Q: is a WanderGuard/elopement bracelet a restraint? I do not believe it is or should be. Here is the path I followed to get to that conclusion.

Definition of Physical Restraint - “Physical restraint” is defined as any manual method, physical or mechanical device, equipment, or material that meets all of the following criteria:

• Is attached or adjacent to the resident’s body;
• Cannot be removed easily by the resident; and Effective November 28, 2017
• Restricts the resident’s freedom of movement or normal access to his/her body.

“Removes easily” means that the manual method, physical or mechanical device, equipment, or material, can be removed intentionally by the resident in the same manner as it was applied by the staff.

Now, one could argue that the Wanderguard/elopement bracelet is attached to the body, and cannot be removed easily. However, I do not believe it meets the “restricts freedom of movement” criteria.

The definition of “Freedom of Movement”- “Freedom of movement” means any change in place or position for the body or any part of the body that the person is physically able to control.

The Wanderguard/elopement bracelet is not restricting the resident from ambulating, getting out of bed/chair, going to bathroom, etc. It’s not even restricting them from walking out the door, it’s just setting off an alarm when they get near a door.

(FYI, all definitions were taken directly out of Appendix PP).

A: If the bracelet does not restrict the resident’s freedom of movement, then it would not be considered to be a restraint. As you had described, “physical restraint” is defined as any manual method, physical or mechanical device, equipment, or material that meets all (with emphasis) of the following criteria:

• Is attached or adjacent to the resident’s body;
• Cannot be removed easily by the resident; and
• Restricts the resident’s freedom of movement.

This response was provided by federal CMS in response to our question on this issue.