

Michigan

State Board of Education

Statement and Guidance on Developing a Policy for Prevention of Suspension and/or Expulsion of Children Birth through Age 8 in Early Education and Care Programs

The State Board of Education (SBE) has adopted the following as part of its Strategic Goals to help make Michigan a Top 10 education state in 10 years: ***Provide every child access to an aligned, high-quality P-20 system from early childhood to post-secondary attainment – through a multi-stakeholder collaboration with business and industry, labor and higher education – to maximize lifetime learning and success.***

The SBE strongly ***recommends and encourages*** all Michigan early education and care program providers to establish a clear and explicit policy that prevents or significantly limits the expulsion and suspension of young children. The SBE supports policies that facilitate family partnerships and the well being, social emotional health and learning of all children. Therefore, expulsion and suspension measures should be a last resort. In extraordinary circumstances where there is a serious safety threat that cannot otherwise be reduced or eliminated through reasonable efforts of intervention, the program provider should assist the child and family in accessing alternate services and placement.

The purpose of this guidance is to support providers of early education and care programs as part of the P-20 system by offering recommendations from the SBE for preventing or significantly limiting expulsion, suspension or other exclusionary discipline practices in early learning and care settings for children birth through age 8. It is meant to complement and align with the existing SBE *Policy on Reducing Student Suspensions and Expulsions* adopted in May 2014.

Definitions

Expulsion is the complete and permanent removal of a child from the regular group setting.

Suspension is the temporary prohibition or exclusion from attending an early learning and care program.

Why is this important?

The first years of a child's life prove critical for building the early foundation for learning, health and well being needed for success in school and beyond. Young children's brains develop rapidly, influenced by experiences, both positive and negative, that they share with their families, caregivers,

teachers, peers, and communities. Given what we know now from research on early brain development, we must ensure that all children's social-emotional and behavioral health are fostered in appropriate, high-quality early care and education programs. Additionally, teachers and caregivers working with young children must receive the training and ongoing support needed to engage in responsive, individualized practice that promotes the well being of all the children they serve.

Reducing expulsion and suspension can influence a number of outcomes across development, health (both mental and physical), and education. Longitudinal research indicates that positive, quality, and stable early education environments correspond to higher graduation rates, decreased chronic absenteeism and fewer interactions with the adult criminal justice system. Disruptions in program attendance may diminish these benefits; further research indicates that school expulsion and suspension are associated with negative educational and life outcomes. Moreover, disciplining children early in their education with suspension or expulsion predicts future suspensions and expulsions. Societal consequences of setting children on a negative path via expulsion and/or suspension, including exacerbating racial, gender and economic inequalities in childhood outcomes, also exist. Children who are expelled or suspended, especially in the case of behaviors manifesting from childhood trauma, are not only potentially affected by these negative consequences, but often miss opportunities to receive help to identify the actual cause of the problem and potential strategies to support an early solution.

Quality Indicators for Developing a Quality Comprehensive Policy

Quality indicators for a comprehensive suspension and expulsion policy are included below. Individual providers and programs should consider these quality indicators when forming or evaluating their program policy. A comprehensive policy:

- Focuses on positive collaboration, communication, and partnership among children, families and staff
- Ensures clear communication of the policy to staff, families and community partners
- Promotes and nurtures all children's learning, health and well-being through practices that are:
 - Developmentally appropriate (includes individualization based on child needs);
 - Strengths-based;
 - Culturally competent; and
 - Aligned with the Michigan Core Knowledge and Core Competencies for Early Care and Education

- Promotes early developmental and health screening with appropriate follow-up, including referrals for resources, social services, supports and education
- Focuses on inclusive, supportive high-quality programs and services
- Uses data (from family conversations, observations, screening tools, child assessments, program assessments, etc.) to address children's needs and strengths
- Outlines the process steps (including strategies, documentation, and communication) that are needed for families and staff to work together to address challenging behaviors and strengthen positive behaviors. Identifies steps that will be taken if intervention plans are not successful and if a child is at risk of causing serious injury to themselves or others
- Supports participation in quality professional development and training opportunities on topics including, but not limited to: use of evidence-based practices, childhood trauma, cultural competence, family engagement, social-emotional well-being, and developmentally-appropriate behaviors
- Adjusts policy to ensure fairness, equity, and continuous quality improvement