Overview of Reducing and Preventing Expulsion from Early Learning State Policy Slides

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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
• We can’t provide the services 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
How Often?

10.4% of Pre-K teachers expelled 1 or more in past year


State Pre-K Expulsion Rates, 2005

Gilliam, 2005
STRIKE #1: Older Boys

Boys 3½ times more likely than girls

4-year-olds 50% more likely than 3’s
Strike #2: Black Children

• Expelled at 2x the rate of White children; 5x the rate of Asian children

• 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
1. Lack of Knowledge (continued)

- 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 cultural socialization and practices
  - Distinguish concerning behaviors from developmentally appropriate behaviors

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

Above the Surface: Conscious/Reflective
effortful, slow, logical, calculating, limited resources

Below the Surface: Unconscious/Reflex
automatic, fast, intuitively-driven, emotional stereotypic, large resources
Bias

- A human condition
- Unaware
- Triggered by brain making quick judgements and assessments of people and situations, influence by our back ground, 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 bias-countering processes and practice to support individuals placing cognitive effort over intuition, e.g.
  - Explicit procedures when a challenging behavior happens, e.g. clear discipline practices
  - Engage in IECMH consultation
  - Provide reflective supervision
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
What is policy?

At its most simple form...

In a developmental frame...

• Implies a vision/goal
• Builds on strengths
• Has periods of regression
• Creates resiliency through cross-system and public-private ownership
• Cycle of design, implementation, and maintenance/re-design
POSSIBLE COMPONENTS OF A STATE STRATEGY

**Goal**
- 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
## State Policy Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Questions</th>
<th>Options</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where does it sit or what is the mechanism?</td>
<td>Legislation, attached to a funding stream, rule in licensing, RFP requirement, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who does it impact?</td>
<td>Providers who accept subsidy, all licensed providers, etc.</td>
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<td>What does the policy say and how explicit is it?</td>
<td>Continuum...</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not allowed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Requires due process &amp; approval</td>
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<td>Requires program-level action</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Offers guidance</td>
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<td>Nothing specific</td>
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Does your state have a framework?

- Is there a goal or vision?
- Who is making the decisions?
- Is there a Theory of Change/Action?
- Are there shared definitions of expulsion and suspension? Shared definitions of what to promote, e.g. adult-child interactions?
- Does data exist on prevalence, what is happening in programs, outcomes of the supports?
In summary, Expulsion is...

- An adult decision
- Not a single-factor problem & requires a multi-pronged approach
- A problem that requires a continuum of supports
- Most effectively reduced when all helpers are involved

➢ Equity requires time and resources
For More Information...

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