Mental Health in Early Childhood: Priorities to Prevent Expulsions, Suspensions, and Harsh Discipline and Implement Responsive Inclusive Practices

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Discipline:

from the root “disciple” referring to a follower or believer of a teacher.

STOCKTON, Calif. (KCRA) — Earlier this year, a Stockton student was handcuffed with zip ties on his hands and feet, forced to go to the hospital for a psychiatric evaluation and was charged with battery on a police officer. That student was 5 years old.

Michael Davis is diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD. His mother says it has led to fights at school. But when the school district said it had a plan to change Michael's behavior, his mother says things went wrong.

Police handcuff 6-year-old student in Georgia

By Antoinette Campbell, CNN
Updated 5:51 PM ET, Tue April 17, 2012

The Washington Post

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My son has been suspended five times. He's 3.

Black families fight entrenched prejudices to get fair discipline for their children in schools.

The New York Times

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FIXES

Empathy, not Expulsion, for Preschoolers at Risk

By SARA NEUFELD FEBRUARY 20, 2015 3:28 AM 186 Comments

Fixes looks at solutions to social problems and why they work.

Email

CHICAGO — A few years ago, a boy here was on the verge of being expelled because his teacher felt he was a danger to his classmates.

He was 4 years old, in preschool.

This situation is all too common. Preschoolers are exp… times the rate of children in kindergarten through 12t… African-American boys being most vulnerable.

This boy — I'll call him Danny — was lucky, though. H… received assistance from a specialist, Lauren Wiley, ar…

Chalkbeat
COLORADO
Education news. In context.

IN FOCUS DATA CENTER JOBS EVENTS 4 NEWSLETTER ABOUT CONTACT DONATE

DATA VOID

New push to quantify, prevent preschool expulsions in Colorado

Preschoolers more likely to be expelled than K-12 students

By Ann Schimke aschimke@chalkbeat.org
PUBLISHED: February 19, 2015 - 4:21 pm MDT

2 COMMENTS

ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS

- In Colorado, there's a growing push to establish state policies and data collection methods around preschool expulsion.
- National data indicates that boys and minorities are disproportionality suspended from preschool.
- The limited state data that exists indicates that young children are expelled from preschool and child care at higher rates than K-12 students.
- Early childhood stakeholders agree that even with new policies and data collection mechanisms, any expulsion strategy must include training and supports for providers.

Mother Jones

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Must Reads: Playing TRUMP: The Game | A New Approach to Disciplining Kids | Jesse Jackson in Silicon Valley

POLITICS
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What If Everything You Knew About Disciplining Kids Was Wrong?

Negative consequences, timeouts, and punishment just make bad behavior worse. But a new approach really works.

—By ***Katherine Reynolds Lewis*** | July/August 2015 Issue

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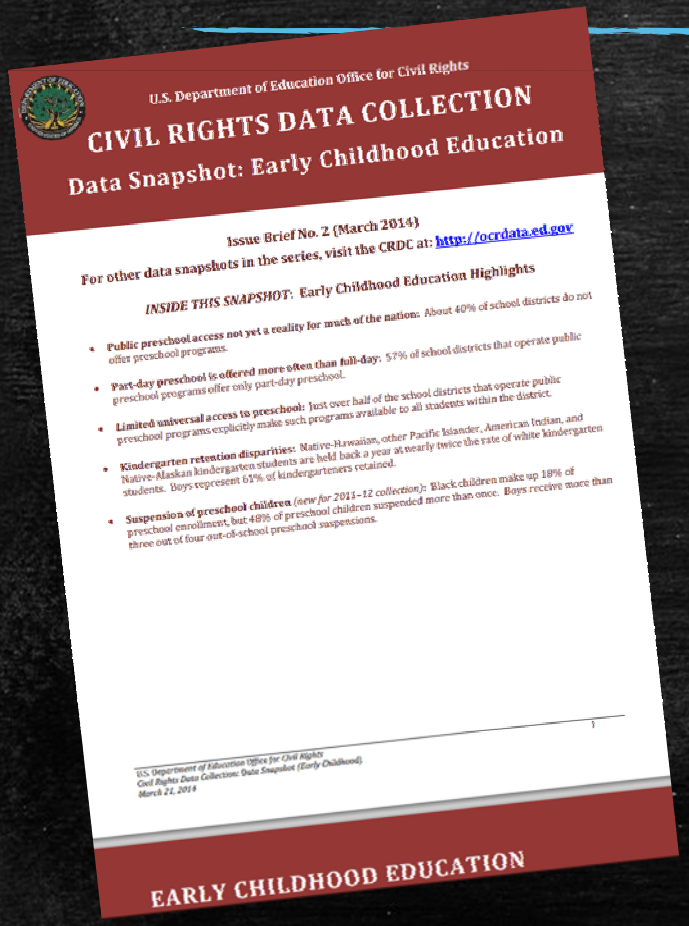
National priority



U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights

CIVIL RIGHTS DATA COLLECTION

Data Snapshot: Early Childhood Education

Issue Brief No. 2 (March 2014)

For other data snapshots in the series, visit the CRDC at: http://ocrdata.ed.gov

INSIDE THIS SNAPSHOT: Early Childhood Education Highlights

- **Public preschool access not yet a reality for much of the nation.** About 40% of school districts do not offer preschool programs.
- **Part-day preschool is offered more often than full-day:** 57% of school districts that operate public preschool programs offer only part-day preschool.
- **Limited universal access to preschool:** Just over half of the school districts that operate public preschool programs explicitly make such programs available to all students within the district.
- **Kindergarten retention disparities:** Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Native Alaskan kindergarten students are held back a year at nearly twice the rate of white kindergarten students. Boys represent 61% of kindergarteners retained.
- **Suspension of preschool children** *(new for 2011-12 collection):* Black children make up 18% of preschool enrollment, but 48% of preschool children suspended more than once. Boys receive more than three out of four out-of-school preschool suspensions.

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights
Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (Early Childhood)
March 21, 2014

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- US Depts of HHS & Education policy statement on suspensions and expulsions https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/expulsion_suspension_final.pdf
- MBK & #RethinkDiscipline initiative
- OCR data focus

Defining expulsion & suspension in early learning settings

Expulsion

Complete and permanent removal of a child from an early learning program

Suspension

Temporary prohibition or exclusion from attending an early learning program

Harsh Discipline Practices

- Restraint
- Seclusion
- Other forms of exclusion

There are statistically significant associations between measured ***social-emotional skills in kindergarten*** and ***key young adult outcomes*** such as:

- education
- employment
- criminal activity
- substance use
- mental health

- Data and scope
- What works
- What is needed

Data and scope

2011–12 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) - first ever collection of preschool suspension and expulsion data show out-of-school suspensions are disproportionate by race as well as disability.

Data and scope – preschool expulsion

- Gilliam's seminal 2005 study found preschool expulsion rates at 6.7 per 1000, 3x higher than K-12 rates
- Subsequent state studies found similar or higher rates (e.g. Colorado 10 per 1000, Massachusetts 27 per 1000)
- Higher in family child care homes

Influencing factors in suspension and expulsion

- Size and ratios
- Attitudes and beliefs
- Teacher stress
- Adult-child interactions
- Teaching strategies
- Environment
- Race
- Disability

Data and scope – students of color

Black students represent 18% of preschool enrollment, but 42% of preschool students suspended once, and 48% of students suspended more than once

Data and scope – students with disabilities

Students with disabilities (served by IDEA) represent

- 12% of the student population
- 58% of those placed in seclusion or involuntary confinement
- 75% of those physically restrained at school to immobilize them or reduce their ability to move freely.

Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension (13%) than students without disabilities (6%)

Data and scope – students with disabilities

With the exception of Latino and Asian students, more than one out of four boys of color with disabilities (served by IDEA) and nearly one in five girls of color with disabilities receives an out-of-school suspension

Federal data show that about 52,500 children with disabilities each year are subjected to physical restraint, with mechanical restraints such as handcuffs used on almost 4,000 of them

Maryland study indicated a large percentage of young children exiting their early childhood program because of behavioral problems had diagnosed developmental disabilities (Perry et al, 2011)

Data and scope – students with disabilities

Restraint and seclusion

- Restraint and seclusion was used more than 267,000 times nationwide in the 2012 school year
- ¾ had physical, emotional, or intellectual disabilities
- Only about half of states have laws prohibiting schools from using restraint
- Almost 1 in 5 school superintendents support seclusion or restraint to punish students for misbehavior

Data and scope – a state perspective

In Colorado during the 2014-2015 school year, 357 Kindergarteners on IEPs were suspended (out of school)

IDEA says…

Stay Put rule

Ten Day rule

Manifestation Determination

Why are children with disabilities disciplined disproportionately?

- Coping with change, transition
- Difficulty following rules
- Impulsivity
- Misunderstanding of ability of student to control his/her behavior
- Previous incidences of discipline may influence future incidences
- Academic or social difficulties manifesting as anger, frustration, behavior challenges
- Teachers' ability and support in consistent implementation of behavior support plans
- Teachers not trained in proper protocols

What can work?

- Widespread acceptance and availability of **preventative strategies** that caregivers can learn and practice (e.g. Incredible Years, the Pyramid Model, Carescapes)
- Intervention strategies that **teach, not punish**
- **Program and state policies** that reflect principles of positive behavior support, inclusion, and limiting suspension and expulsion
- Early childhood mental health **consultation**

Preventative strategies

Positive behavior support and intervention

90% of school superintendents/administrators surveyed across the country indicated their school district would benefit from funding to implement school-wide positive behavioral support and intervention systems and nonviolent crisis interventions

American Association of School Administrators (2012)

Preventative strategies

- Curricula and frameworks that build relationships, enhance environments, and teach self-regulation
- A general understanding of child development, child behavior, and the importance of social and emotional development
- Healthy caregivers and teachers

Non-punitive intervention strategies

Punitive strategies, exclusion, timeout and negative consequences alone can’t solve behavioral difficulties

Program and state policies

- State level policies
- Legislation
- District decisions
- Program level policies
- Rules & regulations such as licensing

What are other states/municipalities doing?

Two examples

Connecticut

July 1, 2015

An act concerning out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for students in preschool and grades Kindergarten to two

Expulsion prohibited for children below 3rd grade except in extreme circumstances.

Washington, DC

May 2015 passed into law

An Act "…to amend the Pre-k Enhancement and Expansion Amendment Act of 2008 to **prohibit the suspension or expulsion of a student of pre-kindergarten age from any publicly funded pre-kindergarten program;** and to amend Title II of the Attendance Accountability Amendment Act of 2013 to **establish annual reporting requirements** for each local education agency or an entity operating a publicly funded community-based organization on suspensions and expulsions data for all grades"

Colorado - community input making a difference

Recommendation:

Child care policies and procedures should inform parents of the following:

- Services offered for children who have disabilities or developmental delays, which includes children with social, emotional and behavioral needs, in alignment with the training and ability of staff, and in compliance with the ADA.
- The procedure concerning recruitment, admission and registration of children, including children with exceptional social, emotional, behavioral, physical, disability specific or developmental needs
- The policy on guidance, positive instruction, supporting positive behavior, discipline and consequences
- The policy regarding how decisions are made regarding suspensions, expulsions and requests for withdrawal from the facility, steps programs take prior to suspending, expelling or requesting withdrawal, and policy regarding notification to the department when children are suspended, expelled or requested to withdraw from the facility.

Colorado recommendations, continued

The center must have a policy on guidance, positive instruction, discipline and consequences that includes how the center will:

- Cultivate positive child, staff, and family relationships, and creating and maintaining socially and emotional respectful early care and learning environments
- Implement teaching strategies that support positive behavior and prosocial peer interaction and overall social and emotional competence in young children
- Provide individualized social and emotional intervention supports for children observed to need them that include methods for understanding the meaning of child behavior and developing, adopting and implementing a team-based (e.g. family, program administrator, teacher, development specialist, consultant, etc.) approach.
- Have a feasible plan to access an early childhood mental health consultant or other specialist as needed.
- The center must have procedures in place, and must indicate steps that the director will take prior to withdrawal, expulsion or suspension from care in instances of social, emotional or behavioral challenge that are consistent with the center's policy on guidance, positive instruction, discipline and consequences.

Infant and early childhood mental health consultation

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is a multi-level preventive intervention that teams mental health professionals with people who work with young children and their families to improve their social, emotional, and behavioral health and development.

IECMHC builds the capacity of providers and families to understand the powerful influence of their relationships and interactions on young children's development. Children's well-being is improved and mental health problems are prevented and/or reduced as a result of the MHC's partnership with adults in children's lives.

IECMHC includes skilled observations, individualized strategies, and early identification of children with and at risk for mental health challenges.

SAMHSA Expert Convening on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, September 2014

What is needed?

1. Decisions on type, frequency & mechanism of ongoing data collection
2. More sustainable infant and early childhood mental health consultation capacity and infrastructure
3. Strong and relevant workforce preparation and professional learning
4. Best and evidence-based practices in classrooms to intentionally support inclusion and social-emotional development – not trying to control or punish behavior
5. Public policies, including rules and regulations, to support keeping kids included in child care, preschool and Kindergarten settings

Resources & publications

Administration on Children and Families, Office of Early Childhood Development – Reducing Suspension and Expulsion Practices http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/child-health-development/reducing-suspension-and-expulsion-practices

Implementing Policies to Reduce the Likelihood of Preschool Expulsion (Gilliam, 2008) http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/ExpulsionBriefImplementingPolicies.pdf

Prekindergartners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Programs (Gilliam, 2005) http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/ExpulsionCompleteReport.pdf

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, CRDC, Data Snapshot: Early Childhood Education http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-early-learning-snapshot.pdf

Full dataset can be accessed at: http://ocrdata.ed.gov/StateNationalEstimations/Projections_2011_12

U.S. Department of Education Rethinking Discipline http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/index.html#rethink-launch

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