

6318 - Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline Practices in Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)

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Introduction

The Commission prioritizes children attending school consistently and seeks to prevent, limit, and eventually eliminate exclusionary discipline practices, such as isolation/seclusion, informal removals, and suspension in Pre-K in alignment with U.S. Department of Health of Human Services & U. S. Department of Education Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings. Our preschool behavior management and positive discipline practices are guided by the goal of maximizing the learning, growth, and development of all children and protecting the wellbeing and safety of everyone. Preschool educators and staff promote the social and personal development of young children in the five core competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Commission policy requires preschool classroom practices to be based on an understanding of child development, developmentally appropriate expectations, and early childhood recommended practices. Behavior management should be proactive, positive, and implemented in a clear and consistent manner using positive behavioral interventions and supports to meet the needs of all children. Commission employs increasing levels of behavioral support through cross-disciplinary collaboration (e.g., behavior, mental health, special education) as alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices.

Commission preschool discipline policy aligns with the three standards detailed in Tennessee Department of Education's (i.e., the department) Guidelines and Standards for Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline Practices in Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K):

1. Create positive early childhood climates and focus on prevention of challenging behaviors;
2. Develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to prevent challenging child behaviors; and
3. Ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement within all preschool programs.

Definitions

Commission uses the following definitions from the department's guidelines and standards:

1. Exclusionary discipline – Exclusionary discipline is the removal, on a long-term or short-term basis, of a child from a class, school, or educational program or activity for violating a school rule or code of conduct or in response to a child’s behavior. Common early childhood examples include sending a child home for the remainder of the day, sending a child to another classroom, requiring contingencies for continued enrollment (e.g., parent attends with child or provides a classroom assistant), having a child stay home for a period of time, or dismissing a child from a program.
2. Expulsion – Expulsion is the permanent dismissal of a child from the assigned educational setting for disciplinary purposes, including in response to a child’s behavior.
3. Suspension – Suspension is the temporary removal of a child from the assigned educational setting for disciplinary purposes, including in response to a child’s behavior.
4. Informal removal – Informal removal includes any action taken by school personnel in response to a child’s behavior that excludes the child from educational services for all or part of the school day and is not officially coded as a suspension or expulsion (e.g., encouraging a parent/guardian to pick up their child early or to remove their child from the program, excessive use of time out, repeated office referrals).
5. Challenging behavior – any repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with, or shows signs of interfering with learning, engagement, and relationships with peers and adults and has not responded to the consistent use of developmentally appropriate guidance and procedures.
6. Positive behavioral intervention and supports – A systematic approach using evidence-based practices to improve school environments and to prevent and respond to problem behaviors, which is proactive and instructional rather than reactive and punitive.

Any authorized charter school offering pre-K classes shall develop procedures in accordance with this policy and Commission Procedure 1043.

Cross References:

T.C.A. § 49-6-3024(e)

LEA Procedures 1043 Alternatives to Exclusionary Practices in Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)