Children Asked to Leave Placements

*Preventing and reducing suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary practices in early learning settings (a white paper)*

# Executive summary

As a result of growing understanding of the scope and consequences of suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary practices in early learning settings, a cross-sector workgroup of Early Learning Division (ELD) and partner agency staff was convened in November 2016 to develop solutions to this problem. Following an examination of background information, regulatory and non-regulatory guidance, and resources and strategies currently available or in development, a logic model was developed to describe the work ahead (Appendix A). The ELD and state partners have a significant collection of programs, professional development and quality initiatives, expertise and other resources to build on. Key activities will include cataloguing, aligning and disseminating existing resources and strategies including professional development focused on positive learning environments; identifying resource gaps and strategizing improvements; conducting a messaging campaign to improve adults’ understanding of the importance of preventing and reducing exclusionary practices and their role in correcting this problem; improving data collection and analysis; and evaluating progress toward outcomes. Through this cross-sector work, we can expect a more highly skilled and supported workforce and children who thrive in school and life.

# Introduction

Researchers have recognized for some time now that high quality early childhood care and education is critical to children’s optimal development and later school and life success.[[1]](#footnote-1) For high quality early education to be effective, children must be able to fully participate in these opportunities. Unfortunately, researchers have also discovered that too many children, including very young children and children with disabilities, are subject to suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary practices.[[2]](#footnote-2) Children subjected to exclusion are disproportionately children of color.[[3]](#footnote-3) As a result, some children are prevented from having full access to these early learning opportunities, and worse, are often set on a trajectory of school failure.[[4]](#footnote-4) A number of factors contribute to exclusionary practice, including insufficient knowledge, skills and abilities of providers and programs; lack of appropriate, coordinated and aligned resources and supports for parents and providers; late identification of children needing extra supports; and other contributing factors such as lack of understanding of implicit bias and trauma-informed care.[[5]](#footnote-5)[[6]](#footnote-6) Carey McCann, from [BUILD](http://www.buildinitiative.org/TheIssues/BUILDingStrongFoundations/tabid/223/PostID/40/Default.aspx), has said that, “State policies on early learning suspension and expulsion either don’t exist or are insufficient. More thoughtful policies – ones that reflect an understanding of expulsion as a symptom of a set of problems related to quality, equity, and adequate supports - are needed.”

To that end, Oregon’s Early Learning Division (ELD) needs to:

1) Develop a state-level policy that a) addresses suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary practices, and b) identifies supports to providers, programs and communities to improve their capacity to serve all children, but especially those children who present challenging behaviors and other special needs that place them at risk of exclusionary practices. In developing policy, the ELD should explore existing regulations, along with other policies and related non-regulatory guidance and incorporate and align these directives as appropriate to improve consistency and coherence of expectations across settings.

2) Explore, create, disseminate, and support implementation of scalable, cost-effective solutions to prevent and reduce exclusionary practices. In the words of Greenhalgh, et al., [[7]](#footnote-7) the ELD needs to “make it happen!”

Oregon’s Early Learning System infrastructure, data collection and reporting capacity, existing and potential funding streams, current initiatives and special projects, and understanding of effective implementation strategy[[8]](#footnote-8) should all be considered when developing and disseminating solutions.

# Vision

The Early Learning Division believes that parents, staff, communities and the state must work in partnership to ensure school and life success for children. [Collective Impact Forum](https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact%20Collective%20Impact%20Forum) tells us that “collective impact brings people together, in a structured way, to achieve social change [and] takes us from common goals to uncommon results.” *Dream, discover, design and deliver.* These are the key elements of Boston Public Health Commission’s process for engaging stakeholders in similar efforts[[9]](#footnote-9) and can serve as a model for the steps the ELD and its partners will undertake in addressing the problem of exclusionary practices in early learning programs.

In order to improve outcomes for children, it is critical that we reframe the notion of “challenging behaviors” by emphasizing and improving understanding of typical child development and promoting effective teaching practices and learning environments. In the words of [Walter Gilliam](https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/02/20/empathy-not-expulsion-for-preschoolers-at-risk/%20), “expulsion is not a child behavior. It’s an adult decision.” We also recognize that multiple factors contribute to these adult decisions and we need to identify and implement strategies to address the factors that contribute to exclusionary practices.

Clear definitions and shared understanding of expulsion and suspension, including both out of school and in school exclusionary practices, are needed. Expulsion is never an appropriate response in early learning settings. Rarely, some form of temporary alternative placement such as reduced classroom time and/or placement in an alternative learning environment, may be appropriate, but only with the expectation and plan for the child to return to the typical setting once adequate supports are in place and the child can successfully return. Programs must develop plans and timetables limiting any temporary exclusions and facilitating the transition of children back to the preferred placement. The ultimate goal is to eliminate or substantially reduce transitional placements.

State policy should address 1) how exclusionary practice is defined in early learning settings, 2) how the policy will be operationalized, including acceptable alternatives to suspension and expulsion and 3) recommendations for implementation, including best practices and strategies to address the contributing factors that are not directly related to the child, such as teacher stress, class size and staff-child ratios, and implicit bias. In developing policy, it is important to remember that there must be good policy to enable good practice, but practice must also inform policy.[[10]](#footnote-10)

A strengths-based approach is essential. Such an approach focuses on serving all children in inclusive early learning settings and on the importance of positive relationships (teacher-child, teacher-parent, parent-child and child-child) where everyone trusts and expects that programs, providers and parents have children’s best interests in mind.

Successful policy and implementation strategies should result in more timely and accurate identification of children and staff needing support; better collaboration between system partners; increased provider knowledge, skills and abilities for working with all children, including children who present challenging behaviors or other special needs; and more rapid, aligned, and efficient access, deployment and use of resources, including training, technical assistance and early childhood mental health consultation supports.

Ultimately, these efforts should result in a more highly skilled and supported early learning workforce with access to a robust collection of resources and supports that are designed to prevent and reduce suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary practices so that all children are able to learn and thrive.

# Part 1 – Background and Guidance

## Background

Attention to exclusionary practices in Oregon’s early learning programs has been building for some time, but began in earnest in July 2016 when the Director of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) program met with ELD leadership to present data that described removal or reduction of services for some EI/ECSE-eligible children in Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten programs. While the data was incomplete, it did raise concerns about practices in the field and the extent to which Head Start providers and programs may not have the capacity to maintain placements for children deemed to have “challenging behaviors” or other special needs. Earlier discussions between ELD and EI/ECSE staff had also raised concerns about the lack of system resources and supports for providers and programs who were struggling to serve some children who presented certain behavioral and/or physical health challenges. There is little data on children in non-Head Start placements, but based on national research findings and anecdotal evidence, the assumption is that children in other settings are at risk of exclusionary practices as well.

In the meantime, much national attention has also been focused on the issue of suspension and expulsion.[[11]](#footnote-11) The revised Head Start Program Performance Standards ([HSPPS](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii)) strictly limit suspension and prohibit expulsion ([Head Start policy statement](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/im/acf-im-hs-16-01)). Recent Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) regulations place similar restrictions on any provider receiving child care subsidy funds.

While the practice has not been well defined or documented, there is little disagreement that too many children experience suspension and expulsion, and some providers and programs struggle to meet the needs of all children in their care. There is evidence[[12]](#footnote-12) that children of color and boys are disproportionately subject to exclusionary practices. The challenge for Oregon will be to find workable solutions. W*hat are the right next steps? What organizational and system changes are needed to create a hospitable environment for the new ways of work? How do we conceptualize this change process? How will this be articulated in policy? Where does this work fit in our state systems and initiatives? Is an aligned system of robust supports enough to achieve outcomes? What are the challenges to implementing effective practices?* To address these issues, a cross-sector workgroup was formed in November 2016, and a logic model and timeline have been developed to move this work forward (Appendix A).

## Guiding Principles

Since its inception, the Early Learning Division has based its work on [Oregon's Equity Lens](http://www.ode.state.or.us/superintendent/priorities/final-equity-lens-draft-adopted.pdf%20). The Equity Lens places a focus on educational equity and excellence for every child in Oregon, especially those children who have been historically underserved, including children of color and children receiving special education services. We have an *ethical* and *moral* responsibility to ensure an education system that provides optimal learning environments for all.

The Early Learning Council (ELC) adopted Guiding Principles (March 2017) to be considered in all of its decision-making (Appendix B). Among other things, these principles guide ELC to promote equitable access and allocation of resources to children furthest from opportunity and cross-sector collaboration, alignment and coordination to support successful outcomes for children.

The ELD’s Measuring Success Committee has adopted a set of Early Learning System Research and Policy Questions (Appendix C). These questions provide guidance in thinking about critical data elements that focus on evaluating outcomes related to system impact, access to services and service coordination. They will provide structure to the ELD as it assesses and creates solutions to address the problem of exclusionary practice.

A number of other guiding documents exist to help establish a foundation for best practices in providing care and education to all young children, including those at risk of suspension and expulsion. [Oregon's Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines](http://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/FullDayK/Pages/Early-Learning-and-Kindergarten-Guidelines.aspx) and the [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/sr/approach/pdf/ohs-framework.pdf%20) describe what children should be able to know and do in the early years, including in the areas of social-emotional development and approaches to learning. These foundational documents should guide development and implementation of effective strategies for serving all children in ways that will promote positive outcomes.

Regulatory and Non-Regulatory Guidance

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE ACTION

*From the joint HHS/DoE Statement*

* Develop and Clearly Communicate Expulsion and Suspension Policies
* Set Goals for Improvement and Analyze Data to Assess Progress
* Invest in Workforce Preparation and Development
* Establish and Implement Policies Regarding Program Quality
* Access Free Resources to Develop and Scale Best Practices

*Source:* [U.S. Health and Human Services and Department of Education Policy Statement on Suspension and Expulsion](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/policy-statement-ece-expulsions-suspensions.pdf) (2014)

To improve consistency and coherence of expectations across settings, ELD should explore pertinent regulations, policies and related non-regulatory guidance and incorporate these directives into state policy and strategies. A key guiding document is the [U.S. Health and Human Services and Department of Education Policy Statement on Suspension and Expulsion](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/policy-statement-ece-expulsions-suspensions.pdf) (2014). This statement is designed to raise awareness about exclusionary practice in early learning settings, and to provide recommendations on establishing and administering relevant policies and identifying and supporting strategies to prevent and eliminate exclusionary practices. Likewise, the [National Association for the Education of Young Children Joint Policy Statement](http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/Standing%20Together.Joint%20Statement.FINAL__9.pdf%20) incorporates guidance that reflects the values of many early learning professionals.

Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) requires a state policy that will need to be described in the next update to the state’s CCDF state plan due in June 2018.

Head Start Program Performance Standards specifically address suspension and expulsion, including requirements for interim services, along with guidance on working with children with disabilities, accessing mental health consultation, engaging families, and utilizing community resources including Medicaid and private insurance. With such a large number of publicly funded preschoolers served in Head Start and Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten programs, it will be important to incorporate these regulations into state policy to the extent possible.

Other federal and state regulations and guidance that contain some reference to access and enrollment opportunities, and service provision include: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Civil Rights laws; EI/ECSE policies; Office of Child Care rules; Title 1 non-regulatory guidance; Preschool Promise operating guidelines; QRIS/SPARK standards; and ODE statutes and administrative rules related to student discipline for children in the K-12 system. Relevant information from each of these sources should be considered for inclusion in a comprehensive state policy and strategy plan for addressing the issue of suspension and expulsion.

# Part 2 – What Can We Build On?

There is much more work to do to ensure that every child has full, equitable access to high quality, inclusive early learning settings and the adults in their lives feel confident and skilled to support them to reach their full potential. That said, Oregon has much to build on as it works to address the issue of suspension and expulsion. From numerous initiatives, special projects and programs that are currently underway to dedicated staff and leadership who are committed to equity, cross system integration and collective impact, we have a strong foundation of resources and strategies that can be made stronger through improved coordination, alignment and dissemination.

A primary objective of Oregon’s Early Learning System is to coordinate and align resources and services for young children and their families so that all children enter school ready to succeed. The ELD continues to develop and support cross-system integration capacity at the state and local levels through its work with Early Learning Hubs, state partners, and numerous advisory and work groups. The Early Learning Division and ODE have expertise and capacity to communicate with and market to internal and external stakeholders through various communication networks, in person, through web-based applications and print, often in multiple languages. This commitment and capacity to engage stakeholders is a valuable asset.

A solid understanding of young children’s social-emotional development and approaches to learning skills is essential for adults who are making decisions about how best to support young children’s success in early learning settings. Both program-level quality standards and child development and learning standards exist to provide common understanding and expectations in the field. The Quality Rating and Improvement System (SPARK) has been piloted over the past four years and is currently undergoing revision. It is unclear if any specific standards and indicators will directly address the issue of suspension and expulsion, but SPARK’s focus on positive and appropriate staff-child interactions, high quality early learning environments, professional development, child screening and assessment, and meaningful family engagement practices is associated with positive outcomes for young children and can form a foundation for this work. [Oregon's Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines](http://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/FullDayK/Pages/Early-Learning-and-Kindergarten-Guidelines.aspx%20) and the [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/sr/approach/pdf/ohs-framework.pdf%20) provide common understanding of developmental expectations for children from birth through age 6. The state has adopted a universal screening tool, the Ages and Stages (ASQ) Questionnaire which, along with the ASQ-SE (social-emotional) and other screenings can help identify young children needing additional evaluation and supports.

While still in development and not universally or sufficiently available, Oregon continues to promote and enhance Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) strategies through more course offerings and certification opportunities for early learning professionals, such as the Infant Mental Health Endorsement. A 2011 working paper[[13]](#footnote-13) outlined the state of the field and recommendations for growing ECMHC capacity, both in quantity and expertise. National organizations, such as [SAMHSA](https://www.samhsa.gov/iecmhc) (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), are available to support state efforts.

Although it is incomplete and lacking common definitions, some child and program-level data exists for use in early planning efforts. The ELD’s commitment to data-informed decision-making and current efforts underway to improve data collection and reporting protocols can inform this work. The Oregon Department of Education Student Services unit plans to enhance data collection and reporting efforts around the issue of EI/ECSE children being removed or excluded from placements and this information will be invaluable.

Many current and upcoming projects focus on professional development, including training, technical assistance, coaching and mentoring.Many opportunities exist for creating and enhancing systems alignment through common objectives, work plans, and strategies. A shared focus on social-emotional development and approaches to learning skills, trauma-informed care and implicit bias can bring alignment to many of these efforts and contribute to improved outcomes for children. A workgroup comprised of staff from ELD, EI/ECSE, Oregon Health Authority and others has been working to determine the sufficiency of resources available to providers and programs to improve their expertise in supporting children’s social-emotional development and to locate or develop training curricula and/or other resources to fill any gaps.

Many federal, state and local training, coaching and mentoring resources and initiatives are under development or in place to train and support early learning providers and programs. Training and technical assistance (T/TA) is available through federal and state Head Start Program Specialists and T/TA staff. Many training opportunities exist for providers including Head Start Regional and Specialist Conferences, Summer Institute, annual P-3 and other statewide conferences, and fall EI/ECSE trainings focused on supporting children’s behavioral needs. The state’s recent OUNCE Partnership for PreK Improvement grant will support effective instructional practices in state-funded and other preschool programs. The Inclusive Child Care Program offers training and supports to providers who work with children with disabilities and other special needs. Numerous online platforms exist to support coaches, mentors, and other instructional leaders, including the Office of Head Start (OHS) [My Peers](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/mypeers-collaborative-platform-early-care-education-community) communities, [Videactives](https://videatives.com/) for Child Care Resource and Referral staff , OHS National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning ([ECTDL Disability Resources](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/Disabilities)), and [EarlyEdU](http://www.earlyedualliance.org/), to name a few. Many local communities support P-3 shared professional development and professional learning team opportunities. Office of Child Care (OCC) Licensing Specialists and Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) Quality Improvement Specialists offer regular guidance to providers and programs. Similarly, the [EI/ECSE State Systemic Improvement Plan](http://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/SpEdReports/Documents/partcphase2ssip.pdf) focuses on improving social-emotional and approaches to learning skills of children with Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs). EI/ECSE is improving their consultants’ capacity to offer guidance to providers in [Program-wide Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports](http://www.pyramidmodel.org/resource/positive-behavioral-interventions-supports-pbis-positive-behavior-support-pyramid-model/) and [Collaborative Problem Solving](http://www.thinkkids.org/learn/about-thinkkids/) so that providers and programs can better support the needs of all young children, including those with identified special needs.

Many parts of the state’s early learning system have established core competencies and/or credentialing systems that include understanding and supporting children’s social-emotional development and well-being. [Oregon's Professional Development Registry](https://www.pdx.edu/occd/oregon-registry-2) system has recently recognized the need for providers to have additional training and education in human growth and development, understanding and guiding behavior, and learning environments and curriculum, and has increased this requirement in the Step Registry system. Oregon Department of Education has established [core competencies for EI/ECSE staff](http://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/SpecialEducation/earlyintervention/Pages/EI-ECSE-Personnel-Competencies.aspx%20), which include knowledge of children’s mental health and social-emotional development. Likewise, the Oregon Health Authority has developed a set of [Home Visiting Core Competencies](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYPEOPLEFAMILIES/BABIES/HOMEVISITING/Pages/WorkforceDevelopment.aspx%20%20) for home visitation staff which include knowledge and skill related to human development and social-emotional well-being. The [Oregon Parent Education Collaborative](https://orparenting.org/parents/opec-parenting-hubs/) (OPEC) has also established core knowledge and skills for parent educators that include competence in child growth and development and social emotional well-being. The Oregon Infant Mental Health Association has established an [Infant Mental Health Endorsement](http://www.oraimh.org/endorsement/) to recognize infant mental health knowledge and experience of infant and family service professionals. Likewise, Portland State University has created an [Infant/Toddler Mental Health Graduate Certificate](https://www.pdx.edu/sped/itmh). While not formally aligned with each other, these various early learning certificates and endorsements hold early learning professionals to similar standards when it comes to supporting children’s social-emotional competence.

In addition to training and support for providers and programs, the Early Learning Division also has significant work underway in the area of family support and engagement. Included in ELD’s vision is acknowledgement of families as their children’s most important teachers. Many opportunities exist to support families to feel confident in this role. 211Info provides referrals and support to parents. The Oregon Parent Education Collaborative provides training and supports to families through its [Parent Education Hubs](https://orparenting.org/parents/opec-parenting-hubs). One of the primary goals of the [Early Learning Hubs](https://oregonearlylearning.com/administration/what-are-hubs/) is to make sure families in their communities have the support they need to help their children thrive. The Early Learning Division is currently participating in a Family Engagement Peer Learning Table, which will use the Head Start [Parent Family Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/pfce-interactive-framework) to guide best practices. OHS’s National Center for Parent, Family and Community Engagement [simulations](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/article/parent-family-community-engagement-simulation-boosting-school-readiness) help providers conduct relationship-based work with families which leads to better outcomes for children. The [Learn the Signs Act Early](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html) initiative in Oregon promotes parent education on early childhood development and active parent engagement in monitoring their child’s development through use of early childhood development tools. [VROOM](http://www.joinvroom.org) is another state initiative that helps parents learn to understand and support their children’s development. The [Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation](http://www.childinst.org/p-3-communities/p-3-communities) (KPI) projects emphasize family engagement and the use of evidence-based parenting curricula. Federal, state and local funding supports Health Families Oregon (HFO), MIECHV (Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting), Early Head Start and other home visiting and parenting programs that support healthy development of children. The Relief Nursery therapeutic, trauma-informed care strategies can serve as a model for the types of supports necessary to prevent and eliminate exclusionary practices.

A number of existing decision-making groups and Advisory Committees are involved with Iinitiatives and strategies that support children’s social-emotional development and well-being, mental health and school success and should be engaged in these efforts to better align and coordinate resources and strategies. Among the committees with some connection to this work are the State and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (SICC and LICC), Best Beginnings, Measuring Success, Inclusive Child Care Program (ICCP) Advisory Committee, the OHA-sponsored Children’s System Advisory Committee, Professional Development Committee, Child Care Partners Forum and the Child Care Policy Team to name a few. The Early Learning Council (ELC) should be kept informed throughout the process and will be involved in adopting policy. An aligned system of resources and strategies is critical to the timely identification of children and providers needing additional support and the rapid and efficient access, deployment and use of available resources.

# Part 3 - What Do We Need to Do?

To better understand the context of the issue of suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary practices and to outline the processes and outputs needed to address these issues in Oregon, a logic model (Appendix A) and this white paper have been developed and are available to all interested parties. A draft policy will be developed by December 2017 to allow time for community engagement, adoption by the ELC and inclusion in the 2018 Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) plan.

The ELD and key partners will inventory, coordinate and disseminate existing T/TA and professional development resources related to supporting social-emotional development and preventing or reducing suspension and expulsion. Once existing resources have been catalogued, resource gaps will be identified and strategies to improve the system of supports will be developed. A messaging and marketing campaign will be developed and implemented to help adults better understand and agree on the importance of preventing and reducing suspension and expulsion and how supporting children’s social-emotional development and staff well-being can improve school and life outcomes for children. The ELD and partners will work to develop and improve data collection and analysis processes, including creating data sharingstrategies and agreements to expand access and use of data to inform short- and long-term planning and decision-making. To monitor effectiveness of state policy, strategy plans and processes, the ELD will establish and implement plans to evaluate progress toward short- and long-term outcomes.

## Strategies, Implementation Plan and Opportunities

As next steps, the ELD and its partners should develop policy and identify and implement strategies that 1) build on existing state early learning system efforts; 2) build capacity of programs and individuals; 3) address risk factors not directly related to children’s behavior and special needs; and 4) address child, family, provider, program and state needs.

The following questions should be addressed as policy and implementation strategies are developed:

* How can we align and build on existing statewide efforts to create linkages that lead to a “no wrong door” approach?
* Can we define and identify a continuum of least to most restrictive supports and services that consider time in the learning environment, and the relative importance of comprehensive, wraparound services and intensity of intervention services?
* How can we determine what factor or combination of factors has the greatest positive impact on child outcomes and what types of resource deployment will make the biggest impact?
* What are the ELD’s and partners’ roles in coordinating these state level efforts and how will they disseminate information and support to the local level?

When building capacity of programs and individuals, it will be important to see where programs and individuals obtain support.

* What is missing and what is still needed to improve child outcomes?
* How can capacity building efforts focus on instructional leadership and intentional teaching practices that lead to successful inclusion of children with special needs?
* What strategies can provide guidance to programs on hiring, orientation and in-service training that could lead to better teacher knowledge, skill and ability in supporting all children, including those at risk of suspension and expulsion?

Policy and resource allocation decisions should also consider factors beyond understanding of children’s typical developmental stages, and instructional strategies for addressing challenges related to a child’s behavior or other special needs. These factors may include: class size; mixed aged grouping; staff-child ratios; availability of early childhood mental health consultation; teacher depression, burnout and job stress; longer class day; and implicit bias to name a few.

Resources need to address child, family, provider, program and state needs. To be most effective, resource availability and accessibility should consider the diverse and varied needs across the state, including urban vs. rural, and different needs of individuals and programs based on cultural identity, language and education levels. Materials and strategies that utilize multiple modalities including in person, web-based and print will enhance accessibility. Resource deployment strategies need to address how we can identify child needs in a timely manner and rapidly triage supports using a multidisciplinary team response while continuing to build a stronger cross-sector, coordinated system.

## Data Availability and Use

The state needs to strengthen data collection and analysis to improve identification of children and staff in need of supports, better develop and deploy resources, and determine if these strategies are improving child outcomes. First, it will be important to know when and where exclusionary practices are occurring. In addition, data sources need to better identify and examine the details of these situations. Factors to be considered might include whether the child is homeless, in foster care, migrant, a dual language learner, EI/ECSE-eligible, and/or low income. Other factors to consider could include program type and quality, teacher qualifications and parent engagement in decision-making.

Currently, there is no common or comprehensive statewide data system to assist providers and programs who may be working with the same child or family to allow them to better collaborate and coordinate resources and supports. Likewise, the state does not require any standardized forms, procedures or processes to support alignment and coordination. The ELD and its partners need to strengthen cross-program data sharing processes and agreements to improve identification of children in need of additional supports and facilitate more effective access, deployment and use of resources.

# Part 4 – Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement

Regular and systematic evaluation of planned activities, processes, work products and outcomes is necessary to determine if goals are being met and what the right next steps are in these efforts to improve outcomes for children. Both quantitative and qualitative measures can help identify what is working and which resources and strategies need to be modified, enhanced or added to improve results.

* How will we know we are effective and which strategies, alone or in combination, contribute to parents, providers and programs getting the support they need so children can participate successfully in inclusive settings and achieve positive outcomes?
* In what ways can evaluations taking place in other parts of the early learning system inform this work?
* How will we be able to identify and navigate points of resistance?

As in all of our work, a cross-sector approach will greatly enhance our ability to assess progress, inform next steps, and communicate and disseminate improved resources and strategies.

Part 5 – Summary

In summary, the ELD must develop a state-level policy to address the issue of suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary practices, and implement a robust system of accessible, coordinated, strengths-based resources and supports that can be deployed quickly to address the identified needs of children and the adults who work with them. This is best achieved through a collaborative approach by early learning system partners who believe that by working together we can move “from common goals to uncommon results” where providers are highly skilled and feel supported, and all children can learn and thrive. Focusing efforts on parent and provider knowledge and skill in supporting children’s social-emotional development and well-being; increasing understanding of implicit bias and trauma-informed care; and improving timeliness of identifying children and adults in need of addition support and deploying resources efficiently and effectively to address these needs should lead to improved outcomes for children.

This work won’t happen overnight. But Oregon has a clear vision and strong foundation of best practices and strategies to build on to ensure that every child has full access to high quality inclusive early learning settings and the adults in their lives feel confident and capable in helping them reach their potential. There are many opportunities to enhance and improve the early learning system to make resources and strategies more effective. It will be important to regularly and systematically monitor and evaluate progress in planned activities, outputs and outcomes, and to make adjustments as needed to ensure best results for the children, families and providers in Oregon.

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## Resources

Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation - <https://www.ecmhc.org/>

Center for the Study of Social Policy - Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework and other resources – <https://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/about>

Collaborative Problem Solving (or Collaborative and Proactive Solutions), “kids do well if they can” (<http://www.thinkkids.org/> and <http://cpsconnection.com/CPSmodel>)

Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center – resource for a wide range of early learning topics including education and child development, health and mental health and family engagement. [https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health)

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center – resource on early intervention/early childhood special education <http://ectacenter.org/>

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute – resource for many topics related to early care and education, including early intervention services <http://fpg.unc.edu/emphasis-area/early-care-and-education>

ODE’s Guidelines webpage - <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/FullDayK/Pages/Early-Learning-and-Kindergarten-Guidelines.aspx>

PBIS - <https://www.pbis.org/> and <https://www.pbis.org/community/early-childhood>

Preschool Mental Health Climate Scale - <http://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/18833>

Some state policies (Preschool Development Grant (PDG) states) on suspension and expulsion -<https://pdg.grads360.org/services/PDCService.svc/GetPDCDocumentFile?fileId=21290>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) - Toolbox and other resources for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation - <https://www.samhsa.gov/iecmhc>

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI) – resources on Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports, social emotional development and other topics <http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/>

## Appendix A

## Logic Model

| Logic Model–**Inputs** *(materials that the organization or program takes in and then processes to produce the desired results)* | **Processes** *(activities, strategies and methods)* | **Outputs** *(tangible results of the major processes directly associated with achieving the desired outcomes)* | **Short term outcomes** *(positive impacts)* | **Long term outcomes** *(positive impacts)* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Research/information (including national expertise/supports)  Regulatory and non-regulatory guidance (laws, rules and guiding documents, such as policies)  Training/Technical Assistance and Professional Development initiatives, systems and resources  Cross-system integration capacity at state and local level (ELD and EL Hubs)   * ELD Work groups/advisory groups * State partners * EL Hubs   Quality indicators (SPARK)  Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines  EI/ECSE data collection (the impetus for this work)  Staff/programs/providers/parents  Communication networks/capacity (ELD/ODE list serves and other information networks, marketing expertise and staff, some capacity in languages other than English, multi-modal – in person, web, print)  Data – incomplete, lacking common definitions, variable access  Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation – growing, but insufficient capacity (quantity and quality/expertise) | Discuss and problem solve suspension and expulsion at cross sector **work group meetings** (connect work of various work groups and committees)  **Develop white paper** (June 2017)and **draft policy** (December 2017), conduct community engagement (winter/spring 2018), adopt policy by ELC (spring 2018), disseminate throughout state and incorporate in 2018 CCDF plan update (June 2018).  **Inventory, coordinate/align and disseminate existing T/TA and PD resources and strategies** related to social-emotional development and supports that can prevent or reduce suspension and expulsion  **Identify resource gaps and strategize improvements**  Conduct **messaging/marketing** about the importance of understanding, preventing and reducing suspension and expulsion  Develop data collection and analysis processes and **data sharing** agreements  Establish plan to **evaluate progress** toward short- and long-term outcomes | **White paper** (June 2017)  State-level **policy** (December 2017-June 2018)  Improved access to and use of **data** to inform short and long-term planning and decisions (through data sharing agreements and processes, such as interagency MOUs, policy-practice loops, Spring 2018)  Comprehensive, aligned and annotated **resource list** of existing T/TA, PD and related strategies available to Oregon trainers, consultants, providers and parents (Spring 2018)  Strategic **plan** (recommendations) **to fill resource gaps** and target future investments  Website, print and other **messages** to the public/early learning field (including ELD/OCC staff and leadership)  Develop and deliver **cross-program professional development** focused on creating and sustaining positive learning environments | **Program and provider buy-in** of the problem reflecting Gilliam’s thinking that “Expulsion is not a child behavior. It’s an adult decision.”  **Improved identification** of children and staff needing support  **Increased collaboration** between system partners  **Increased provider and program knowledge, skills and abilities** for supporting social-emotional development and needs of all children, including children who may present challenging behaviors and/or needs  **More rapid, aligned, and efficient access, deployment and use of resources** – including T/TA, PD and early childhood mental health consultation supports | **Children successful** in school and life  **Highly skilled and supported early learning workforce**  **Prevention and reduction of suspension and expulsion** and other exclusionary practices  **Adequate (robust) resources and supports** to providers, programs and families to so all children are able to learn and thrive. |

*State policies on early learning suspension and expulsion either don’t exist or are insufficient. More thoughtful policies – ones that reflect an understanding of expulsion as a symptom of a set of problems related to quality, equity, and adequate supports - are needed. (Carrie McCann, BUILD)*

## Appendix B

## Early Learning Council Guiding Principles

The Early Learning Council has established six guiding principles and operational questions that are designed to help ensure that the Early Learning Council’s core values, principles and goals are infused through the work that it conducts and guides. These guiding principles and questions that should be considered and asked before making any decision.

1. The Early Learning Council operates with cultural responsiveness in the best interest of children and their families and recognizes family as a child’s first teacher.

a. Have you considered the family norms and values?

b. Have you considered non-dominant cultures?

c. Have you applied the Equity Lens?

2. The Early Learning Council promotes equity in access and allocation of resources to and cultural responsiveness for populations furthest from opportunity.

a. How are resources allocated to produce the most equitable outcomes for children and families

furthest from opportunity?

b. Have you considered families and children from the following communities?

i. African American

ii. Latino

iii. API

iv. Tribal Communities

v. Children in the foster care system

vi. Children with disabilities

vii. English language learners

viii. Economic disparities

ix. Immigrants and refugees

x. Geographic isolation

3. The Early Learning Council is committed to moving beyond a culture of compliance to one of continuous improvement.

a. Is continuous improvement supported throughout systems and services?

b. Do providers/caregivers/educators have competencies, supports and financial resources for best outcomes for children & families?

4. The Early Learning Council supports practice-based evidence and data-driven decision-making and accountability for realistic, measurable outcomes for children and families whenever possible.

a. Are these measures realistic?

b. How long will it take for these outcomes to be measurable?

c. Is there data or research available to support these outcomes or measures?

d. Do these outcomes further the commitment to support the whole child?

5. The Early Learning Council ensures that family-parent voice and roles are respected, enlisted, included and valued.

a. Are you meeting people where they are?

b. Are parents and families empowered as decision-makers?

6. The Early Learning Council promotes collaboration, alignment and coordination within communities and across sectors.

a. Are you engaging across agencies and partners to work toward success for children and families?

b. Are you working together to benefit children and families?

c. Is there transparency in community public engagement?

d. Are you consulting with communities?

## Appendix C

## Key Early Learning Policy, Research and Evaluation Questions

*(adopted by the Measuring Success Committee January 2017)*

**1. Impact of the Early Learning System on Children and Families**

***Key Question:*** *Are state-funded and affiliated services improving healthy development for young children and families furthest from opportunity?*

***Sub Questions:***

1.1 How have early learning services impacted children’s developmental progress? Has the

developmental progress of children under six improved?

1.2 Are all young children needing developmental supports receiving services, and is it improving the

lives of children and families?

1.3 How have early learning services impacted children and families from the parents’ perspective,

and are parents actively engaged?

1.4 Are early learning services delivered in a culturally relevant manner?

1.5 How have early learning services differentially impacted children and families furthest from

opportunity and have disparities been reduced?

1.6 What are the processes for programs’ continuous quality improvement? What is the quality of

programs, and is quality improving?

1.7. How can technical assistance by the ELD be improved to enhance early learning services?

**2. Access to Early Learning Services**

***Key Question:*** Are early learning investments improving the lives of children and families furthest from opportunity?

***Sub Questions:***

2.1 What state funded and affiliated early learning services are available for children and families

furthest from opportunity?

2.1 Are early learning investments prioritized to reach those furthest from opportunity?

2.2 Are state funded and affiliated early learning services located in communities with high

concentrations of children and families furthest from opportunity?

2.3 How are early learning services engaging children and families furthest from opportunity?

2.4 Are children and families able to seamlessly transition among early learning services?

2.5 What are the barriers that prevent some children and families furthest from opportunity from

participating in state-funded services?

**3. Early Learning System Coordination**

***Key Question:*** *Are early learning services aligned, coordinated, and family centered?*

***Sub Questions:***

3.1 How do early learning organizations align and coordinate family services?

3.2 Are children and families able to navigate and seamlessly transition among early learning services?

3.3 What are the barriers to an effectively coordinated and aligned early learning system?

3.4 How are resources blended and braided to achieve collective impact within the early learning

system?

3.5 Are culturally-specific community-based organizations and services effectively integrated

partners in the early learning system?

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