



Behavior and Discipline in Early Childhood Programs

This informational flyer is an executive summary of the full [OEC Statement on Exclusionary Discipline](#).

Being an early childhood provider can be a rewarding and exciting experience. But it can also be challenging. As a teacher, administrator, or assistant, you may work with a child who engages in behavior that you find difficult, disruptive, concerning, or unsafe. At times, it may seem that removing the child from the setting where this behavior is occurring is a good solution. But removing children from their early childhood programs (often known as exclusionary discipline) causes disruptions to a child's routines and learning and impacts families' ability to work and care for their child.

What is Exclusionary Discipline?

Exclusionary discipline includes suspension, expulsion, and informal removal.

- *Suspension* refers to a child being excluded from the regular setting in their early care and education program for a particular period of time. Suspensions may take place within the setting (e.g., the child is removed from the group, but remains at the program), may involve the child going home for a period of time, and/or may be in the form of a reduced schedule.
- *Expulsion* refers to when children are excluded from attending a program or school on a more permanent basis.
- *Informal removals* may be temporary or permanent and are generally the same as suspension and expulsion but may not be documented or referred to as a suspension or expulsion.

Research has shown that children who are excluded from early care and education programs (often referred to as exclusionary discipline) are much more likely to have negative outcomes, such as being asked to repeat a grade, dropping out of high school, and being incarcerated. Data also shows that more African-American and Hispanic boys experience exclusionary discipline when compared to other children, making this an important issue of equity.

What can we do to prevent exclusionary discipline?

- Prevention strategies and family partnerships set the stage for success.
- State and community resources and supports are available to help.
- Your relationship with the children in your care can have a lasting, positive impact

- Ensure a strong network of support for yourself and all staff.
- Form strong, ongoing partnerships with families so that you can address concerns as a team as soon as they arise.
- Create a strong behavior policy for your program, focused on how you prevent challenging behaviors, steps for addressing concerns about behavior, and resources/services to access for support.
- Review the full [OEC Policy Statement on Exclusionary Discipline](#) for information on state and federal policies, program standards, and resources to help you address exclusionary guidance.
- Check out OEC's webpage on [Supporting Young Children with Challenging Behaviors](#).



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What is OEC doing to prevent exclusionary discipline? The OEC supports a range of Behavioral Health Initiatives (link to webpage) to support providers, families, and children.

- The CT [Early Childhood Consultation Partnership](#) (ECCP) provides free early childhood mental health consultation throughout Connecticut. Services can be requested by families or early care and education providers and can support individual children, classrooms, or programs.
- The [Pyramid Model](#) is a positive behavioral intervention and support framework. Early childhood providers, caregivers, and families can use Pyramid practices to promote young children's social and emotional development and prevent and address challenging behavior. There are also supports to implement the Pyramid Model across a program and make lasting changes that can prevent suspension and expulsion.
- 211 Child Development is the gateway to help and referrals for parents, providers, and pediatricians. Families or providers can ask questions about child development or behavior by calling 1-800-505-7000 or [sending a message](#).
- [Sparkler mobile app](#) provides access to free developmental screening using the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaires-Social Emotional (ASQ-SE) and provides off-screen play activities and tips related to social and emotional development.

What policies and/or quality standards address Exclusionary Discipline?

Policies and standards addressing behavior and discipline vary depending upon program setting (and type of funding). The [OEC Policy on Exclusionary Discipline](#) outlines the various policies and quality standards in detail. Below are a few highlights:

Licensing regulations

- *Child Care Centers and Group Child Care Homes* are required to have a behavior policy and are a written general operating policy, including, but not necessarily limited to the withdrawal and expulsion of children.
- *Family Child Care Homes* are required to use appropriate discipline practices.

Connecticut General Statutes, Section 10-233I

- Out-of-school suspensions or expulsions (with a limited exception if a child is in possession of a firearm) are prohibited in public school preschool programs.

Federal Civil Rights Laws

- Provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may be relevant, depending upon the nature of your program. It is important pay attention to the possibility of discrimination when considering suspension and/or expulsion.

Quality Standards

- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), The Head Start Performance Standards, and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) all have standards or criteria addressing behavior policy, discipline, and/or suspension and expulsion.