



March 4, 2020

**CPR Commends the FDA
For Banning the Use of Electrical Stimulation Devices**

Today the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a long-awaited final rule banning the use of electrical stimulation devices (ESDs) on people with disabilities to control self-injurious or aggressive behaviors, finding that the devices present an “unreasonable and substantial” risk of serious harm to the people subjected to them. Today represents a landmark victory for the many advocates who have fought tirelessly to end this dangerous and harmful practice.

CPR has a long history of advocating for a ban on the use of ESDs and protecting the rights of people exposed to or at risk of such treatment. For decades, we have [represented](#) people residing at the Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC) in Canton, Massachusetts, the only institution in the country that currently uses ESDs, where we have seen first-hand and spoken with our clients about the physical and emotional harm of ESDs. CPR has also worked together with many other disability organizations in efforts to end the use of ESDs by the federal government and by the state of Massachusetts.

The FDA’s final rule was based on the extensive evidence from people with disabilities, families, medical professionals, and other experts collected as part of an expert panel in 2014 and proposed rule published in 2016. The final rule recognizes the immense risk presented by ESDs and the lack of evidence of their effectiveness. The gravity of the harm from ESDs is evidenced by the fact that this is only the third device the FDA has ever has banned. The FDA noted in its [press release](#) that the use of ESDs presents “significant psychological and physical risks...including worsening of underlying symptoms, depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, pain, burns and tissue damage.” Alternative treatments exist – and are successfully used everywhere other than JRC – that do not subject people with disabilities to painful electric shocks and the risk of device malfunctions and psychological trauma. The continued use of ESDs is indefensible, and we are grateful that the FDA has finally taken action to end this practice.

The FDA’s final rule will become effective 30 days from its official publication in the Federal Register, expected on March 6, 2020. The rule provides individuals currently subjected to ESDs up to 180 days to transition to another treatment method. The FDA’s final rule can be read [here](#).

Today’s rule is the result of years of committed and strong advocacy of so many in the disability community. We recognize, however, that our fight may not be over. For decades, JRC has fought every effort to end its use of ESDs. CPR vows to fight any challenges to this important rule. For more on CPR’s work in opposition to involuntary interventions, including the use of ESDs, please visit our [website](#).