

ISSUE BRIEF:

SUMMARY: “ADDRESSING SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTINGS: AN INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH-INFORMED APPROACH.”

A **report** published by the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health and **ORIMHA**



REPORT SUMMARY

This report draws on extensive literature addressing suspensions and expulsions in Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings, emphasizing the severe, lifelong negative impacts—especially for Black, Indigenous, and children of color (BIPOC). These practices correlate with adverse outcomes such as increased interaction with child welfare and juvenile justice systems, higher rates of grade repetition, school dropouts, and poverty. The report advocates for an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) approach to foster supportive, nurturing environments that aid children’s emotional and social development.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

The report urges collaboration with state infant mental health associations, grants for IECMH training, and integration of IECMH principles into higher education.

These measures can help create an IECMH-trained workforce essential to ending suspensions and expulsions, promoting improved developmental outcomes, and reducing inequities.

- 1. Training & Professional Development:** Fund IECMH training, technical assistance, and reflective practice supports for ECE educators.
- 2. Equity:** Ensure all children, including those with disabilities and BIPOC children, are supported equitably across systems.
- 3. Supportive Systems:** Integrate IECMH competencies in ECE licensing and quality standards, implicit bias training, and supports for social-emotional and language development.
- 4. Funding:** Allocate funds for IECMH credentialing, professional development, and consultation services.
- 5. Reflective Supervision:** Fund reflective supervision to aid educators in addressing trauma and supporting child development.
- 6. Compensation:** Ensure ECE educators earn a living wage, with incentives for IECMH specialization.

KEY POINTS

Impact of Suspensions and Expulsions

Suspensions and expulsions in early childhood have profound, lasting effects, disproportionately impacting BIPOC children. These practices are linked to negative academic and social outcomes, including involvement with child welfare and juvenile justice systems, higher rates of grade repetition, school dropouts, and poverty.

IECMH Approach

IECMH is crucial for children's development from birth to age five, focusing on emotional regulation, relationship building, and learning. A mentally healthy environment fosters resilience, confidence, and emotional competence. IECMH-informed strategies emphasize supportive, non-punitive disciplinary techniques.

Impact of COVID-19

The pandemic increased trauma for children, families, and ECE educators, particularly within BIPOC communities. ECE educators urgently need training to address trauma and provide developmentally appropriate support.

Role of ECE Educators and Systems

ECE educators play a vital role in building early relationships with children. Systems should support educators with ongoing IECMH training. An IECMH-trained workforce is essential to eliminating suspensions and expulsions.



CALL TO ACTION

1. Policymakers should collaborate with state associations for infant mental health and other IECMH experts.
2. Provide grants and funding opportunities to support IECMH training and endorsement.
3. Embed IECMH principles in higher education curricula for future ECE professionals.

LINKS & RESOURCES

FOR MORE DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION STEPS, CONSULT THE [FULL REPORT](#) PUBLISHED BY THE ALLIANCE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF INFANT MENTAL HEALTH

- Zero to Three: "[How to Talk about Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health](#)"
- Education Commission of the States: "[The Status of School Discipline in State Policy](#)"
- Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health: "[Endorsement® is Good for Babies](#)"
- Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health: [Main Page](#) and "[Members of the Alliance](#)"