

Tennessee Department of Human Services

Early Childhood Expulsion and Suspension Policy Statement

Purpose

The Tennessee Early Childhood Expulsion and Suspension policy statement is aligned with the Child Care Development Block Grant Reauthorization Act of 2014 to prevent, reduce, and eliminate suspension and expulsion in early care and educational settings.

High quality child care and early learning programs are important to preventing suspensions and expulsions in the early learning setting. It is recommended that programs focus on fostering the social and emotional health of children. Early childhood education programs are responsible for creating positive learning environments that focus on preventing expulsions and suspensions, encouraging partnerships between programs and families to support healthy development, and ensuring fairness, equity and continuous improvement to support children's social, emotional and behavioral health.

Definitions

- **Expulsion** – The permanent dismissal of a child from the assigned early childhood setting for disciplinary purposes.
- **Suspension**- The temporary removal of a child from the assigned early childhood setting for disciplinary purposes.
- **Social Emotional and Behavioral Health** – The child's developing capacity to form secure relationships, experience and regulate emotions and explore and learn.
- **Challenging Behavior** – Any repeated pattern of behavior, or perception of behavior, that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults.

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement policies that promote social emotional health to prevent, limit and eliminate suspensions and expulsions in early learning childcare settings.
2. Invest in professional development, training and education to prepare and develop educators so that they are equipped to support children's social and emotional health.
3. Identify and adopt specific strategies to include positive behavior interventions and discipline and guidance practices to effectively manage challenging behaviors in the early learning setting.
4. Research best practices on classroom management techniques in order to assist educators in developing and implementing effective and intentional techniques.
5. Provide opportunities for family engagement activities such as but not limited to parent teacher conferences, parent meetings and developmental monitoring and screenings to allow educators, parents, and partners to develop strong partnerships and healthy support systems.

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6. Provide parent resources to give parents additional information about community supports such as, but not limited to brochures, handouts and websites, on a variety of topics such as child development, social and emotional health, early mental health counselors, developmentally appropriate behavior management, support groups, family activities, etc.
7. Develop and implement a means of documenting efforts to reduce and prevent challenging behaviors; examples include teacher observations, teacher and classroom modifications, daily progress reports, parent conferences, consults with early mental health professionals.
8. Written policies should be communicated to parents and classroom expectations for positive behavior and consequences should be communicated to children and parents.

Children with Unique Needs and Challenging Behaviors

Early childhood programs are responsible for creating environments that promote children's social, emotional, and behavioral health. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services early childhood prevention and discipline practices should be used as learning opportunities to guide children's appropriate behavioral development.

The following outlines developmentally appropriate social, emotional, and behavioral health promotion practices in the early childhood and child care environments.

1. Forming strong, supporting and nurturing relationships with children and families including valuing of cultural diversity.
2. Reinforcing children's desired behaviors and implementing logical, non-punitive consequences that are consistent and developmentally appropriate for challenging behaviors
3. Paying distinct attention to the developmental appropriateness of both behavioral expectations and consequences for challenging behavior, given the substantial developmental and experiential differences among children birth through five years of age.

Resources

Center For Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
https://www.ecmhc.org/tutorials/social-emotional/mod1_0.html

National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations
<http://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/>

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Vanderbilt Peabody College Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)

https://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/research/pro/about_peabody_research/funded_projects/center_on_social_and_emotional_foundations_project_home.php

Tennessee Department of Education Tennessee Early Intervention Systems (TEIS)

<https://www.tn.gov/education/early-learning/tennessee-early-intervention-system-teis.html>

Association of Infant Mental Health in Tennessee

<https://aimhitn.org/>