

# The Preschool Exclusionary Discipline Study (PEDS)



## RESEARCH BRIEF

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October 2020



Exclusionary Discipline in U.S. Public Pre-K Programs:  
An Initial Look at the 2017-2018 CRDC Data

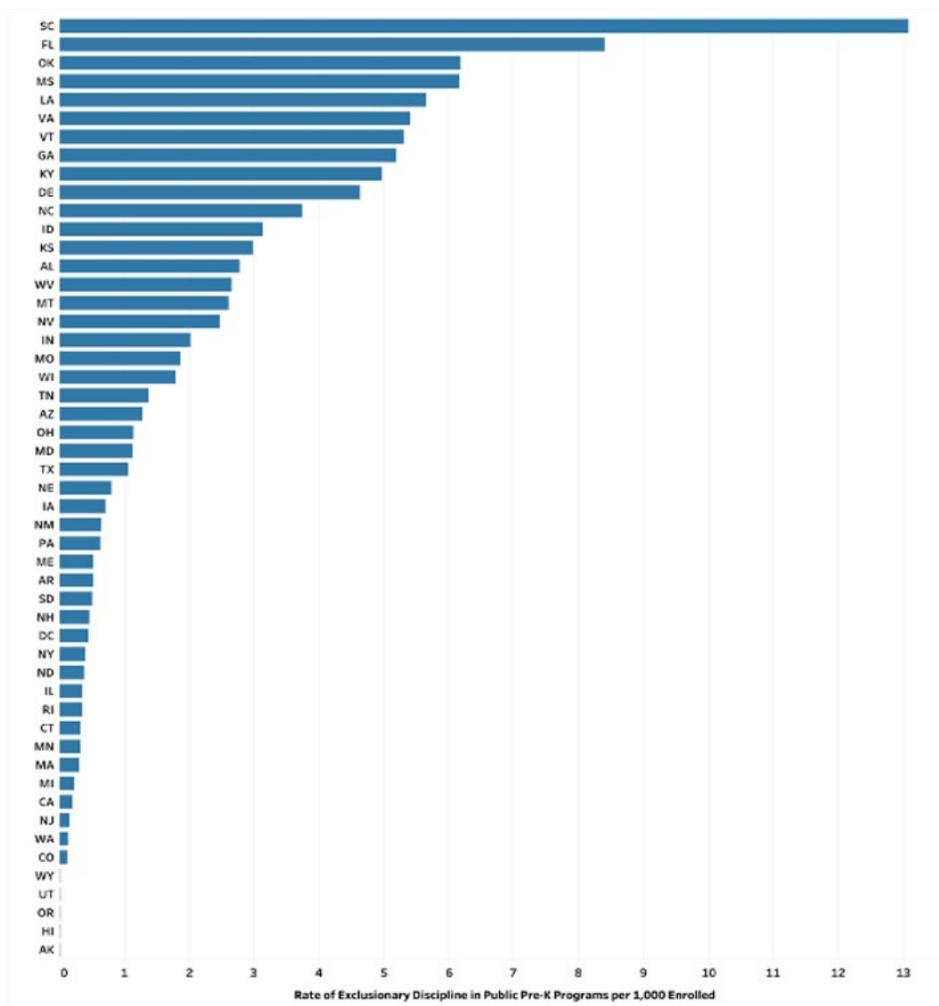


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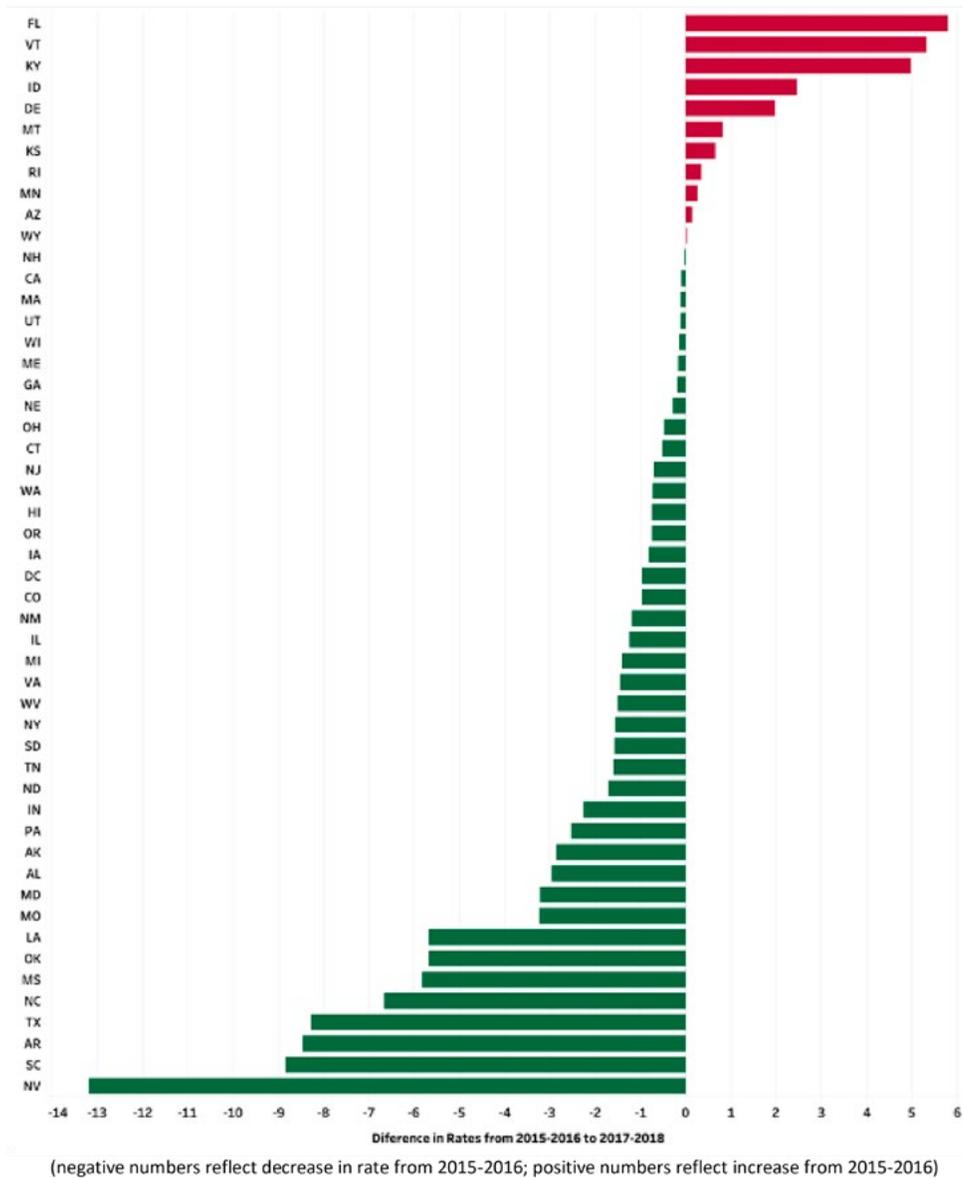
The use of exclusionary discipline (ExD) – defined as discipline that removes a student from the school setting via expulsion or suspension –has been found to undermine students’ health, well-being, and educational achievement. With the support of a new federal grant\*, members of the Preschool Exclusionary Discipline Study (PEDS) team will be examining and mapping the prevalence, disparities, and factors associated with the use of ExD in U.S. public school pre-K programs. As we work to accomplish our goals, we plan to disseminate many of our findings through these Research Briefs.

For this Research Brief, we present initial analyses of the data from the newly released publicly available Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) of 2017-18 (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-2017-18.html>). In this data set, there were about 1.45 million children enrolled in public pre-K programs. Of these, 3,128\*\* pre-K children were expelled or suspended at least once from U.S. public pre-K programs. Thus, across the U.S. in 2017-2018, there were about 2.15 pre-K students suspended or expelled for every 1,000 enrolled in U.S. public school pre-K programs.

In 2017-2018, there were about 30,000 pre-K programs public school programs in the U.S. that reported enrollment. Of these, about 5.3% reported using ExD. Although the national rate of use of ExD in public school pre-K programs was just over 2 per 1,000 pre-K children enrolled, the rates varied when calculated at the state level -- ranging from or near 0 in many states to a high of 13.07 per 1,000 students enrolled in South Carolina (see figure).



We also compared the rates in use of ExD in the new 2017-2018 data set to those in the 2015-2016 data collection. By our calculations, it is noteworthy that the rate of use of ExD in U.S. public school pre-K programs dropped by almost 50% from a rate of 4.48 per 1,000 enrolled in 2015-2016 to the 2.15 per 1,000 enrolled in the data reported two years later. As can be seen in the following figure, the reported ExD usage rates in pre-K dropped for almost all states, with some states showing large drops in rates (e.g., NV, SC). There were several states that showed an increase in rates (e.g., FL, KY).

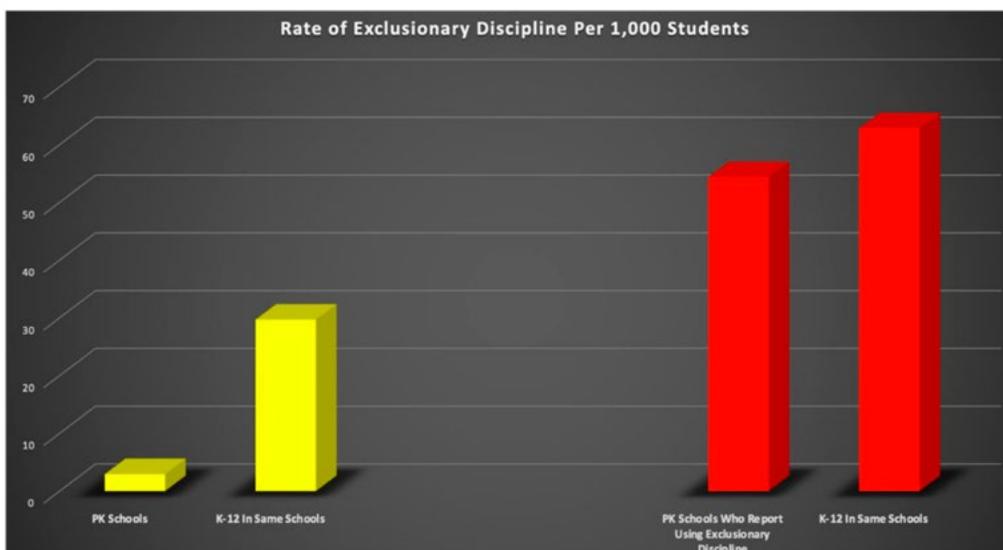


Despite the drop in the rate of use of ExD in U.S. public pre-K programs from 2015-2016, disparities remained significant. As noted in the following table, rates of reported use of ExD in U.S. pre-K programs varied by race/ethnicity and for boys and girls. For all pre-K schools, the rate for Black children (per 1,000 enrolled) was about 2.7 times higher than those for White children and almost 6 times higher than those for Latino children. Across all pre-K schools, the ExD rate for American Indian/Alaska Native was about 1.6 times higher than those for White children, whereas those for Asian students were the lowest of any of the groups of children. Additionally, the rate of use of ExD for boys was about 4 times higher than those for girls. Rate of ExD for children with disabilities was moderately high relative to the other rates. Similar patterns were found when we looked only at those pre-K programs that reported at least 1 case of ExD, but note the dramatically higher rates for these pre-K programs compared to the rates for all programs combined.

	All Pre-K Schools (per 1,000 enrolled)	Only Pre-K Schools Reporting at Least 1 ExD (per 1,000 enrolled)
Black Children	5.08	48.02
White Children	1.86	29.89
Latino Children	.86	17.86
AIAN Children	3.06	31.85
Asian Children	.19	5.37
Boys	3.31	50.57
Girls	.79	11.84
Children with Disabilities	2.55	48.13

These data clearly reveal that significant disparities continue to exist in the use of ExD in U.S. public school pre-K programs. These disparities will be central to our future analyses and reports.

We also examined how rates of pre-K ExD compared to those in K-12\*\*\* in the same school. Across all U.S. public schools with pre-K programs, the average rate of ExD for pre-K children was significantly lower ( $p < .001$ ; controlling for size of enrollment) than the rate for K-12 students at the same school (about 10% the average rate of those K-12 students; yellow bars in figure). However, for those children in pre-K programs that reported at least 1 case of ExD, these pre-K students were likely to be suspended or expelled at rates that were not significantly different from those for their fellow K-12 students in the same school (red bars in figure). These findings suggest that the use of ExD in pre-K likely is reflective of the school culture towards the use of such practices. These findings have implications for policy development and interventions and suggest that these should be directed at the entire school culture, as well as for individual teachers and administrators. Once again, note that when pre-K programs reported at least 1 case of ExD, the overall average ExD rates were dramatically higher.



The raw number of cases of ExD in US public pre-K programs remain a concern, but these numbers reflect only those cases reported and it is likely that there are 'soft' cases of ExD. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that the CRDC data reflect only the use of ExD in public school pre-K programs –not private pre-K programs, child care, or programs for younger children. Thus, there are significantly more cases of the use of ExD in early childhood that are not identified in the CRDC data set. Moreover, although most pre-K public school programs in the U.S. did not report the use of ExD with their students, when a program did use ExD, it tended to do so at an alarmingly high rate. This is why it is so important to better understand the use of ExD in pre-K so that we can rethink the ways in which we foster the health and well-being of our youngest learners.

The PEDS team is committed to examining and closing disparities in the use of ExD in schools, and ultimately eliminating its use altogether. Importantly, we recognize that there are historical systemic legacies of racism and bias that relate to the use of discipline in U.S. schools, including pre-K programs. As such, we acknowledge that our goal will not be easily or quickly achieved.



To join the PEDS distribution list, or for more information, contact us at [PEDS@asu.edu](mailto:PEDS@asu.edu).

PEDS is proudly affiliated with the Children's Equity Project. [childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/cep](https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/cep)

## FOOTNOTES

\*This research was supported by a grant from the Administration for Children and Families (Award # 90Y#0122-01-00).

\*\*All variables were calculated directly from the raw data set provided in the publicly available CRDC sets as of 10/22/20. For example, to calculate total number of expulsions for pre-K, we added together the totals for boys and girls. We did this in both the new 2017-2018 data set and the 2015-2016 data set to standardize our procedures across data sets for comparisons. We acknowledge that these computations may not match the estimates provided by CRDC (e.g., <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/2013-2014/Preschool-Expulsions.xlsx>). At the time of the release of this Research Brief, state and national estimations for the 2017-2018 data set were not yet available.

\*\*\*Exclusionary discipline for K-12 was calculated as the sum of all reported expulsions (with or without educational services) and single and multiple out-of-school suspensions for both students with and without disabilities.

### Suggested citation:



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*As members of Arizona State University, we acknowledge the 22 Native Nations that have inhabited this land for centuries. Arizona State University's four campuses are located in the Salt River Valley on ancestral territories of Indigenous peoples, including the Akimel O'odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa) Indian Communities, whose care and keeping of these lands allows us to be here today.*

## RESOURCES

Here are some resources related to ExD in Pre-K Programs:

### **Understanding and Eliminating Expulsion in Early Childhood Programs**

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/understanding-eliminating-expulsion-early-childhood-programs>

### **Preventing Expulsion From Preschool and Child Care**

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/series/preventing-expulsion-from-preschool-and-child-care>

### **Standing Together Against Suspension & Expulsion in Early Childhood: Resources**

<https://www.naeyc.org/standing-together-against-suspension-expulsion-early-childhood-resources>

### **Rethink School Discipline: School District Leader Summit on Improving School Climate and Discipline**

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/rethink-discipline-resource-guide-supt-action.pdf>

### **Rethinking Discipline**

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/index.html>

### **Preschool Suspension and Expulsion: Defining the Issues**

<https://www.instituteforchildsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ICS-2018-PreschoolSuspensionBrief-WEB.pdf>