

Preventing Expulsion & Suspension, Promoting Equity and the Relationship to Quality Improvement

QRIS Conference Session 408

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CHILD CARE
State Capacity Building Center



Today's Session...

- Be grounded in the research
- Explore role of State Policy
- Apply our discussion to the role of QRIS
- Weave equity throughout the conversations



Introductions

How do we understand the problem?

Our Point of View

- Expulsion is not a child problem, this is about adult decisions
- A solution focused on children and not changing anything about how we work with children and families will perpetuate current trends in expulsion rates
- It is not a single-factor problem - requires a multi-pronged approach

Definitions

We don't call it expulsion...

- Please pick your child up early today
- Don't bring her in tomorrow
- Why don't you have him join us for half days for the next few weeks
- Our program just isn't right
- We can't provide the services your child needs

Exclusionary Practices

- Remove from activities that include other children
- Remove in the short-term or limit the time a child attends the program
- Dismiss a child permanently
- Encourage families to voluntarily terminate services, “soft expulsion”

Caring for Our Children

- Terminating enrollment because of challenging behavior or health condition
- Reductions in the amount of time in attendance at the setting
- Other services are limited on the basis of challenging behaviors, e.g. denying outdoor time, withholding food, and using food as a reward or punishment

Research tells us...

Why

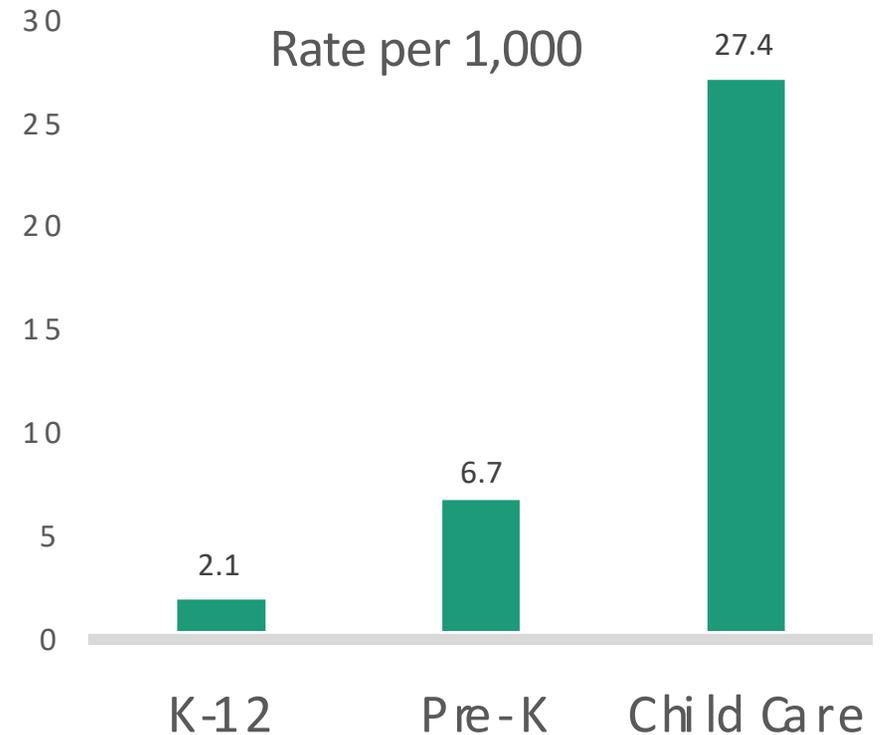
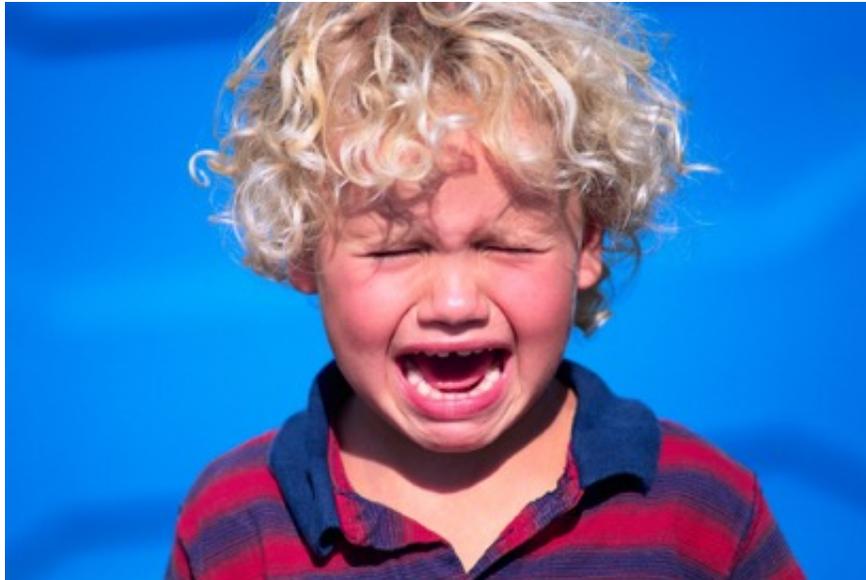
- Suspension and expulsion are stressful and negative experiences in themselves that can impact child outcomes
- Expulsion or suspension early in a child's education predicts later expulsion or suspension in school
- Young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as **10 times** more likely to:
 - Drop out of high school
 - Fail a grade
 - Be incarcerated

Expulsion represents extreme end of a continuum
What has been happening leading up to that expulsion?

How are our expulsion rates in early childhood a “canary in the coal mine”



How Often



10.4% of Pre-K teachers expelled 1 or more in past year

Gilliam, WS & Shahar, G (2006). Preschool and child care expulsion and suspension: Rates and predictors in one state. *Infants and Young Children*, 19, 228-245.

Gilliam, WS (2005). Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion Rates in state prekindergarten programs. *FCD Policy Brief, Series No. 3*. Available: www.ziglercenter.yale.edu/publications/briefs.html

Who

- Boys 3½ times more likely
- 4-year-olds 50% more likely
- Black children expelled at 2x the rate of White children; 5x the rate of Asian children
- Black children make up 18% of preschool enrollment, but 48% of preschoolers suspended more than once
- Latino and Black boys combined represented 46% of all boys in preschool, but 66% of all boys suspended
- Girls who are Black, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander represent 30% or more of all out-of-school suspensions than girls who are White, Latina, and Asian

Implications

Regardless of the study, there are significant disparities by race

Intersectionality: these risks for expulsion are multiplicative, e.g. a 4-year-old boy who is Black is exponentially more at risk for expulsion than a 3-year-old girl who is White or Asian

Infant Toddler

A study in Chicago found that **42% of birth to three child care programs** expelled at least one child in the previous year because of behavior

A 2017 study in Philadelphia found that **26% of child care programs** had expelled at least one child in the past year and that **toddlers were just as likely as preschoolers** to be asked to leave the child care setting



Four Drivers of Expulsion to Consider

Driver 1: Structural Quality

What increases the likelihood of expulsion?

- High teacher-child ratios
- High teacher stress / Feeling hopeless
- Private and faith-based child care
- Long school day
- Too little structure
- Too restrictive structure
- No consistent ongoing availability of a mental health consultant

Voices from the Field: Implication for Organizational Capacity

- Programs unable to be reflective regarding their role in children's behavior
- Responding to other parents' feelings
- Afraid of losing staff who are hard to replace and need to maintain ratios, quality requirements, etc.
- Scared or do not like the child's parent(s)
- Belief that there must be a better program out there to meet this child's needs...

Driver 2:
Lack of Knowledge of
Child Development

Knowledge of Child Development Needed

- Social-emotional development occurs in context of family, community and cultural expectations
- Challenging behavior is a part of typical child development and offers “touch points”
- Cross-cultural differences in children’s expression and interpretation of emotions, e.g. anger, shame, exuberance of positive emotions
- Expulsion and suspension can pathologize child behavior and increase disparities



Knowledge in Child Developed Needed

- Workforce needs knowledge and skills to
 - Understand how children's emotional responses may reflect cultural expectations and learning
 - Communicate classroom expectations in a child's first language
 - Support social-emotional learning
 - Examine their own cultural socialization and practices
 - Distinguish concerning behaviors from developmentally appropriate behaviors
- NSECE study found only 20% of providers reported receiving training on facilitating social-emotional growth in the past year

Driver 3: Racial Disparities in Discipline

Racial Disparities in Discipline and Expulsion Rates

Growing evidence indicates...

- Black boys are perceived as less innocent, less human and more deserving of punishment
- Threat commonly associated with Black men may be generalized to Black boys as young as 5
- Underprepared early learning teachers are more likely to use punitive and rejecting disciplinary techniques



Understanding Racial Disparities in Discipline and Expulsion Rates

Recent Research has found...

- Disproportionate levels of discipline by race
- Mixed impact when background information on familial stressors is made available
- At kindergarten entry, Black and White parents equally rated their children's persistence, approaches to learning, and social interactions, but teachers rated Black students as having a distinct disadvantage relative to White students

What's Behind the Numbers?

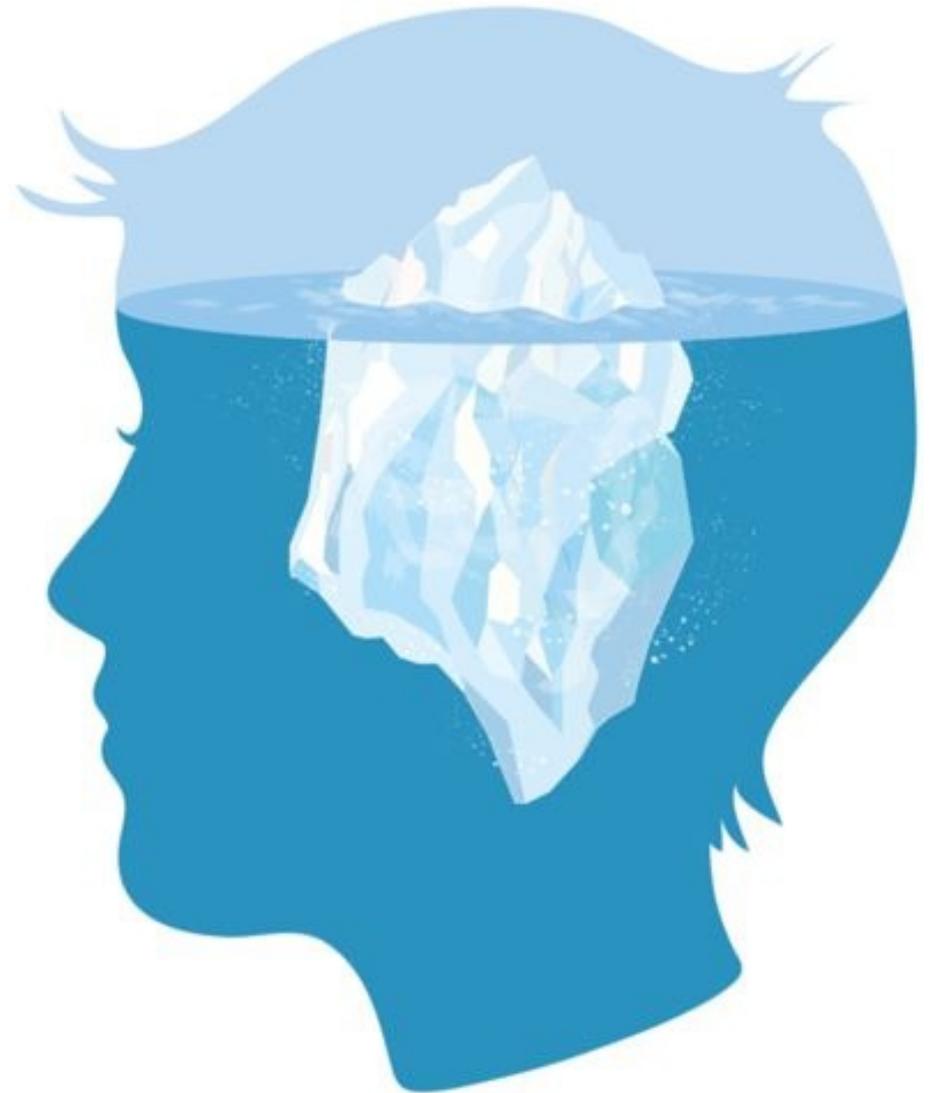
Other Related Explanations

- Cultural discontinuity
- Negotiating conflict cross-culturally
- Goodness-of-fit
- Lower expectations
- Perception of threat
- “Protection” from harsh world / preparation for bias
- Implicit and/or explicit bias

Bias as One Explanation for Racial Disparities

**Above the Surface:
Conscious/Reflective**
effortful, slow, logical,
calculating, limited
resources

**Below the Surface:
Unconscious/Reflex**
automatic, fast, intuitively-
driven, emotional
stereotypic, large resources



Understanding Bias

- A human condition
- Unaware
- Triggered by brain making quick judgements and assessments of people and situations, influence by our back ground, cultural environment and personal experiences
- Compounded by the belief that our perceptions, beliefs and experiences are objectively true
- Negative information more salient
- Easily triggered under cognitive or emotional load

Driver 4: Trauma Behavior Connection



- Approximately 10 to 14 percent of children from birth to age 5 experience emotional, relational, or behavioral disturbance
- Children experiencing trauma arrive at school less ready to learn
- Exposure to violence can diminish concentration, memory, organizational, and language abilities
- Quality of early learning settings is *even more* important

Reflections

Why does this feel complex?

- Subjectivity in what behavior is considered challenging
- Many types of exclusionary practices
- Program characteristics may provoke or contribute to children's behaviors
- Increased understanding of why racial disparities exist
- Lack of supports for an underprepared workforce

Implications

All actions and triage are “after the affect”

How are we designing and support programs upfront?

Reducing and preventing expulsions through IECMHC (mental health consultation)

Tying it all together....

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

Children were expelled about twice as frequently when there was no consistent, ongoing availability of a mental health consultant (Gilliam, 2005).



(Georgetown Model, 2009)

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

Smart Support

Arizona's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation System

Smart Support Research Questions

1. Were there improvements on key outcomes (program, classroom, teacher, child level)?
2. Were there group differences (gender and African American / Latino status) in child outcomes at baseline?
3. Was the Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation intervention effective at reducing the gender and racial disparities for boys and African American and Latino preschoolers?

Sample: Focus Children

n = 1,028

- Mean age = 42.53 months
- Boys = 74%
- Ethnicity: White (51%); Latino/a (25%); African American (12%)
- Diagnosed disability = 8%; IEP/IFSP = 7%
 - African American children overrepresented as ‘focus children’

Sample: Teachers

n = 799

- 98% Female
- Mean age = 35.90 years
- Highest education level
 - High School = 53.3%; CDA = 7.6%; AA = 12.5%; BA = 17.6%; MA = 5.4%
- Teacher ethnicity
 - White = 54%; Latino/a = 30%; African American = 7%; Asian American = 2%; Native American = 3%; other = 4%

Findings: Main Effects

The entire sample showed significant growth for positive outcomes and significant declines in negative outcomes.

Findings: Racial and Gender Disparities

Boys and children of color started with lower scores on almost every outcome variable.

After 6 months these gaps were closed!

Closing the Gap: What improved over 12 months?

Outcomes	African American Boys	Latino Boys
Attachment	X	X
Initiative		X
Self-Regulation	X+	X
Teacher-Child Closeness		
NEGATIVE OUTCOMES		
Teacher-Child Conflict	X	
Risk of Expulsion		X
Teacher's Negative Attribution of Child		X

+ Surpassed white students by 12 months

Why was Smart Support so effective for teachers and children?

Discussion: 'Drivers' Addressed

- Resisting pathologizing of children – IECMHC an adult-focused intervention
- IECMHC Theory of Change
 - Main focus on relationships
 - Curiosity about the meaning of children's behavior
 - Relationships (holding space for the other)
 - Parallel process
 - Enhancing relationships and communication with families
 - Capacity for reflection
- Other components of mental health consultation
 - Job-related stress; Organizational climate

What else changed for teachers of African American and Latino children?

- Implicit and explicit bias?
- Cultural mis-match?
- Relationships with families?
- Expectations?
- Perception of threat?
- “Protection” from harsh world?
- Preparation for a world with bias?

Cautions about these findings:

Resisting pathologizing of 'brown' children

Did the shifts generalize to all the African American and Latino children in teachers' classrooms?

Role of State Policy

POSSIBLE COMPONENTS OF A STATE STRATEGY

Goal

Governance

State Goals
and Road Map

Data

Policy

State Policy &
Protocols on
Expulsion

Policies related
to Program
Characteristics

Child Care
Assistance

Work
Conditions

Supports

Hotline/Triage

Training &
Coaching

IECMH
Consultation

QRIS

Alignment of
TA Providers

Services

Developmental
Screening &
Referral

Early
Intervention &
Special
Education

Health, Mental
Health, and
Family Support

Cross-cutting: Family Partnerships and Racial & Gender Equity

Examples of States' Strategies

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Alignment of TA Providers

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Early Intervention & Special Education

Health, Mental Health, and Family Support

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Health, Mental Health, and Family Support

Cross-cutting: Family Partnerships and Racial & Gender Equity

Common Policy Pitfalls

- Banning without supports and clear protocols for programs and due process for children and families
- Dictating first step is a “behavioral plan” for the child and no guidance about reflecting on program practices, skills and knowledge
- Not collecting data from providers and those offering support to improve strategies and target supports
- Not creating a pathway for professional development beyond the “101”
- Not aligning and coordinating all technical assistance providers who walk into programs

State expulsion policies through an equity lens

Pilot study –Indigo Cultural Center
(5 states)

Question 1: Background language/rationale

To what extent does your state's policy explicitly mention race, equity or racialized disparities in its rationale, introduction or background section?

- 3 states/out of 5

Question 2: Tracking racialized data

To what extent does your policy include tracking racial and or economic demographic data of children, teachers, etc.?

- **3 states out of 5** (IL only state with explicit language in policy)

Question 3: Accountability with data

To what extent does your state have a plan to use (or is currently using) the racialized demographic data to track whether equitable outcomes are being achieved?

- **3 states out of 5** (no specific language in policies)

Question 4: Implicit bias training and TA

To what extent do your expulsion policy prevention and/or intervention approaches include an explicit focus on:

- Increasing cultural awareness;
- Training or coaching on implicit bias, etc.?
- **2 states out of 5** (but no specific policy language)

Question 5: Consultants' capacity to address bias

To what extent do your policy efforts include plans or funding directed toward increasing the capacity of the T.A. workforce (esp. IECMHC consultants) to provide implicit bias support?

- **0 states out of 5** (but 4 states provide equity training within own ECMHC agencies)

Leadership in racial equity: 5 key strategies

Lessons learned from systems evaluations

Racial Equity

Enablers

1. Initiating courageous conversations
2. Making meaning and connecting
3. Raising awareness and shifting the discourse
4. Inclusive leadership
5. Addressing resistance to change

Inhibitors

1. People
2. Perceptions about race and diversity
3. Data
4. Time

Group Activity: Role of QRIS

Directions for Activity

Small Group Discussion

Does QRIS have a role in any of these enablers?

If so, how?

What is needed?

Enablers

- Initiating courageous conversations
- Making meaning and connecting
- Raising awareness and shifting the discourse
- Inclusive leadership
- Addressing resistance to change

Debrief Activity

Final Thoughts

Expulsion is...

- “Expulsion is not a child behavior; it is an adult decision” Walter Gilliam
- Not a single-factor problem and requires a multi-pronged approach
- A problem that requires a continuum of supports

Asking States to....

- Address two scenarios at the same time
- Build reinforcing messages, expectations, and practices across sectors and supports
- Bring intention to established efforts, and identify where new strategies are needed
- Consider all available helpers
- Keep equity at the forefront and look to promote enablers and look out for unintended consequences

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