

What Can Your School Do for You?

Your program should have:

- Clearly written policies and guidelines for considering suspending or expelling a child.
- Access to early childhood mental health consultation and crisis counseling for teachers.
- Meaningful professional development about child development, classroom management, social-emotional learning, characteristics of children with special needs, implicit bias, or other topics that would help teachers.
- Information about Multi-Tiered Systems of Support such as the Pyramid Model, and positive behavior supports for all children.
- An emphasis on good relationships with families and ongoing communication with them.

What About YOU? Who Can Help YOU?

Preschool teachers face many challenges. Class sizes may be large and sometimes there are not enough adults in the classroom to meet the needs of all the children. Do you sometimes feel depressed about your work? Do you have someone to talk to, or strategies for relieving your own stress?

Research tells us teachers benefit from consulting with an **early childhood mental health specialist**. It's helpful to have someone to talk to and share ideas with and make plans to help your children develop well. Your program may have someone qualified on staff, or you might try calling your local Department of Mental Health (go to <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/MHPContactList.aspx> for a list). It's important to have an infant/early childhood specialist who really knows early development. He or she can listen to your story and help you plan to help the child.

Resources on These Topics:

1. Self-assessment and building relationships

It's difficult to acknowledge that we might have implicit biases toward some groups, but everyone does—it's human. Recognizing our own biases is the beginning of changing our actions. Begin with the statement from the National Association of Educators of Young Children (NAEYC) at <https://www.naeyc.org/about-us/press-releases/statement-naeyc-implicit-bias-research>: "any solution to the challenges posed by suspension and expulsion must include a willingness among early childhood educators to hold ourselves accountable for our biases, our expectations and our actions".

2. A supportive and predictable environment

There are two excellent online resources from the IRIS Center:

Early Childhood Behavior Management:

Developing and Teaching Rules

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ecbm/> and

Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/env/>

3. Fostering Healthy Social and Emotional Development

The most useful resource may be the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>). Dig deep and you will find ideas for teachers, families, and programs. Much of the information is also available in Spanish.

A Resource on Responsibilities of Your School or Program Administration

Preventing Suspensions and Expulsions in Early Childhood Settings: A Program Leader's Guide to Promoting All Children's Success.

<https://preventexpulsion.org/>

For more information, references, or an electronic copy of this brochure, please contact Nancy Hunt, Ph.D. at nhunt@chla.usc.edu.

Draft Preschool Teachers!

Do You Need Help with Your Students with Challenging Behaviors?



An Informational Brochure for California Preschool Teachers

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Introduction

Preschool teachers have been known to go to bed at night worrying about the children who challenge them during the day. These worries can add to the stress of your work, your feeling of hope for your students, and your fears for yourself and all your students.

In fact, these behaviors and feelings can lead to the suspension and expulsion of young children with challenging behaviors, which occurs at a rate three times more frequently than it does for elementary and secondary students. Yet the students who are expelled are the ones who may need you and the warmth and stability of your program more than others.

This brochure will provide you with some information and resources so that you have the tools to provide other alternatives to suspension and expulsion for your preschool students.

What Does Preschool Suspension Look Like?

In-School Suspension

- Sending the child out of the classroom (for example to the director's office)

Out-of-School Suspension

- Asking a family to pick up their child early from school because he or she is not behaving well

"Soft" Expulsion

- Repeatedly asking a family to pick up their child early from school (often requiring caregiver to miss work)

Expulsion

- Asking a family to find another program because their child is not "a good fit" for the program or because they do not have the appropriate supports for him or her.

Which Children are at Greatest Risk?

The research shows that four-year-old African American boys are disproportionately suspended and expelled from preschool. Children with disabilities are also expelled, even though federal law prohibits it if the child's behavior is related to his disability.

Figure 1. Bar chart displaying disproportionate number of preschool suspensions in Black/African American preschool children. - From the Department of Education

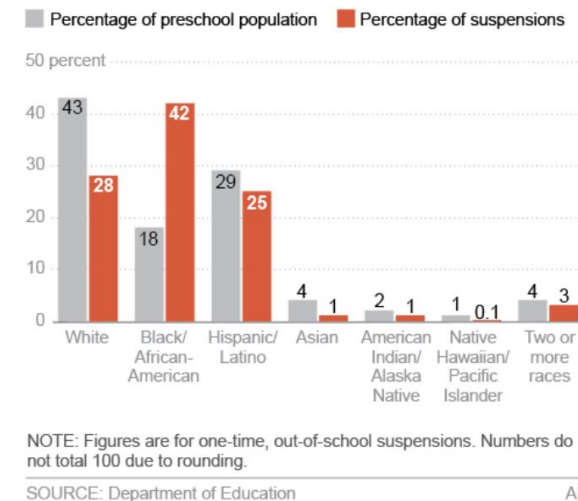
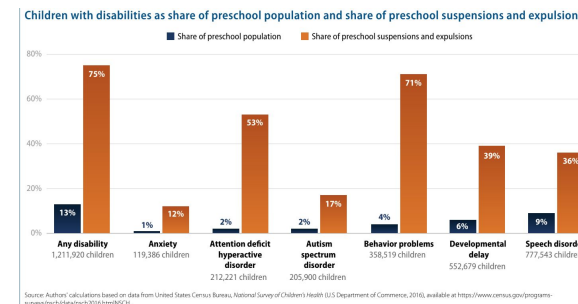


Figure 2. Bar chart showing disproportionate number of preschool suspension for children with any disability. - From US Census Bureau National Survey of Children's Health



What Happens to These Children as They Get Older?

Once a child has been expelled once, he or she is more likely to be expelled again. This can begin a cycle which involves more absences from school and missing both school work and a sense of belonging in school. It also increases the likelihood that these students will experience academic failure in grades K-12, drop out of school, and be arrested for minor offenses, which can lead to more serious involvement with the criminal justice system—the "preschool to prison pipeline" (see <https://nwlc.org/blog/disrupt-the-preschool-to-prison-pipeline-with-equitable-practices/>).

What Can You Do in the Classroom?

Evaluate your own classroom practice. What can you do to implement these evidence-based practices which are likely to prevent challenging behaviors (Fish, 2015)?

1. Do you focus on *building relationships*?

- How can you strengthen relationships with the child and family?
- Have you examined your own attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions toward children and challenging behaviors?

2. Have you created a *supportive environment*?

- Do you set and follow routines & schedules and make them clear to your students?
- Do you teach expectations? Do you talk to the child and show him how he is expected to behave?

3. Do you teach *social and emotional skills*, such as:

- How to make friends
- Identifying feelings
- Regulation or control and expression of feelings?
- Do you set up opportunities and model problem solving and conflict resolution?