

Draft Policy for Social-Emotional Development and Behavioral Health: Preventing Pre-School Expulsion

Division of Early Care & Education

The South Carolina Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) and its partners recognize the importance of children's social-emotional and behavioral health. High quality early childhood environments and positive experiences nurture social-emotional and behavioral health. Exclusionary practices, such as expulsion and suspension, are negative experiences that hinder children's development and learning. Therefore, it is DECE's policy to work toward eliminating expulsion and suspension practices across early learning systems in South Carolina.

DECE will support providers, parents, and the work of our partners, including:

- Raising awareness about expulsion, suspension, and other exclusionary disciplinary practices in early childhood settings.
- Developing a goal-driven process for improvement that is informed by a coordinated data system across early childhood sectors.
- Investing in the workforce development system by assisting providers in establishing preventative disciplinary policies that limit or eliminate the use of expulsion and suspension and promote the use of evidence-based practices.
- Reviewing and updating policies regarding program quality that are specifically targeted to increase overall quality of early learning services and reduce or eliminate expulsions, suspensions, and other exclusionary discipline practices.

This policy addresses four key areas: 1) education about exclusionary discipline practices; 2) identification of the use of these practices in early childhood settings in our state; 3) creation of goals for the reduction in the use of these practices; and 4) support of the workforce through education and training about positive discipline techniques and behavior management systems.

In addition to the state policy, DECE has established key goals for providers that are in the QRIS. The ABC Quality standards have focused on positive guidance techniques since their initial development in 1992. Quality assessors observe classroom staff in each enrolled program measuring the use of these strategies. With the development of the state policy on social-emotional development and behavioral health, providers will soon be expected to address all of the following:

- i. Ensure that all children's social-emotional and behavioral health are fostered in an appropriate high-quality early learning program, working toward eliminating expulsion and suspension practices across early learning settings.
- ii. Develop and communicate appropriate policies that are implemented consistently and without bias or discrimination across the diversity of young children represented in early learning settings.
- iii. Use evidence-based practices to create positive climates and focus on prevention; develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address challenging behavior; and ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement.
- iv. Develop and clearly communicate preventative guidance and discipline practices
 - v. Develop and clearly communicate expulsion, and suspension policies
- vi. Access technical assistance for their workforce related to preventing expulsion and suspension