

Addressing Suspensions and Expulsions: A Guide for Families

To reduce and prevent these practices, early learning programs and schools should engage families in conversation about developmentally appropriate practices and behavioral expectations, responses, and protocol. Additionally, educators and professionals must be supported with appropriate tools and resources to meet children's needs.

The Trying Together public policy agenda calls for an end to suspensions and expulsions for children birth through age nine in all early childhood settings.

Suspensions and expulsions are not developmentally appropriate ways to address behaviors.

- Removing a child from the classroom due to a behavior may damage the relationship between the child, their family, and the teacher.
- Children need support to learn and develop social and emotional skills. Just as students are not punished for needing to develop a specific cognitive skill, they should not be punished for needing to develop a social or emotional skill.

Exclusionary discipline is a problem.

- Racial disparities exist in both pre-kindergarten and K-12; Black students are three times more likely to be suspended and expelled than white students.
- Young children who are pushed out of the classroom often need intervention and support.
- Students with disabilities are two times more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions.
- Suspensions in the early years increase the likelihood of suspension throughout a child's school years and are 10 times more likely to hold negative attitudes about school, drop out of high school, and face incarceration.



Defining Suspensions and Expulsions

- In-School Suspension—child is removed from classroom or activities with other children
- Out-of-School Suspension—child is removed from the school or program for a certain period of time
- Expulsion—child is permanently dismissed from school or program; this includes if a school or program encourages a family to voluntarily leave based on a child's behavior
- Exclusionary Discipline—disciplinary practices that remove or exclude a child from the classroom and peers, including suspensions and expulsions

Resources

Locally, organizations are working to ensure all children are treated fairly and to end the use of these practices. Below are a few organizations and resources in Western Pennsylvania for families with concerns about children receiving suspensions or expulsions.

Early Care and Education Programs

Allegheny County Rapid Response Team provides immediate assistance and support to child care programs and helps families locate resources that may supplement the child's care. Child care providers and families/caregivers in Allegheny County can submit a request for support by contacting rapidresponse@tryingtogether.org or calling 412.206.1178.

Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRC) across the state serve as a one-stop shop for families and providers and supports high-quality early learning opportunities. Locally in Allegheny County, families or providers can reach out to ELRC Region 5 at elrc5.alleghenycounty.us or by calling 412.350.3577.

Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultation helps strengthen the early care and education system's workforce in their capacity to support the social and emotional development of infants, toddlers and young children. To learn more visit: www.pakeys.org/iecmh

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) outlines quality policy guidelines for programs suspension and expulsion policies. This guidance also provides protocol for finding assistance or support for children with unique needs. bit.ly/OCDEL-SusExp

For more information or to view the full white paper visit www.tryingtogether.org



http://bit.ly/SusExp_PrekToSchoolAge
http://bit.ly/SusExp_Elimination

Trying Together

Additional Information and Advocacy Resources

A+ Schools serves as Pittsburgh's community alliance for public education and advocates for equitable education for all students. A+ Schools offers trainings and workshops for families and provides guidance to families who reach out about concerns with suspensions and expulsions. For more information visit www.ourschoolspittsburgh.org or contact 412-697-1298.

The **CONNECT Helpline** at 1.800.692.7288 assists families with locating resources and providing information regarding child development for children ages birth to age five.

The Early Intervention Technical Assistance Portal PA (EITA-PA) provides training and technical assistance to local Infant/Toddler and Preschool Early Intervention programs and also offers resources for families. Visit www.eita-pa.org to explore the resources.

The Education Law Center (ELC) works to ensure all children have access to quality public education. ELC can provide legal advice, and advocacy to families, youth, community members, etc. Their website also has numerous free resources. Visit www.elc-pa.org to learn more or call 412.258.2120 with questions.

The Local Taskforce (LTF) provides opportunities for parents, guardians and community members to ask questions about special education services as well as address concerns that affect students with disabilities. Reach out to your local Intermediate Unit to find additional LTFs.

Pittsburgh LTF: www.facebook.com/LTF2Pgh
or call 412.529.2300
Allegheny County LTF: www.ltf3.org
or call 412.323.3996

The Parent Education and Advocacy Leadership (PEAL) Center works with families, children, and youth with disabilities to help them understand their rights. PEAL also offers trainings to educate and empower families. Visit www.pealcenter.org to learn more or call 412-281-4404.

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) works with the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) and Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to provide professional development and technical assistance. Their website also has a variety of parent resources and free publications. Visit www.pattan.net to learn more.