Ukeru.



**Cultural  
Shift**



**Reduction of Restrictive  
Interventions**



**Staff Injury  
Reduction**



**Staff and Students  
Feel Safer**