

Child Care & Early Education RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

Preventing Preschool Expulsion

An accumulation of strong messages from policymakers and advocates suggests that preschool expulsion is becoming an important target for change. In May 2014, the My Brother's Keeper Task Force--part of an initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential--released its first report to the President, offering recommendations to "***eliminate suspensions and expulsions in preschool and other early learning settings***," including the use of early childhood mental health consultation (My Brother's Keeper Task Force, 2014). In November 2014, the quality improvement provisions of the reauthorized Child Care and Development Block Grant required "effective behavior management strategies and training, including positive behavior interventions and support models, that promote positive social and emotional development and reduce challenging behaviors, ***including reducing expulsions of preschool-aged children for such behaviors***" (United States, Office of Child Care, 2014).

Most tellingly, on December 10, 2014, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burwell and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan released a joint policy statement on ***preventing expulsions and suspensions in early learning settings*** (United States, Department of Health and Human Services & United States, Department of Education, n.d.). The statement notes the high prevalence of preschool expulsions and their association with negative child outcomes, and also offers recommendations to programs and states on strategies and practices to reduce expulsions, including early childhood mental health consultation.

This **Topic of Interest** examines reports and journal articles from the *Research Connections* collection on the prevalence of preschool expulsions. It also highlights evidence on one approach that has shown promise in reducing preschool expulsion: early childhood mental health consultation.



Expulsion Rates

There have been two large-scale, national studies of preschool expulsion rates, which can be found below. One, by Walter Gilliam, uses data from a national survey of state prekindergarten programs to examine preschool expulsion rates. The second, based on the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights' annual data collection, reports on disparities in prekindergarten expulsion rates by race and other characteristics. In addition to these national studies, state-level studies on expulsion rates have been conducted in Colorado, Massachusetts, North Dakota, and Wisconsin, also below.

- Gilliam, W. S. (2005). *Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten programs*. New York: Foundation for Child Development.
- Gilliam, W. S., & Shahar, G. (2006). Preschool and child care expulsion and suspension: Rates and predictors in one state. *Infants & Young Children*, 19(3), 228-245.
- Hoover, S. D., Kubicek, L., Rosenberg, C., Zundel, C., & Rosenberg, S. A. (2012). Influence of behavioral concerns and early childhood expulsions on the development of early childhood mental health consultation in Colorado. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 33(3), 246-255.
- Irvin-Vitela, L. (2010). *Child retention in Wisconsin child care settings: Understanding the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that impact expulsion and retention in early care and education*. Madison, WI: Supporting Families Together Association.
- North Dakota State Data Center. (2008). *Licensed child care dismissal study*. Fargo, ND: North Dakota State Data Center.
- United States. Department of Education. Office for Civil Rights. (2014). *Civil Rights Data Collection: Data snapshot: Early childhood education*. (Issue Brief No. 2). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation and Expulsion Reduction

As discussed in the studies below, early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC) creates partnerships between mental health professionals and early childhood teachers that strengthen teachers' capacity to support children's socioemotional and behavioral development. One of ECMHC's aims is to help teachers reduce children's problem behaviors, which are among the most frequently-cited reasons for preschool expulsions. An extensive body of research explores ECMHC's relationship to various child-, teacher-, and program-level outcomes. These selected studies examine ECMHC's associations with preschool expulsion outcomes.

- Fink, D., & Wakai, S. (2003). *Addressing behavioral outcomes in Connecticut's child care centers: An evaluation of the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP)*. Farmington, CT: University of Connecticut, A. J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.
- Fung, J., Bruns, E. J., & Trupin, E. W. (2010). *Child Care Consultation Pilot Project:*

- Evaluation report.* Olympia: Washington State, Department of Early Learning.
- Perry, D. F. (2013). *Healthy Futures: Year three evaluation of early childhood mental health consultation.* Washington, DC: District of Columbia, Department of Mental Health.
 - Perry, D. F., & Deardorff, S. (2011). *Healthy Futures: Year one evaluation of early childhood mental health consultation.* Washington, DC: District of Columbia, Department of Mental Health.
 - Perry, D. F., & Deardorff, S. (2012). *Healthy Futures: Year two evaluation report.* Washington, DC: District of Columbia, Department of Mental Health.
 - Perry, D. F., Dunne, M., McFadden, L., & Campbell, D. (2008). Reducing the risk for preschool expulsion: Mental health consultation for young children with challenging behaviors. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 17(1), 44-54.
 - Perry, D. F., Holland, C., Darling-Kuria, N., & Nadiv, S. (2011). Challenging behavior and expulsion from child care: The role of mental health consultation. *Zero to Three*, 32(2), 4-11.
 - University of Maryland at Baltimore. School of Medicine., Georgetown University. Center for Child and Human Development., & CKD Communications. (2011). *Maryland's early childhood mental health consultation evaluation.* Baltimore: University of Maryland at Baltimore, School of Medicine.
 - Upshur, C. C., Wenz-Gross, M., & Reed, G. (2009). A pilot study of early childhood mental health consultation for children with behavioral problems in preschool. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 24(1), 29-45.
 - Van Egeren, L. A., Kirk, R., Brophy-Herb, H., Carlson, J., Tableman, B., & Bender, S. L. (2011). *An interdisciplinary evaluation report of Michigan's Childcare Expulsion Prevention (CCEP) initiative.* East Lansing: Michigan State University.
 - Walsh, M., & Stipetic, D. (2009). *Pennsylvania Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation program report: July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2009.* Harrisburg: Pennsylvania, Office of Child Development and Early Learning.

Additional Resources

Explore resources in the *Research Connections* collection related to the topic, including *Linking mental health and child care and early education services: A Key Topic Resource List* (Child Care & Early Education Research Connections, 2007) and updated search results.

The American Psychological Association also recently examined the issue, releasing four posts on its Psychology Benefits Society blog, which demonstrates how psychological science contributes to society (Gilliam, 2014; Heller & Boothe, 2015; Meek, 2014; Perry, 2014).

References

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- Gilliam, W. (2014, December 13). *What could make less sense than expelling a preschooler?* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://psychologybenefits.org/2014/12/13/preschool-expulsions/>
- Heller, S., & Boothe A. (2015, January 8). *Practice to Policy: How Louisiana Revamped Its Approach to Preschool* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://psychologybenefits.org/2015/01/08/practice-to-policy-how-louisiana-revamped-its-approach-to-preschool/>
- Meek, S. (2014, December 16). *Equity and excellence in the earliest years: Action on expulsion and suspension in early childhood settings* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://psychologybenefits.org/2014/12/16/expulsion-suspension-early-childhood-settings/>
- My Brother's Keeper Task Force. (2014). *My Brother's Keeper Task Force report to the President*. Washington, DC: My Brother's Keeper Task Force.
- Perry, D. (2014, December 23). *Can preschool expulsion be prevented? A growing body of research says yes!* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://psychologybenefits.org/2014/12/23/can-preschool-expulsion-be-prevented-a-growing-body-of-research-says-yes/>
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