



# Standing United: Preventing Suspension & Expulsion in Early Childhood

For Early Childhood Leaders

“

Suspension and Expulsion are not a child's behavior, but an adult's choice.”



Walter Gilliam



## HeartWired Video

<https://youtu.be/ZacejFXeO4?si=RULjiMY69em2ReND>

## Standing United Preventing Suspension & Expulsion in Early Childhood



Ann-Marie Bryan, Parent



heartwired



## A Director's Toolkit:

Pathways to support mitigating suspension and expulsion in early care and education

### Know the Research

As a Program Director, it is critical to have access to the latest research and data on suspension and expulsion. A brief published last fall by the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) reports that 17,000 preschool children are suspended or expelled nationwide each year. Alarming, suspension and expulsion rates are higher among preschool-aged children than K-12 students.

Research indicates that preschoolers are expelled at up to three times the rate of school-aged children. This is particularly concerning, as it occurs during a critical period of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical

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development. At a time when children most need the support of professionals, they are instead being excluded from essential learning opportunities.

*“Suspension and expulsion deny children access to critical learning opportunities, setting them up for both short- and long-term negative outcomes.”*

## Why It Is Important

Birth to age five is a **critical period in a child’s development**. Remarkably, **90% of a child’s brain** is developed by the age of five. During this stage, children are profoundly influenced by their environment, and these experiences play a pivotal role in shaping their growth and overall development. What occurs in these early years has lasting implications for their long-term success and well-being.

Research underscores the severe consequences for young children who face suspension or expulsion from preschool or childcare programs. Some identified impacts include:

1. **Loss of Educational Support:** Once expelled, children and their families may lose access to further education or counseling services, hindering developmental opportunities.
2. **Increased Risk of Negative Outcomes:** Children expelled from preschool or childcare are ten times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure, struggle with grade retention, develop negative attitudes toward school, and face potential incarceration later in life.
3. **Economic Strain on Families:** Expelling children can separate families from stable employment, which is essential for financial support and family stability.
4. **Damage to Self-Worth:** Experiencing expulsion diminishes a child’s sense of value, belonging, and self-esteem.

Suspension and expulsion during early childhood not only disrupt a child’s learning but can set them on a challenging path with lasting consequences. Addressing these issues early is essential to ensuring all children have access to the support they need for a successful future.

## What You Can Do as an Administrator

As an administrator, you play a key role in **creating a supportive environment** that prioritizes children’s social-emotional development. Here are some steps you can take to reduce and eliminate suspension and expulsion in early childhood programs:

### 1. Establish Clear Policies and Procedures

- Develop well-defined guidelines for **positive behavior support** that emphasize helping children build social-emotional competence within the classroom setting.
- Ensure educators and parents understand that the goal is to **support—not punish—behavioral challenges** through developmentally appropriate strategies.

### 2. Implement Documentation and Tracking Systems

- Use **data tracking tools** to monitor children’s behaviors and interventions.
- Regularly analyze this data to make informed **policy adjustments** that focus on reducing and preventing suspensions and expulsions.

### 3. Provide Ongoing Training and Professional Development

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- Offer continuous **training on behavior guidance and social-emotional regulation** strategies for educators and childcare providers. Refer to [Standing United: Preventing Suspension & Expulsion in Early Childhood for Child Care Teachers](#) for valuable insights into understanding child development, addressing behavior, and implementing effective strategies.
- Equip staff with the skills to foster positive classroom environments that support all children.

#### 4. Collaborate with Experts and Support Services

- Partner with **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants, pediatricians, and early intervention specialists** to provide additional support for educators, children, and families.

#### 5. Enhance Program Conditions

- Whenever possible, improve classroom environments by:
  - **Lowering teacher-child ratios** for more individualized attention.
  - **Providing adequate break times** for educators to prevent burnout.
  - **Allocating time for professional planning** to enhance lesson effectiveness.

#### 6. Build Strong Relationships with Families

- Foster open communication with families and caregivers to better understand the child's background, needs, and challenges.
- Engage families in the development of **alternative solutions to expulsion** and connect them with appropriate community resources.

By implementing these strategies, you can create a more **responsive and supportive** learning environment that benefits children, families, and educators alike.



## Additional Resources

**American Association of Pediatrics:** <https://www.aap.org/>

**California Tools to Focus on Prevention:** <https://preventingchildcareexpulsionca.org/california-tools-to-focus-on-prevention/>

**Child Development Module:** <http://veipd.org/elearn/course/index.php?categoryid=14>

VA's Integrated Training Collaborative | Partnership for People with Disabilities at VCU

This module provides information about infant and toddler development (birth to 36 months) as well as the impact of specific conditions on development. Completing the module takes approximately 2 hours and results in a certificate of completion.

**Child Development Topics and Trends:** [https://www.veipd.org/main/sub\\_child\\_dev.html](https://www.veipd.org/main/sub_child_dev.html)

This website provides resources about infant and toddler development (birth to 36 months).

**Division for Early Childhood:** <https://www.dec-sped.org/>

**Expulsion Prevention Self-Reflection Checklist:** <https://www.pyramidmodel.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ExpulsionPreventionChecklist-Revised1.22-Final.docx>

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**Infant Toddler Temperament Tool (IT3):** <https://www.ecmhc.org/temperament/index.html>

**Resources to Share with Families:** [https://preventingchildcareexpulsionca.org/resources-to-share-with-families/?utm\\_source=MAP+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=4649c3cb13-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_08\\_07\\_08\\_31&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_54a9e8e226-4649c3cb13-154887421](https://preventingchildcareexpulsionca.org/resources-to-share-with-families/?utm_source=MAP+Newsletter&utm_campaign=4649c3cb13-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_08_07_08_31&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_54a9e8e226-4649c3cb13-154887421)

**Expulsion Prevention Self-Reflection Checklist:** <https://www.pyramidmodel.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ExpulsionPreventionChecklist-Revised1.22-Final.docx>

**National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations:** <https://challengingbehavior.org/>

**Zero to Three:** <https://www.zerotothree.org/>

**Virginia Early Intervention Professional Development Center:** <https://www.veipd.org/main/>

### **Social Emotional Based Curriculum**

- **Kimochis:** <https://www.kimochis.com/>
- **MindUp:** <https://mindup.org/>
- **Incredible Years:** <https://www.incredibleyears.com/>
- **Second Step:** <https://www.secondstep.org/>
- **Conscious Discipline:** <https://consciousdiscipline.com/>



## **Concluding Thoughts**

As early childhood professionals and advocates, we must come together with the shared understanding that children thrive when provided with optimal learning opportunities alongside their peers and educators. Through intentional actions and meaningful efforts, early childhood professionals can play a pivotal role in reducing and preventing the suspension and expulsion of our youngest learners.

