



Expulsion and Suspension in Early Childhood Settings: A National Overview

Carey McCann, BUILD Initiative.
NCSL Early Learning Fellows Meeting
September 18, 2017



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

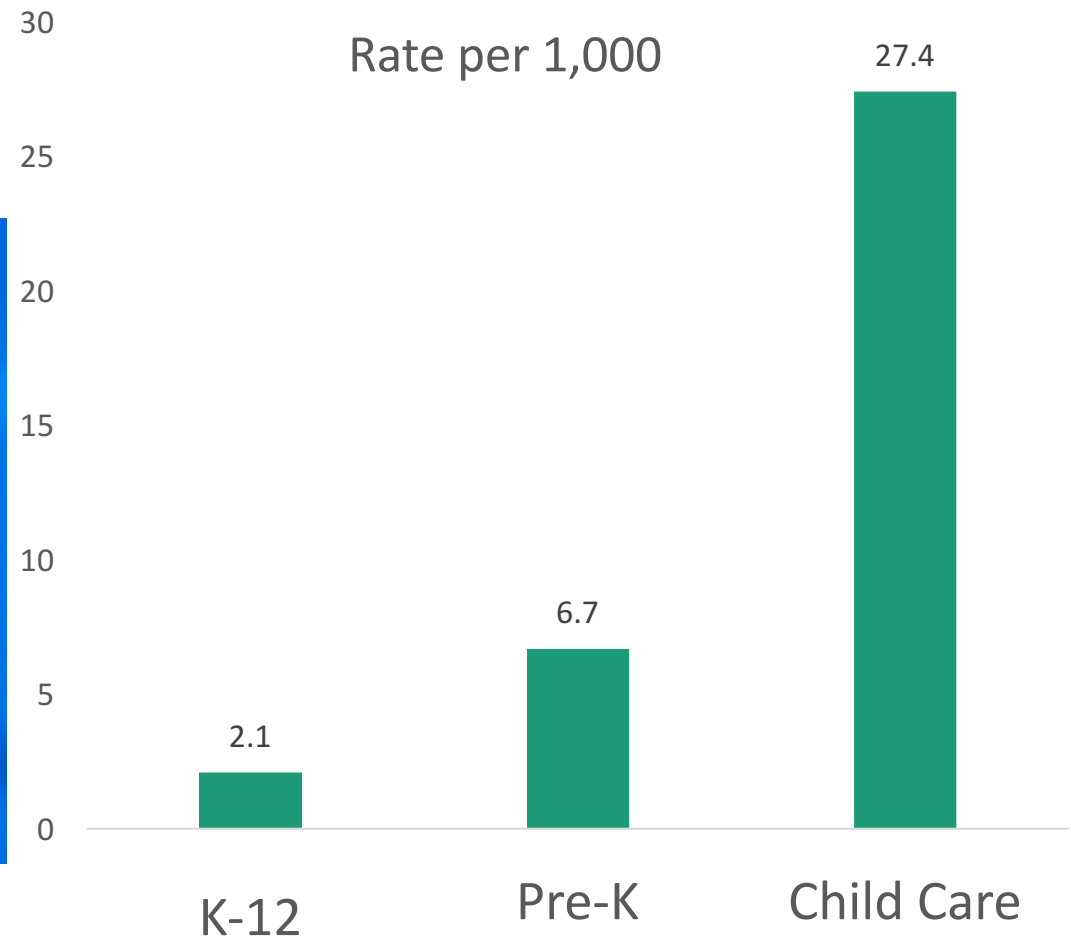
Research tells us...

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



How Often?

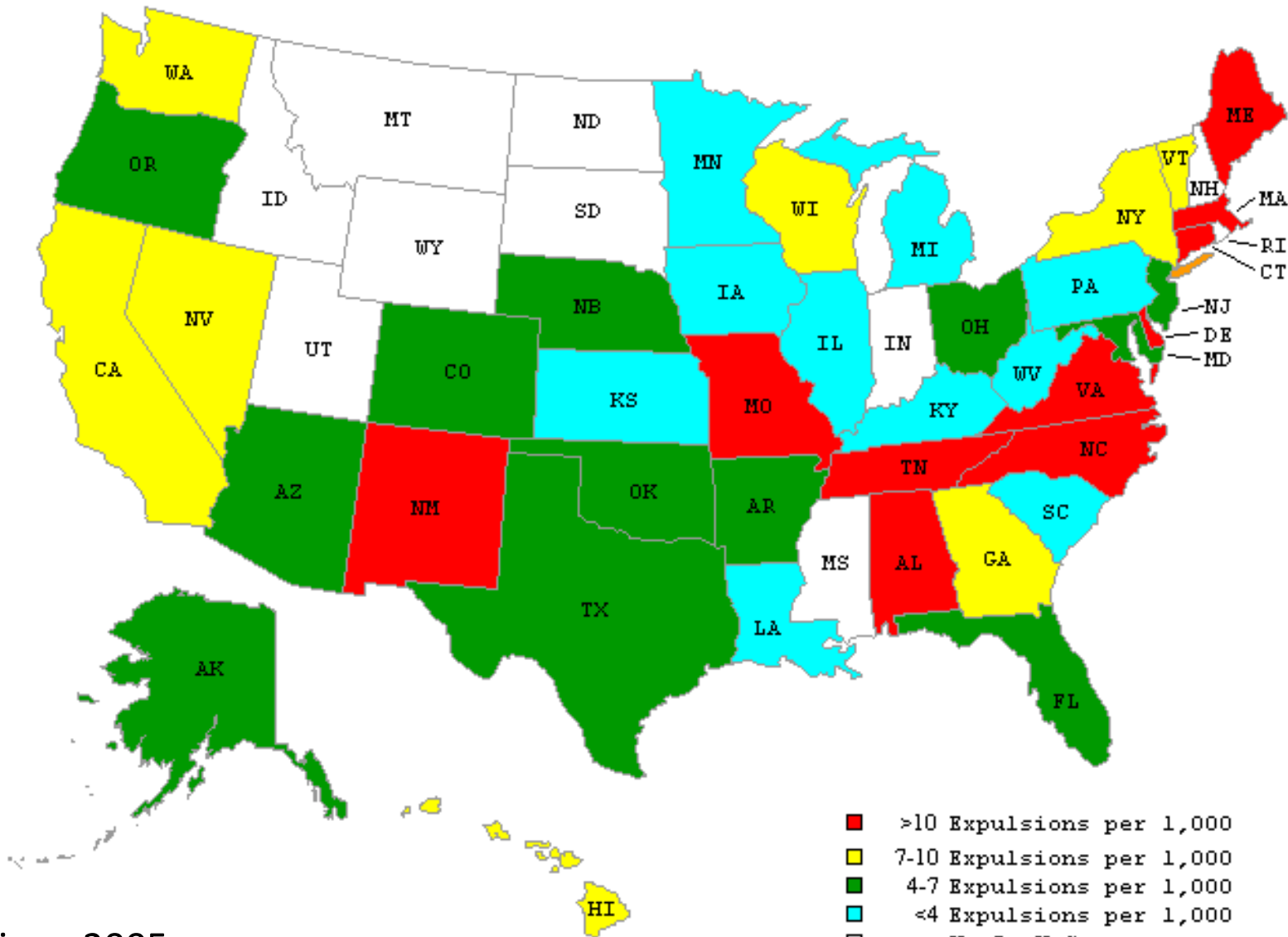


10.4% of Pre-K teachers expelled 1 or more in past year

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

Gilliam, WS (2005). Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion Rates in state prekindergarten programs. *FCD Policy Brief, Series No. 3*. Available: www.ziglercenter.yale.edu/publications/briefs.html

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 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 triggered 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

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

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

Carey McCann, Assistant Director of State Services, cmccann@buildinitiative.org

www.buildinitiative.org

