

Reducing Exclusionary Discipline & Increasing Behavioral Supports

# Early Childhood Resource Guide: Strengthening and Coordinating Systems to Eliminate Exclusionary Discipline

## Overview

Early childhood is a critical time for development and learning. However, many young children experience exclusionary discipline practices that hinder their early learning opportunities. Data show that young children, age birth to five, experience exclusionary discipline at the same or higher rates than children kindergarten – 12th grade.<sup>1</sup> Data also show that black children, boys, and children with disabilities are more likely to experience suspensions and expulsions from early care and education programs<sup>2</sup>. To eliminate the use of exclusionary discipline practices across early childhood education, systemic support is necessary. This is a significant task given that systems change takes time and will require interagency collaboration, cross-program solutions as well as family and community engagement. The resources included in this guide can help professionals at the State and local early childhood program levels prevent exclusionary discipline through strengthening and coordinating State and local early childhood systems; collecting, analyzing, and using high quality data to inform practice and policy decisions; and equitably implement evidence-based and inclusive practices.

In July 2022, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), published the guide [\*Positive, Proactive Approaches to Supporting the Needs of Children with Disabilities: A Guide for Stakeholders\*](#), which provides actions state educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, early childhood programs, and educators can take to implement positive, proactive, and preventative practices that seek to better address a child's behavioral needs while decreasing the use of exclusionary discipline. These practices reinforce core pillars of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including: (a) how addressing the behavioral needs of children with disabilities is part of IDEA's requirement to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE), and (b) the IEP as the vehicle for fulfilling this obligation. When implementing practices associated with these positive and proactive approaches, children with disabilities can access an educational environment that is nondiscriminatory, supportive, positive, and nurturing for both their academic and behavioral development.

## OSEP Technical Assistance Center Resources

The resources listed in the following tables can support schools and early childhood programs in reducing exclusionary discipline and responding to children's behavioral needs more effectively.

<sup>1</sup> Zinsser, K. M., Silver, H. C., Shenberger, E. R., & Jackson, V. (2022). A Systematic Review of Early Childhood Exclusionary Discipline. *Review of Educational Research*, 92(5), 743–785. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543211070047>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (2021). *Discipline Practices in Preschool: 2017-18 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)*.

## UNDERSTANDING AND ELIMINATING EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Link
<b>Research Product, Technical Assistance Product, Training</b>	Understanding and Eliminating Expulsion in Early Childhood Programs	Educators, School Administrators, Local and District Agencies, State and Regional Agencies	Research tells us that high-quality, supportive early childhood programs have a positive effect on the lives of infants, young children, and families. Recent data show a troubling number of children are expelled or kicked out of early childhood settings, impacting their ability to receive the benefits that early childhood programs provide. This fact sheet offers data on early childhood expulsion and suspension, resources, and ways early educators and systems can help.	<a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/understanding-eliminating-expulsion-early-childhood-programs">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/understanding-eliminating-expulsion-early-childhood-programs</a>
<b>Policy or Guidance, Toolkit</b>	Preventing Suspensions and Expulsions in Early Childhood Settings	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This practice guide is a research-based tool aimed at helping early childhood programs eliminate suspensions and expulsions by addressing the underlying root causes. The guide provides information, recommended policies and practices, resources, and tools targeted at three levels or tiers of support to help program leaders.	<a href="https://preventexpulsion.org/">https://preventexpulsion.org/</a>
<b>Website</b>	Mental Health: Understanding and Eliminating Preschool Suspension and Expulsion	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	Preschool expulsion denies comprehensive services that nurture social and emotional development to children in need of the services. This website provides a collection of resources (policies, program guides, webinars) that can help programs eliminate preschool suspension and expulsion.	<a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health/article/understanding-eliminating-preschool-suspension-expulsion">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health/article/understanding-eliminating-preschool-suspension-expulsion</a>
<b>Technical Assistance Product</b>	Pyramid Model State Leadership Team Guidance for Preventing the Use of Suspension and Expulsion and Promoting Equitable, Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Practice	State and Regional Agencies	This document provides state leadership teams with guidance on how to prevent suspension and expulsion by integrating with existing efforts, including Pyramid Model, MTSS, QRIS, inclusion, and SSIP efforts. This resource is organized around the Guiding Principles and Recommendations from the federal joint <i>Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings</i> . <sup>a</sup>	<a href="https://challengingbehavior.org/document/pyramid-model-state-leadership-team-guidance-for-preventing-the-use-of-suspension-and-expulsion-and-promoting-equitable-inclusive-and-culturally-responsive-practice/">https://challengingbehavior.org/document/pyramid-model-state-leadership-team-guidance-for-preventing-the-use-of-suspension-and-expulsion-and-promoting-equitable-inclusive-and-culturally-responsive-practice/</a>

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Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Link
<b>Policy or Guidance</b>	Establishing Policies and Procedures to Eliminate the Use of Exclusionary Discipline Practices in Early Childhood Programs	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This resource provides information about the use of exclusionary discipline practices within early childhood programs and how program-wide implementation of the Pyramid Model for Promoting the Social and Emotional Competence for Infants and Young Children can eliminate the use of these practices.	<a href="https://challengingbehavior.org/document/establishing-policies-and-procedures-to-eliminate-the-use-of-exclusionary-discipline-practices-in-early-childhood-programs/">https://challengingbehavior.org/document/establishing-policies-and-procedures-to-eliminate-the-use-of-exclusionary-discipline-practices-in-early-childhood-programs/</a>
<b>Technical Assistance Product</b>	Expelling Expulsion: Using the Pyramid Model to Prevent Suspensions, Expulsions, and Disciplinary Inequities in Early Childhood Programs	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This fact sheet summarizes current research findings about suspension and expulsion of children—particularly children of color—from early childhood settings. The fact sheet offers recommendations and suggestions for using the Pyramid Model to address this national problem.	<a href="https://challengingbehavior.org/document/expelling-expulsion/">https://challengingbehavior.org/document/expelling-expulsion/</a>
<b>Toolkit</b>	Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	The Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion are made up of four sets of indicators: (1) State Indicators, (2) Community Indicators, (3) Local Program Indicators, and (4) Early Care and Education Environment Indicators. The indicators were designed by a group of national partners to support state leaders, local administrators, and front-line personnel in the early care and education system providing programs and services to children, birth through age 5, and their families. The indicators are aimed at supporting early care and education systems to enhance their infrastructure to support the implementation and scale-up of high-quality inclusion and to support early care and education practitioners with using practices that increase engagement and belonging for young children with disabilities.	<a href="https://ectacenter.org/topics/inclusion/indicators.asp">https://ectacenter.org/topics/inclusion/indicators.asp</a>
<b>Website</b>	ECTA Racial Equity webpage	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This webpage is a compilation of resources on racial equity. It includes information about data, early education anti-racism, language and terminology, organizational culture and change, policy, and professional development.	<a href="https://ectacenter.org/topics/racial-equity/">https://ectacenter.org/topics/racial-equity/</a>

*Note.* MTSS = multi-tiered system of supports; PBIS = positive behavioral interventions and supports; QRIS = Quality Rating Improvement System; SSIP = State Systemic Improvement Plan.

<sup>a</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Policy statement on expulsion and suspension policies in early childhood settings.*

<https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/07/policy-statement-ece-expulsions-suspensions.pdf>

## UNDERSTANDING AND ELIMINATING EXPULSION IN STATE AGENCIES

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Link
<b>Research Product</b>	One State's Systems Change Efforts to Reduce Child Care Expulsion: Taking the Pyramid Model to Scale	State and Regional Agencies	This article describes the efforts of one state to address unacceptably high rates of child care expulsion. The primary policy initiative involved the funding of a center to develop model sites, a state-level planning team, ongoing practitioner training, and certification of coaches and trainers, all built around the Pyramid Model. Results show a dramatic reduction in expulsion rates and a corollary increase in providers' teaching of prosocial skills to children with challenging behavior.	<a href="https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0271121415626130">https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0271121415626130</a>
<b>Technical Assistance Product</b>	Pyramid Model Program Leadership Team Guidance for Preventing the Use of Suspension and Expulsion and Promoting Equitable, Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Practice	Local and District Agencies	This document provides program leadership teams with guidance to support their efforts to eliminate suspension and expulsion and promote equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive practice in all early childhood settings, including public and private schools and child care centers.	<a href="https://challengingbehavior.org/document/pyramid-model-program-leadership-team-guidance-for-preventing-the-use-of-suspension-and-expulsion-and-promoting-equitable-inclusive-and-culturally-responsive-practice/">https://challengingbehavior.org/document/pyramid-model-program-leadership-team-guidance-for-preventing-the-use-of-suspension-and-expulsion-and-promoting-equitable-inclusive-and-culturally-responsive-practice/</a>
<b>Technical Assistance Product</b>	Roadmap to Effective Intervention Practices: Statewide Implementation of the Pyramid Model	State and Regional Agencies	This document is a guide—a roadmap—for implementing widespread use of the Pyramid Model for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children.	<a href="https://challengingbehavior.org/document/roadmap-6-road-map-to-statewide-implementation-of-the-pyramid-model/">https://challengingbehavior.org/document/roadmap-6-road-map-to-statewide-implementation-of-the-pyramid-model/</a>
<b>Toolkit</b>	A System Framework for Building High-Quality Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Programs	State and Regional Agencies	Building and sustaining high-quality early intervention and preschool special education systems is a complex and ongoing process for state agencies. The purpose of the ECTA System Framework is to guide state Part C and Section 619 coordinators and their staff in (1) evaluating their current systems; (2) identifying potential areas for improvement; and (3) developing more effective, efficient systems that support implementation of evidence-based practices.	<a href="https://ectacenter.org/sysframe/">https://ectacenter.org/sysframe/</a>
<b>Website</b>	Expulsion and Suspension in Early Childhood	State and Regional Agencies	This webpage is a compilation of resources regarding expulsion and suspension in early childhood. The resources include federal guidance, resources from national centers and associations, and practice resources.	<a href="https://ectacenter.org/topics/expulsion/expulsion.asp">https://ectacenter.org/topics/expulsion/expulsion.asp</a>

## SUPPORTING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Link
<b>Webinar, Video</b>	Preschool Suspensions: This Is What We Know	State and Regional Agencies	This webinar provides panel discussions related to equity, inappropriate discipline practices, effective strategies, and preschool suspensions.	<a href="https://challengingbehavior.org/webinar/lets-talk-preschool-suspensions-this-is-what-we-know/">https://challengingbehavior.org/webinar/lets-talk-preschool-suspensions-this-is-what-we-know/</a>
<b>Website</b>	Early Childhood Behavioral Health	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This webpage provides resources to support early childhood mental health and social and emotional development. Resources are organized for parents and caregivers, early care and education program staff and administrators, state and territory leaders, and tribal leaders and programs.	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/initiatives/behavioral-health">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/initiatives/behavioral-health</a>

# OSEP Technical Assistance Centers & Other Federal Resources

The following are descriptions of additional information that OSEP Technical Assistance Centers can provide to support early childhood programs in implementing practices to reduce exclusionary discipline and respond to children's behavioral needs.

- **National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI)** | The goals of the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) are to assist states and programs in their implementation of sustainable systems for the implementation of the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children (Pyramid Model) within early intervention and early education programs with a focus on promoting the social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of young children birth to five, reducing the use of inappropriate discipline practices, promoting family engagement, using data for decision-making, integrating early childhood and infant mental health consultation and fostering inclusion.  
<https://challengingbehavior.org/>
- **Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA)** | The ECTA Center supports state IDEA Part C and Part B, Section 619 programs in developing more equitable, effective, and sustainable state and local systems, that support access and full participation for each and every young child with a disability, and their family.  
<https://ectacenter.org/>
- **Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy Center)** | The DaSy Center is a national technical assistance center that works with states to support IDEA early intervention and early childhood special education state programs in building high quality data systems and using data to improve results for young children with disabilities and their families.  
<https://dasycenter.org/>
- **STEM Innovation for Inclusion in Early Education (STEMI<sup>2</sup>E<sup>2</sup> Center)** | The STEM Innovation for Inclusion in Early Education (STEMI<sup>2</sup>E<sup>2</sup>) Center aims to:
  - Develop and enhance the knowledge base on engagement in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) learning opportunities for young children with disabilities (0-5);
  - Implement high-quality technical assistance and professional development to increase engagement for young children with disabilities in STEM opportunities; and
  - Engage partners and stakeholders from diverse disciplines and industry in work to increase the inclusion of young children with disabilities in early high-quality STEM.<https://stemie.fpg.unc.edu>
- **Child Care Technical Assistance Network** | The Child Care Technical Assistance Network (CCTAN) and its partners promote excellence through high-quality, practical resources and approaches. They are designed to build early childhood program capacity and promote consistent practices across communities, states, territories, and Tribes. These centers bring together the knowledge and skills from Head Start, child care, and health partners across the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)..  
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/>
- **Head Start Early Childhood Knowledge and Learning Center** | The Office of Head Start Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) System improves the knowledge, skills, and practices of grant recipient staff to implement programs which, in turn, improve the outcomes of children and families. The 2020–2025 OHS TTA System has three components that have distinct and complementary function: national centers, regional TTA network, and grant recipient funding.  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>

- **Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)** | The CPIR provides universal technical assistance to the network of Parent Centers funded by OSEP. The CPIR's priorities include (1) providing Parent Centers with products and materials to support their work with families; (2) increasing Parent Centers' knowledge and capacity in specific domains; and (3) increasing the coordination of parent training efforts throughout the network. Among the products and services the CPIR provides to the Parent Center network are its information-rich website in English and Spanish (called the Parent Center Hub); a twice-monthly e-newsletter called the Buzz from the Hub; the eLearning Hub, which features online, self-paced learning modules for all Parent Center staff as part of capacity building; frequent webinars about high-priority topics; national Parent Center capacity-building conferences; private communication spaces where Parent Centers can share resources and collaborate with their colleagues (CentersConnect); and coordination of annual data collection and reporting of Parent Center activities, training contacts, and services provided to families, professionals, and youth with disabilities.

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/>

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