

A Suspension and Expulsion Prevention Policy Guide for New Hampshire Afterschool Programs

A photograph of a man and a young boy sitting on a wooden bench in a forest. The man, on the left, is wearing a dark t-shirt with 'NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS' and a logo, and a baseball cap. He is looking down at the boy. The boy, on the right, is wearing a dark t-shirt and shorts, and is looking down with his hand near his face. The background shows trees and foliage. The entire image has a green tint.

**Developed By: The New Hampshire Afterschool
Suspension and Expulsion Prevention Task Force
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Purpose of the Guide

This guide was created as a tool to support afterschool programs with the development of policies seeking to create pathways for the inclusion of all children/youth by decreasing the occurrence of suspension and expulsion in afterschool programs.

Why Develop the Guide?

This guide was developed to address the needs of afterschool programs in the state of New Hampshire. One such need comes in light of Child Care Licensing Unit rules that require licensed programs to have a written policy addressing the limitations of expulsion of children/youth due to challenging behaviors. Additionally, this guide was developed to support afterschool programs with the development of policies that seek to include all children/youth in afterschool programs.

Who Developed the Guide?

The New Hampshire Afterschool Suspension and Expulsion Prevention Task Force is comprised of New Hampshire afterschool professionals representing members of the Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration, the Child Care Licensing Unit, A Comprehensive Resource for Out-of-Schooltime Staff New Hampshire (ACROSS NH), and afterschool program administrators.

Why Prevent Suspension and Expulsion?

Studies on the effectiveness and outcomes of suspension and expulsion conclude that they do not improve behavior, climate, or safety, and their use runs counter to our best knowledge of promoting healthy child/youth development. At the same time, research shows many positive outcomes from participation in afterschool programs that intentionally address growth in personal and social skills. Positive outcomes include an increase in youth self-perception, positive social behaviors, and self-regulation skills, as well as significant reductions in problem behaviors (Qureshi, 2014). **Thus, suspension and expulsion either limit or eliminate access to programming that is shown to be beneficial for children/youth.**

What is Suspension?

Suspension is a reduction in time a child/youth may be in the program. A suspension might:

- Require a child/youth to cease attendance for a set duration of time
- Reduce the number of days or amount of time that a child/youth may attend the program
- Modify how a child/youth can positively participate in the program

What is Expulsion?

Expulsion is the removal of a child/youth from an afterschool program for an indefinite period of time. It can be terminating the enrollment of a child/youth from the program because of a challenging behavior.

Prevention Practices

Preventing suspension and expulsion can be connected to proactive practices such as family collaboration, staff training/professional development, program evaluation, and reflective practices.

Program Evaluation and Reflective Practices

Creating and following a plan and procedure for program evaluation and reflective practices can support program administration and staff in finding their areas of strength and areas of need. The information gained by the program administration and staff can be used to identify areas for further training and professional development, and to implement new practices that may prevent future challenges.

Training and Professional Development

Training and professional development can be ongoing and/or tailored to meet a specific need. Providing program administration and staff with continual training can support in preventing and addressing challenging behaviors by building knowledge and skills. As program administration, staff, families, and children/youth collaborate to address a specific challenge, they may identify a need for targeted training and professional development to enhance skills and deepen knowledge.

Family Collaboration

The program administration, staff, and family form a team and actively collaborate, communicating with each other and sharing information about the needs of the child/youth. They work together to meet the objectives of:

- > Identifying possible function(s)/cause(s) of the challenging behavior.
- > Creating a prevention plan which identifies possible solutions or supportive actions for the program administration, staff, family, and child/youth to implement to prevent the behavior from continuing to happen and support the child/youth and program in gaining new methods and skills. A prevention plan may include: setting individual goals for the child/youth to work toward gaining new skills, identifying specific strategies to be practiced at home and in the program, and/or incorporating professional services from the community, school district, or other source.

What Does an Expulsion Prevention Policy Include?

The following must be included in an expulsion policy in order to be compliant with the NH Child Care Licensing Rules:

- Steps the program will take to assist the child in maintaining enrollment prior to expelling the child for challenging behavior(s)
- Family notification regarding their child's challenging behavior(s)
- The responsibility of the program if the challenging behavior results in a serious safety risk to the child or others within the program

Also consider addressing:

- How the policy upholds the program mission, objectives, and values
- How the policy will be implemented
- How staff will be trained to implement the policy
- How and when the policy and its implementation will be reviewed (annually, bi-annually, and/or as needed)

Technical Assistance

Contact ACROSS NH at 603-206-6800 or acrossnh@seresc.net for further support with: writing and implementing a suspension and expulsion prevention policy, finding additional resources, and providing professional development opportunities to enhance skills and deepen knowledge around challenging behaviors.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION PREVENTION POLICY SAMPLE

Write an introduction addressing:

- The program's values regarding the prevention of suspension and expulsion.
- The program's commitment to implementing the policy.

Sample Introduction:

[Program Name] is committed to preventing suspension and expulsion of children/youth from our program. [Program Name] objectives are to create a safe and inclusive environment that promotes growth in social and emotional learning and that values children/youth as partners in their learning. As such, [Program Name] is committed to the goal of preventing suspension and expulsion by investing in policies that support our values of safety, inclusion, and collaboration with families.

Address Child/Youth and Family Expectations:

- What are the expectations for children/youth in the program?
- How are families expected to participate in assisting their child/youth?
- What happens when these expectations are not met?

Expectations Sample:

All children/youth and families at [Program Name] are expected to keep themselves and others safe. When problems arise, they must be solved safely, refraining from the use of physical aggression and negative behaviors. When a child/youth acts unsafely, measures to restore safety must be taken, and children or youth, families, program staff and administrators must work collaboratively to find a solution to the problem.

Address the measures and steps taken when a child/youth has been unsafe:

- How unsafe behaviors are addressed.
- How and when unsafe behaviors are documented.

- How and when the program will communicate and engage with families.
- How the program will keep all children or youth and staff, safe within the program.
- How the program will plan to further assist the child/youth to maintain enrollment.

Measures and Steps Sample:

1. When children/youth have challenging and unsafe behavior at [Program Name], staff shall assist to de-escalate the situation and regain a safe environment.
2. Program staff will assist the child(ren)/youth with regulating their emotions with the goal of the child(ren)/youth becoming ready to rejoin the group or activity safely.
3. Staff shall document (in writing) events of unsafe behavior, including the circumstances that may have influenced the actions.
4. Program administration and staff shall share the documentation with the child/youth's family within 24 hours of the occurrence.
5. When an unsafe or challenging behavior or behaviors repeat, the program administration, staff, family and child/youth shall form a collaboration team, schedule collaboration meetings, and work through the program's "Program-Family Collaboration Forms."
6. Using the information collected from the collaborative work, the team shall form and implement a support plan and schedule times to assess, reflect, and update the plan.
7. Should all measures to support the child/youth, family, and program staff in attending to the challenging behavior become exhausted, and the exhibited behavior continues, posing a serious risk to the safety and well-being of the child/youth, other children/youth, and/or the program staff, the collaboration team shall make the decision for the cessation of enrollment in the program.

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION PREVENTION POLICY TEMPLATE

Introduction:

Expectations:

Measures and Steps:

PROGRAM – FAMILY COLLABORATION FORM EXAMPLE	
<u>Program-Family Collaboration Team</u> Child/youth: Family member(s): Administrator(s): Staff member(s):	Date: Time:
<u>Agenda</u> 1) <u>Establish positive connections</u> with each other on the team. (The program representation can discuss or ask for information about the observed strengths of the child/youth and family. The family can discuss and ask for information about the strengths of the program.) 2) Together, address questions and prompts designed <u>to uncover the cause of the behavior.</u> Sample questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What challenging behaviors have been happening in the program? Outside of the program? • What are the circumstances surrounding these behaviors? • What are [child/youth's name] strengths? Areas of need? Possible stressors? Possible soothers? • Is there any information about these behaviors from other professionals involved with [child/youth]? 3) Based on the possible causes of the behavior, <u>generate ideas of strategies, approaches, resources, and/or training</u> for the child/youth, family, and program staff to implement.	

- 4) **Assign responsibilities for the implementation** of the ideas generated from agenda item three to each of the members of the collaboration team.
- 5) **Establish a date and time** for the next collaboration meeting.
- 6) Together, **create an agenda for the next collaboration meeting**. Include reflection questions and a time to plan for any further required actions.

Team Responsibility Assignments

Child/youth:

Family member(s):

Administrator(s):

Staff member(s):

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Resources

Qureshi, F. (2014). *Policies and programs aimed at keeping kids safe and out of trouble: Research roundup*. Journalists Resource. <https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/education/policies-programs-aimed-keeping-kids-safe-out-trouble-research-roundup/>

[Cover Photo Credit: Abigail J. Blodgett]