



Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion

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Overview of the Topic: Why is Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion Important?

It is difficult to imagine punishing a preschooler by expulsion, though recent data indicate this form of discipline is an increasing issue in preschool classrooms. Evidence shows that children who are suspended or expelled in the early school years may be more likely to experience negative events in later school years. As early as 2005, research found that preschool children are expelled at three times the rate of children in Kindergarten through 12th grade, the majority of those children, at least 42% of preschool children suspended, being African American boys. Even 10 years later, data suggests preschool classrooms disproportionately suspend students with disabilities or English Learners, students who could benefit from daily attendance in preschool programs.

The Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 requires states to provide consumer education information to families, the general public, and where applicable, providers. That information must include their policies regarding the social-emotional and behavioral health of young children, which may include policies on expulsion of preschool-aged children in early childhood programs receiving CCDF assistance. The law also allows States to target CCDF quality enhancement funds to professional development, including effective behavior management strategies and training that promotes children's social-emotional development and reduces challenging behavior, including reducing expulsions of preschool aged children for such behaviors. General prevention practices have been recommended by the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services, including setting goals, strong family partnerships, behavior monitoring, access to specialized consultation, highly skilled workforce, and fair and appropriate policies. Some states are leading the rest to create policies on this, such as New Jersey which developed a specific policy on suspension and expulsion for preschool programs. Other states have taken a more preventative approach such as North Dakota and Wisconsin. This document identifies selected research studies and federal and state policy resources on early childhood suspension, expulsion, and discipline and what can be done to prevent these practices. Click on the topic in the table of contents and go directly to that section of the selected resources.

Suspension/Expulsion Research Studies and Policy Briefs

Federal Reports

State Research and Policy

¹ The introduction for this annotated bibliography was slightly revised September 3, 2015. A resource was removed in June 2016.



Suspension/Expulsion Research Studies and Policy Briefs

[Implementing Policies to Reduce the Likelihood of Preschool Expansion](#)

Gilliam, W.S. (2008). *Implementing policies to reduce the likelihood of preschool expansion*. New York, NY: Foundation for Children Development.

This policy brief examines factors associated with expulsion from preschool such as mental health and classroom behavior problems. Certain factors that contribute to expulsion may inform changes in policy that can be regulated.

[Prekindergarteners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Programs](#)

Gilliam, W.S. (2005). *Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten programs*. New York, NY: Foundation for Children Development.

This policy brief studies expulsion in preschool programs nationally and by state as well as by program setting gender, race/ethnicity and state. The report found preschool students are expelled at a rate more than three times that of children in K-12 grades.

[Discipline Policies in Early Childhood Care and Education Programs: Building an Infrastructure for Social and Academic Success](#)

Longstreth, S., Brady, S. & Kay, A. (2013). Discipline policies in early childhood care and education programs: Building an infrastructure for social and academic success. *Early Education and Development*, 24(2), 253-271. doi: 10.1080/10409289.2011.647608

Preventing challenging behavior in young children is becoming a national priority. Discipline policies could help early childhood programs build an infrastructure that promotes academic and social success. This study evaluates whether current discipline policies are considered high-quality.

[Challenging Behaviors and the Role of Preschool Education](#)

McCabe, L.A & Frede, E.C. (2007). *Challenging behaviors and the role of preschool education*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

This policy brief from the National Institute for Early Education Research discusses the research on the role preschool education plays in improving challenging behaviors. This includes recommendations that can lead to better behavioral outcomes.



Federal Reports

[Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings](#)

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2014). *Policy statement on expulsion and suspension policies in early childhood settings*. Washington, DC: Author.

This policy statement jointly released by Secretaries Burwell and Duncan covers preschool suspension and expulsion practices. Its purpose is to raise awareness about discipline practices in early childhood settings and provides recommendations on establishing policies on discipline.

[Reducing Suspension and Expulsion Practices in Early Childhood Settings](#)

Administration for Children and Families. (n.d.) *Reducing suspension and expulsion practices in early childhood settings*. Washington, DC: Author

This website from the Administration for Children and Families hosts several resources to prevent, limit and eliminate expulsion and suspension practices in early childhood classrooms. Includes a webinar series, policy statements, webinars and resources on the harmful effects of early childhood expulsion and prevention suggestions. Experts from across the country share their work on different aspects of the issue including policy, research and data and intervention.

[Data Snapshot: Early Childhood Education](#)

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2014). *Data snapshot: Early childhood education*. Washington, DC: Author.

This data snapshot from the US Department of Education highlights early childhood data. It includes data on suspension of preschool children, especially African American boys.

State Research and Policy

[Connecticut: Opportunity Knocks: A Connecticut School-Community Partnership Closes the Door on Preschool Expulsion](#)

Fahey, C., Ihle, P., Macary, S. & O'Callahan, C. (2007). Opportunity knocks: A Connecticut school-community partnership closes the door on preschool expulsion. *Young Children*, 62(2), 21-24.

This report is a local example in Connecticut showing how the city of Middletown is planning to stop



preschool expulsion. Includes recommendations for parents, pediatricians, and educators working together to eliminate the issue.

[Massachusetts: Preschool and Child Care Expulsion and Suspension: Rates and Predictors in One State](#)

Gilliam, W.S., Shahrar, G. (2006). Preschool and child care expulsion and suspension: Rates and predictors in one state. *Infants & Young Children, 19*(3), 228-245

This report examines the rates and predictors of preschool expulsion and suspension in Massachusetts. They found the rate of preschool expulsion was more than 34 times the K-12 rate. Implications for policy, prevention and future research included.

[Missouri: The Call to End Preschool Expulsion](#)

Splett, J. & Hawks, J.S. (2011). *The call to end preschool expulsion*. Columbia, MO: Center for Family Policy and Research, University of Missouri.

This report from the University of Missouri discusses Missouri's high preschool expulsion rate and the relationship between early childhood expulsion and adult delinquency. Policy recommendations are included to reduce challenging behaviors in early childhood.

[New Jersey: Preschool Student Suspension/Expulsion Guidelines](#)

New Jersey State Department of Education. (n.d.). *New Jersey: Preschool student suspension/expulsion guidelines*. Trenton, NJ: Author.

The New Jersey Department of Education outlined New Jersey regulations on preschool discipline and provided recommendations for centers on challenging behavior.

[New York: Suspension and Expulsion of Preschool Children](#)

New York State Education Department. (2015). *Suspension and expulsion of preschool children*. Albany, NJ: Author.

The New York State Education Department developed this resource list to provide resources and documents that help with preschoolers and disciplining children with challenging behaviors. Resources include a memorandum on federal and state policy, Common Core guidelines for regular and special needs early childhood teachers, and technical assistance resources.



North Dakota: Licensed Child Care Dismissal Study

North Dakota State Data Center. (2007). *Licensed child care dismissal study*. Fargo, ND: Author.

This study gathered information on child care expulsion in North Dakota and reasons why the child was dismissed in order to provide policy makers and child care administration information on the issue and to define needs for supportive services. 51% of dismissal cases were children displaying behavioral problems. Providers said helpful resources include additional staff and more background information from the parents on the child.

Wisconsin: Child Retention in Wisconsin Child Care Settings: Understanding the Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors that Impact Expulsion and Retention in Early Care and Education

Vitela-Irvin, L. (2010). *Child retention in Wisconsin child care settings: Understanding the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that impact expulsion and retention in early care and education*. Madison, WI: Supporting Families Together Association.

This study looked at child care providers throughout Wisconsin and the likelihood of expulsion in Wisconsin child care programs. Some reasons for expulsion include negative perceptions of the child and inability to meet child's needs. One in five programs reported they had little confidence in their ability to deal with challenging behaviors.



CENTER ON ENHANCING EARLY LEARNING OUTCOMES

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