Expulsion and Suspension in Early Childhood Settings: A National Overview

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Getting on the same page...

• Brief review of the research
• 3 dimensions of expulsion practices
• Role of state policy
• State examples
Definitions
We don’t call it expulsion...

• Please pick your child up early today
• Don’t bring her in tomorrow
• Why don’t you have him join us for half days for the next few weeks
• Our program just isn’t right for your child
• We can’t provide the services that your child needs
**Exclusionary Practices**

- Remove from activities that include other children
- Remove in the short-term or limit the time a child attends the program
- Dismiss a child permanently
- Encourage families to voluntarily terminate services, “soft expulsion”

**Caring for Our Children**

- Terminating enrollment because of challenging behavior or health condition
- Reductions in the amount of time in attendance at the setting
- Other services are limited on the basis of challenging behaviors, e.g. denying outdoor time, withholding food, and using food as a reward or punishment
Research tells us...
Why Focus on Expulsion and Suspension?

• Suspension and expulsion are stressful and negative experiences that can impact child outcomes

• Expulsion or suspension early in a child’s education predicts later expulsion or suspension in school

• Young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as 10 times more likely to:
  ▪ Drop out of high school
  ▪ Fail a grade
  ▪ Be incarcerated
10.4% of Pre-K teachers expelled 1 or more in past year


State Pre-K Expulsion Rates

Gilliam, 2005
**STRIKE #1: Older Boys**

**Boys** 3½ times more likely than girls

**4-year-olds** 50% more likely than 3’s
**Strike #2: African Americans**

Expelled at 2x the rate of European Americans; 5x the rate of Asian Americans

Make up 18% of preschool enrollment, but 48% of preschool children suspended more than once.

Source: CIVIL RIGHTS DATA COLLECTION Data Snapshot: Early Childhood Education – March 2014
STRIKE #3: Setting

• Private and faith-based child care
• High teacher-child ratios
• High teacher stress / feeling hopeless
• Long school day
• Too little or too restrictive structure
• No consistent ongoing availability of a mental health consultant
Infant Toddler

A study in Chicago found that 42% of birth to three child care programs expelled at least one child in the previous year because of behavior.

A study of Philadelphia found that 26% of child care programs had expelled at least one child in the past year and that toddlers were just as likely as preschoolers to be asked to leave the child care setting.
Three Dimensions of Expulsion to Consider
1. Lack of Knowledge of Child Development

- Social-emotional development occurs in context of family, community and cultural expectations

- Challenging behavior is a part of typical child development and offers “touch points”

- Cross-cultural differences in children’s expression and interpretation of emotions, e.g. anger, shame, exuberance of positive emotions

- Expulsion and suspension can pathologize child behavior and increase disparities
Address Knowledge & Practice

- NSECE study found only 20% of providers reported receiving training on facilitating social-emotional growth in the past year

- Workforce needs knowledge and skills to
  - Understand how children’s emotional responses may reflect cultural expectations and learning
  - Communicate classroom expectations in a child’s first language
  - Support social-emotional learning
  - Examine their own teaching and discipline practices
  - Distinguish concerning behaviors from developmentally appropriate behaviors
2. Implicit Bias

THE HUMAN BRAIN

**Conscious/Reflective**
effortful, slow, logical, calculating, limited resources

**Unconscious/Reflex**
automatic, fast, intuitively-driven, emotional stereotypic, large resources
Bias

• A human condition
• Triggered by brain making quick judgements and assessments of people and situations, influence by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences
• Compounded by the belief that our perceptions, beliefs and experiences are objectively true
• Negative information more salient
• Easily trigged under cognitive or emotional load
Implicit Bias & Racial Disparities in Expulsion Rates

Growing evidence indicates...

• Black boys are perceived as less innocent, less human and more deserving of punishment

• Threat commonly associated with Black men may be generalized to Black boys as young as 5

• Underprepared early learning teachers are more likely to use punitive and rejecting disciplinary techniques
Understanding Racial Disparities in Expulsion Rates

Recent Research has found...

- Disproportionate levels of discipline by race
- Mixed impact when background information on familial stressors is made available
- At kindergarten entry, Black and White parents equally rated their children’s persistence, approaches to learning, and social interactions, but teachers rated Black students as having a distinct disadvantage relative to White students
Countering Implicit Bias

- Institute organization-wide processes and practice to support individuals placing cognitive effort over intuition, e.g.
  - Explicit procedures when a challenging behavior happens, e.g. discipline practices
  - Engage in ECMH consultation
  - Provide reflective supervision
  - Offer professional development and coaching
3. Trauma Behavior Connection

- Approximately 10 to 14 percent of children from birth to age 5 experience emotional, relational, or behavioral disturbance
- Children experiencing trauma arrive at school less ready to learn

- Exposure to violence can diminish concentration, memory, organizational, and language abilities
- Quality of early learning settings is even more important
Role of State Policy
GOVERNANCE

STATE GOALS AND ROAD MAP

DATA

POLICY

STATE POLICY & PROTOCOLS ON EXPULSION

POLICIES RELATED TO PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

WORK CONDITIONS

SUPPORTS

HOTLINE/TRIAGE

TRAINING & COACHING

IECMH CONSULTATION

QRIS

ALIGNMENT OF TA PROVIDERS

SERVICES

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING & REFERRAL

EARLY INTERVENTION & SPECIAL EDUCATION

HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, AND FAMILY SUPPORT

CROSS-CUTTING: FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS AND RACIAL & GENDER EQUITY
Possible Role of Legislation

• Are program components or state financing for preschool and child care in statute?

• What data could be collected across state agencies re: prevalence, what is happening in programs, and how are the supports working?

• What are available supports re: professional development and mental health consultation?

• Are there clear expectations or requirements around protocols and procedures?
State Examples
Arkansas

• Cross-system and sector planning group
• Hotline/Triage
• Tiers of BehaviorHelp
  ▪ Quality Improvement & ECMH Consultation
• Core 6 Trainings
  1. Teaching Pyramid
  2. Nurturing Relationships
  3. Supportive Classrooms
  4. Understanding and Describing Behavior
  5. Working with Families
• Evaluation
Arkansas: Financing

- Triage specialists pulled from within various units within DHS/DCCECE
- Shifted resources to expand ECMHC to several new sites
- All other services funded by redeploying existing staff and resources
- TA and ECMHC funded through CCDF and state pre-k quality improvement dollars
Ohio: Whole Child Matters

• Statewide Hotline (Children’s Hospital)
• ECMH Consultation Expansion
• Core Training
  1. Social and Emotional Development from Ohio’s Early Learning Development Standards
  2. Managing Challenging Behavior
  3. From Toxic Stress to Safe Zone - Trauma Informed Care
  4. Cultural and Linguistic Competency
• Evaluation
Closing Reflection
Expulsion...

- An adult decision
- Not a single-factor problem
- Requires a multi-pronged approach
Preventing Expulsion ...

- Build the capacity of and supports for the workforce
- Bring a expulsion prevention lens to current efforts
- Determine what will be the new focus
- Involve all helpers
- Pick a starting point and build momentum
For more information

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