

**Expulsion and Suspension Prevention Webinar Series –  
Webinar 1: Basic Research, Data Trends, and the Pillars of Prevention  
February 11, 2015**

**Tricia Haley:** All right, everyone, once again, welcome to the first webinar in our expulsion and suspension prevention webinar series. My name is Tricia Haley. I'm with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). I'm going to give you just a few quick logistical announcements, and then we will get started.

First of all, you have likely noticed that all of our lines are muted. It's so that we can avoid getting any background noise. It does not mean that we don't want to hear your input, your thoughts, and your questions. And we would invite you to share those throughout the course of the webinar, through your chat and question boxes. We'll be watching those as they come in and then we're hoping to have a few minutes for Q&A at the end of the webinar. So, please do feel free to chat those in throughout the course of the webinar.

The only other thing that I will mention, because we get this question every time and we will get it at least four more times probably in the next hour, the slides in this webinar are not currently available online. The full webinar, both the audio and the slides, will eventually be available and as soon as we have that posted, we will send it out to you. But the slides are not currently available online.

With that, I will hand it over to Shantel Meek, the policy advisor for early childhood development here at ACF.

**Shantel Meek:** Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to thank all of you for joining the first in our series of four webinars focused on expulsion and suspension prevention in early childhood studies. I think this is a topic that's really captured the conscience of people around the country and it certainly has ours.

Today's presentation is going to focus on the research and data trends observed over the last several years and it will highlight what we know and what we don't know about expulsion and suspension in early childhood studies. If we could go to the next slide.

**Shantel Meek:** Next week we're going to focus on policy, just to give you an overview of the series. We're going to unpack the full Federal policy statement released by U.S. Department of Education (ED) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in December.

We're also going to highlight Colorado's work in addressing expulsion and suspension and children's social, emotional, and behavioral health through State policy. And finally, we're going to hear from Chicago Public Schools and their efforts to curb expulsion and suspension in the early learning settings and into the early grades to hear from a local example. The following week, we're going to focus on intervention and prevention practices, and we'll take a deep dive in the positive behavior intervention supports as well as early childhood mental health consultation.

We're also going to take a look at diversity-informed tenets for providers working with families and children, because given the racial disparities seen in these practices, we know that diversity informed practice and things like implicit bias play into this issue.

Our last webinar is going to focus on data, and it's going to highlight data collection systems at both the Federal and State levels. We're going to highlight Washington State and Connecticut and hear from Dr. Gilliam again as well as from our Office of Civil Rights from the ED on the data that they collect on the issue.

So without further ado, I'll hand it over to Linda Smith, our fearless leader, who's the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development here at HHS to provide some framing remarks before introducing and handing it over to our guest speaker today, Dr. Walter Gilliam.

**Linda Smith:** Okay. Well, I want to thank Shantel for putting together this series. This is Linda Smith and I want to welcome you all as well to this, I think very, very important topic that we're going to discuss over the next several weeks.

As you know, President Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative last year to address the persistent opportunity gaps faced by young boys and men of color and to ensure that all people could reach their full potential. This was a very important initiative and one that we completely endorsed and jumped on board with, primarily because of the issues that we're going to start talking about today.

The MBK initiative seeks to address stubborn opportunity gaps from cradle to grave for certain portions of our portions of our population, and as you know, we believe wholeheartedly that ensuring that all children have a healthy start and enter school ready to learn is the first step in this process.

I think everyone knows the brain research and how critical that it is to the foundation for what happens in later life with the children and we completely endorse that and in fact have made getting more information on the brain development now as the top priority for ACF over the next year. So, it's very important, and it's very important to children who live in poverty, including disproportionate numbers of children who, because of their color, face an array of environmental factors that disrupt their healthy development and ultimately their life outcomes.

So, we know that many of the things that contribute to some of these disparities include poor-quality early childhood education, lack or poor quality health, access to healthcare and other things like that. So these things also, as we all know, have a long impact and are felt for years to come for children. They also contribute to many of what we know is going on in terms of the disturbing trends around school suspensions and expulsions, and that these are starting in preschool and earlier and that we really have got to take this on. There's no question about that.

For example, a nationally representative study found that over 10 percent of preschool teachers in State-funded, prekindergarten (preK) programs reported expelling at least one preschooler in the last year, a rate more than three times the average for teachers of K-12 public school

students. So, these are unacceptable. It indicates what we know we need to do, and that is to take a look at what we do around the workforce issue. Recent data from our own ED indicates the African American boys make up 18 percent of the preschool enrollment, but 48 percent of preschoolers suspended more than once.

Again, these are alarming trends and we need all hands on deck to make sure that we deal with this problem. We all share the responsibility for this. There's no question about it. These things start early in life and they can either be turned around quickly and more easily or grow into really major problems that put children on a trajectory that is very negative and that sets in motion certain things to happen with their later life.

As you know, as a part of the White House summit on early education, we were pleased to release the first ever Federal policy statement on expulsion and suspension practices. We did that in conjunction with the ED, and as Shantel said, you will learn more about that in the next webinar.

We hope that through this series of webinars we can shed more light on the issue and partner with all of you around the country to call attention to the issue and figure out what some of the solutions might be that bring an end to these practices.

So, I'm going to now hand it over to Dr. Walter Gilliam from Yale University, who has probably done more research on this than anyone in the country, and who is going to talk to you about what we have learned and what he has learned along the way that can help point us in the direction for future solutions. So Dr. Gilliam, if you want to take it away.

**Walter Gilliam:** Thank you very much, Linda, and thank you, Shantel. I certainly appreciate the leadership that ACF has shown in taking a look at this very difficult, hard to wrap your head around sometimes problem that we have with children being expelled and suspended from our early care and education programs.

I'm going to dive straight into the presentation with talking about how recently, in March 2014, the ED's Office of Civil Rights released data from a study that they had done themselves surveying superintendents of public school systems across the nation. They were asking those superintendents in school systems where public-funded preK programs existed about numbers of children being expelled and suspended from those programs.

And you can see here from the slide, one quote, black children make up 18 percent of preschool enrollment, but 48 percent of the preschool children who were suspended more than once. Also, boys receive more than 3 out of 4 of the out of school preschool suspensions. It doesn't take a microscope or a magnifying glass to be able to see that these rates are far more than what you would expect given the population of the children who are enrolled in these programs.

To try to drive this message home a little bit more, I'm going to show you a video. This is a video of a little girl in St. Petersburg, Florida, about a decade ago. She was throwing a temper tantrum in her classroom and then she was brought to the principal's office and then later this is what happened.

**[Video of young girl being handcuffed in office]**

**Walter Gilliam:** That little girl was a kindergarten child. She had been in her classroom and was engaging in some behavior that the teacher didn't really understand how to deal with. As a result of that, the child was brought to the principal's office. The teacher didn't know what to do from there. Principal didn't know what to do from there.

Instead of contacting the school psychologist or the guidance counselor or the special education department or anybody else within the public school system, what they seem to have done instead, was to contact the St. Petersburg Police Department, which then came into the elementary school and arrested the child and brought her to the police department where her mother had to then pick the child up. Some people do ask what could have possibly caused this kind of a response from the school system, so we do have a video of what was happening in the classroom.

The reason that we have these videos is that later on, the parents appear to have sued the school system and the lawyer found out that there were videos taken of what was happening. The lawyer acquired those videos and then made them available online for people to be able to see. If you're curious what happened in the classroom, this is what happened in the classroom that led up to the child being arrested.

**[Video plays]**

**Walter Gilliam:** You see one child there who then was taken away. The classroom was basically evacuated.

**[Video plays, child creating incidents]**

**Walter Gilliam:** And basically, the video continues on like that for several minutes. This was a child who was struggling with some kind of an emotional challenge at the time and was basically walking around the classroom and knocking things down onto the ground.

The teacher's skillsets at the time were basically to follow the child around the classroom and to tell her that it makes them sad when she knocks things down on the ground, and then when things escalated, eventually they moved the child to the principal's office, I think contacted the St. Petersburg Police Department, which then came to arrest the child.

Now, fortunately most expulsions in our preschool programs and our kindergarten programs are not quite as dramatic as this one was. However, I do like to sometimes show this as an example, to be able to get our heads wrapped around exactly what we're talking about here.

Let me flash back for you, though, back to 2005 when we first started becoming here at the Yale Child Study Center interested in this topic of children being expelled from preK programs. It started out with some curiosity. I was conducting a fairly dry study about how State-funded preK programs were being implemented across the country, what kind of policies guided these

programs at the State level and then at classroom level, how were these programs actually being implemented and what things gave rise to better policy appearance. Was it per child spending or the types of monitoring structures and things like that?

But at the same time that we were designing the study, I was also supervising child psychiatry fellows and child psychology fellows and pediatricians, and I was sitting on the other side of a mirror while they were working with young children, first at five years old. We started noticing that many of the children were being referred to Yale for an evaluation, because they had been expelled from a preschool or a child care program, or they were actually told by the directors of the program that if they didn't go to a place like Yale for an evaluation that they would be expelled or suspended from that program.

Of course, as both a clinician as well as a scholar, this made me quite curious as to what it is that we know about children being expelled from these really young age programs. You know, I'd heard about children being expelled from high school before, but I didn't have much information about what it was like to be expelled from a preschool program. So, I went to the literature to see what kind of research had been conducted in the past and basically found absolutely nothing.

And so, since we were already going to collect this data on State-funded preK programs, contacting the teachers in these programs with a sample of about 4,000 classrooms across the nation, we thought that this would be a good opportunity to weave in some additional questions to ask the teachers about expulsions and suspensions that have actually happened in their programs in order to be able to get a sense of what the rate of expulsion and suspension was, who is being expelled and suspended, and what kind of programmatic features in those programs and classrooms might predict increased likelihood of a child being expelled or suspended.

**Tricia Haley:** Hey, Walter? This is Tricia at ACF. You are occasionally drifting away a little bit. Can you make sure that you are staying close to your microphone?

**Walter Gilliam:** Absolutely. Can you hear me better now?

**Tricia Haley:** Thank you. Yep, you're great.

**Walter Gilliam:** So, this was a survey for 40 States, 52 different, State-funded preK systems operating in those 40 States with about 3,000—well, exactly 3,898 respondents. We had an 81 percent response rate. We used a computer-assisted telephone interview to collect the data from the teachers and we offered the teachers \$10 as well as a letter of appreciation.

Now, what's interesting about this study, at least for maybe some of the people who are on this telephone call, is that 81 percent response rate. That is a terrific response rate. Usually, you shoot for about 40 percent, and if you get 60 percent, that's phenomenal.

We didn't have a hard time at all getting preschool teachers to talk to us, and I think part of it had to do with the fact that we were asking them questions, not just about their classrooms, but also about job stress and teacher depression and why they entered the field in the first place and so we were really quite pleased with this response rate that we got.

We initially just planned on giving them \$10, but then many of the teachers said that what they would have really liked instead was a letter of appreciation from Yale for participating in a survey, which is one of those touching little anecdotes from research that will probably never end up in a research paper, but I thought that I would pass it along to you. That really what seemed to motivate these teachers the most was just having some recognition from somebody that their work really mattered and cared.

So, what is expulsion? In K–12, there is various different definitions depending on the State. One State was identified in 2004 as saying anything that was more than three days of consecutive exclusion from the program was considered an expulsion. Most States that had some kind of a definition say that anything more than 10 days of exclusion, they would call an expulsion. But as you can see, the majority of the States, 32 of those States, leave it up completely to local discretion as to what constitutes an expulsion, versus just being suspended, versus being told not to come back for the rest of the day.

We have no research and data that supports the effectiveness of expulsion. As a matter of fact, according to some research by Russ Skiba at Indiana University, one of the best predictors of being expelled was having been expelled before. And so, if expulsion is an intervention aimed at improving children’s behaviors, it doesn’t seem to be working very well.

In preK, there’s no formal definitions of what an expulsion means or what it means to be expelled until fairly recently, when *Caring For Our Children* started to, as a publication, try to pass some guidelines to actually define what an expulsion was and a suspension.

Eighteen States, back in 2005, stated that they disallowed expulsion, but it wasn’t clear at that time exactly what they were disallowing or how they were even defining it. Thirty-two States either explicitly allowed programs to expel, these are state-funded preK programs. Thirty-two States either explicitly allowed the expulsions to happen or they pass it down to the local level for local implementers to decide exactly what the policies and procedures would be.

So within our survey, we asked teachers this question. “Over the past 12 months, have you ever required a child to terminate participation from your program due to a challenging behavior? Do not include children who were transitioned directly from your program to a special education preschool program, therapeutic preschool program, or some other more appropriate setting.”

And so you see, what we did here was we opted not to call it expulsion, but instead just define what we’re talking about. Terminating all enrollment from the program in a very permanent kind of way. That was the question that was asked. In terms of who we were surveying, we were surveying teachers in state-funded preK programs.

These are programs that are administered at a State level and funded with at least some degree of State dollars, serving children in the 3- to 4-year-old age range. These are classroom-based programs and these are programs where the explicit goal of the program is to provide some kind of a school readiness experience for the children or these were programs that were funded and

administered through a State department of education, which we took as a de facto statement of the program being about education school readiness.

You can see the 40 States here that we were surveying. Fifty-eight percent of the classrooms that we surveyed were in the public schools, 29 percent were in Head Start (HS), because you can see half of those HS classrooms were HS classrooms where the public school was the grantee. And then, 13 percent of those classrooms fell into this other category, which included non-profit child care programs, for-profit child care programs, and faith-affiliated programs.

So what were the results? We found that 10.4 percent of the preK teachers reported expelling at least one child due to a challenging behavior over the past year. Of those teachers who did report expelling a child, most of them, 78 percent, reported expelling only one.

Fifteen percent of the teachers reported expelling two children. Six percent of the classroom teachers reported expelling three children in the past year and we had some teachers at 1 percent reporting expelling four or more children in the past year. When we piloted this survey in Massachusetts in child care programs, we actually ran into, in that survey, one teacher who reported expelling 6 children out of a class of 16 in the course of a 12-month period.

When we computed out a rate of expulsion, we found that for every 1,000 children enrolled in our State-funded preK programs, there was 6.7 expulsions. In order to be able to get a sense of what that compares to, we thought that we would compare that to K–12 rates. Now, we couldn't find any published rates or expulsion for children in grades K–12, however, the Office of Civil Rights at the ED had collected data on them, but they had never apparently written up a report that was available at that time.

The data were available online and so we downloaded those databases, about 16,000 different databases, one for every school district in the United States and computed out the rates ourselves. When we did that, the rate that we found for K–12 expulsion was only 2.1 expulsions per 1,000 children. So, you can see from here that the rate of expulsion for our preK children, 3- and 4-year-olds, was more than 3 times that for children in grades K–12. But in child care programs, the rates seemed to be much higher.

There was a survey done back in 1999 in Detroit, Michigan, with a sample size of 127 and a response rate of 28 percent that reported an expulsion rate of 28 expulsions per 1,000 and these were children in preschool programs and child care programs serving children 3-to-4 years old. Massachusetts, in our pilot study that we conducted, we found a rate of 27 expulsions per 1,000, 39 percent of the classroom teachers reported expelling at least one child in their classroom in the past 12 months.

After we conducted the research in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Department of Education decided to run its own study to see whether or not they would replicate that, so the Massachusetts Department of Education in 2003, after we had told them what the findings were from our study, did another study with 764 child care providers and found that 2 percent of the children in those programs had been expelled, 1 percent had been suggested to leave.

We're not sure exactly what that means to be suggested to leave, and 1 percent was transferred. Of course, if you were to convert percents into thousands, then 2 percent is about 20 per thousand having been expelled and 1 percent is another 10 per thousand, and so basically they found pretty close to the same rates that we had found in Massachusetts the year previous when we collected the data. Colorado did a study. You can see the results there in 2006.

Wisconsin recently did a study where they found that 68 percent of the providers had reported at least expelling, had reported expelling at least one child in the course of their career and 52 percent of the child care providers, and again, these are child care providers serving children 3-to-4 years old, had reported expelling at least one child in the past two years. Alaska had done a similar study, 35 percent of the centers reported expelling at least one child in the past year. The Chicago study is interesting. It was conducting by—

**Tricia Haley:** Walter? You're fading a little bit on us again.

**Walter Gilliam:** Sorry. The Chicago study is interesting in that it was conducted in infant-toddler centers, and in these infant-toddler centers, 42 percent of these centers serving children birth to 3-years old had reported expelling at least one child from the program due to some kind of a challenging behavior, and in most cases what they found was that the challenging behavior was biting or something similar to that.

If we were to graph out the rates of expulsion, this is what you'd basically find. In K–12, it's much lower. Our State-funded preK programs administered through our State departments of education, typically, quite a bit higher and in our child care industry that are not part of our State-funded preK programs, the rate's higher still by a large margin.

You can see here from this map, some States seem to have a much higher expulsion rate than others. The States in red are expelling at more than 10 expulsions per 1,000 children enrolled. Then, you can see various different shades of color showing less rates of expulsion, but nonetheless, some degree of expulsion happening. Of course the States that are not colored at all, the States in white, reported zero expulsions because they didn't have any State-funded preK programs from which to expel anyone.

So of course, when you have results like this, it tends to get front line news coverage in a lot of newspapers and in 2005 when we released the results, it hit the front page of just about every major newspaper in the United States as well as television news.

**[Video of national news show highlights]**

**Walter Gilliam:** As you can see from this kind of coverage that most of what they, the focus of the coverage was really on the sensational aspects of what the rate of expulsion was without getting into too much detail about who exactly was being expelled. What we know is this. In mixed age classrooms with 3- and 4-year old children combined, 4-year olds are more than 50 percent likely than the 3-year olds to be expelled.

Also, boys are expelled at 3.5 times more likely than girls and African American children are expelled at twice the rate of European Americans and five times the rate of Asian Americans. Of course, this degree of disparity, both in terms of gender as well as race, is something that's extremely troubling to us for a lot of reasons. One of the reasons I'll share with you, that it troubles me a lot, especially the rate disparities, is that when we think about our early care and education programs in the United States, we tend to think of these as investments.

We're investing in early care and education, because it pays dividends later on down the road. And many people in this business know about the Perry Preschool Project that found that for every \$1 spent in preschool programs, \$7.14 was yielded back in societal savings by the time the children were 27 years old, and the Abecedarian study, and the Chicago Child Parent Center study.

But what a lot of people don't realize about some of these studies, especially the Perry Preschool Study, which is obviously the most widely cited reason for investing in our preschool programs, is that not only was it a study that randomized children to preschool programs in Ypsilanti, Michigan, just outside of Detroit with a sample size of 123 back in 1964, but another element of that study was that every single one of the children in that study, this study that's used by scholars all across the United States as evidence for investing in preschool programs, was a study conducted with a sample completely comprised of African American children.

So in other words, what we're doing is we are using data that belonged to African American children to justify creating preschool programs for all of our children and then sitting back and allowing those same African American children to be disproportionately pushed out the back door of those programs. Those programs were created, in large part, on data that belongs to them.

There's something about that the, one, just doesn't sound fair at all, and two, underlies the fact that when we're expelling children from these preschool programs, especially children who might come from low income backgrounds, we are basically undercutting our collective investment. Now, these programs tend to yield a better return on investment for children who come from disenfranchised backgrounds and disadvantaged backgrounds. And to expel those children from these programs is a form of undercutting our investment.

Some of the other things that we know about are state-funded preK programs and expulsions is that teacher/child ratio predicts expulsion. As the number of children per teacher increases, the likelihood of an expulsion goes up as well. Also, in our programs that are open for longer lengths of the day, it increases the likelihood that an expulsion will happen.

Also, teacher job stress. The teachers in our sample completed a job stress inventory and teachers who reported high levels of job stress were far more likely to report expelling at least one child in the past year than teachers who reported low levels of job stress. In fact, the teachers also completed something called the Center for Academical Studies Depression Scale, which is a depression screener. Teachers who screened positive for depression expelled at twice the rate of teachers who screened negative for depression.

Here's a cartoon. Today, we're going to explore and paint how we feel when we're picked up late from preschool, this one teacher says. Job stress. But here's another example of job stress in the classroom. I want to show you a clip from a newscast that happened from Houston, Texas back in February 2008 that gives a sense of what it's like for a teacher to be experiencing high levels of job stress in the classroom and what kind of an impact that might have on the children who are in her care.

**[Video featuring girl at home and  
at school featuring covert audio of teacher berating student]**

**Walter Gilliam:** Unfortunately, I don't think that this is a very isolated incident. These things happen in a lot of our early care and education centers and kindergarten programs across the nation. In order to be able to conduct some of the research that we've been doing on expulsion as well as on early childhood mental health consultation, we've created a measure called the preschool expulsion risk measure.

Now, this isn't the measure to decide who should be expelled, and I would certainly never create a measure like that, but rather it's a measure to finally determine just how at risk a child seems to be at expulsions so that we can then see if we can change that degree of risk for a child through providing supports to the teacher.

You can see that many of the items here on this measure has to do with the teacher rating the degree to which she feels or he feels that this child's behavior somehow impacts or interferes with his or her ability to be a good teacher or the other children in the classroom to be able to learn or benefit from the classroom experiences. But you can also see some of these items on the measure, especially the ones here in bold, also have to do with a different factor.

They have to do with the degree to which the teacher feels some degree of hope that this child's behavior might actually improve over time and some of the emerging findings that we're finding right now is that when teachers feel that the child's behaviors, whatever those behaviors are in the classroom, somehow impact on that teacher's ability to feel that she or he is doing a good job in the classroom and that teacher feels a low degree of hope that anything could improve in terms of that child's behavior, then the likelihood of that child being expelled seems to go much higher. In terms of its relationship to job stress, you see that for this one item, this child's classroom behaviors are not likely to improve significantly.

Teachers who report high levels of job stress are far more likely to agree or strongly agree with an item like that. Also, for this item there is little that I or anyone else can do to significantly improve this child's behavior. Teachers with high degrees of job stress are far more likely to endorse an item like that for a specific child. This child's parents will not be much help in improving the child's behavior. Again, a strong degree of relationship to job stress.

And then this final item, some mornings I find myself hoping that this child will be absent from my classroom. Teachers report high levels of job stress far more likely to say that this is true to agree or strongly agree to this regarding an individual child. In fact, 50 percent of teachers who

reported elevated levels of job stress in classrooms feel this way on a daily basis about at least one of the children in the classroom.

From a positive standpoint, we did find this, that there seems to be a significant relationship between access to a behavioral consultant or an early childhood mental health consultant in terms of its likelihood to decrease the likelihood of children being expelled from preschool programs. We see that when teachers have no access to any supports regarding children's' challenging behaviors in the classrooms, this is the likelihood that that teacher is going to report an expulsion within the past 12 months.

When there is somebody available on an on-call basis, the likelihood is significantly less and when there's somebody available to the teacher onsite in the program, even less likely still. What we're finding from this, is strong evidence for at least a correlation that having access to an early childhood mental health consultant or some other type of person who can provide supports to the teacher regarding challenging behaviors significantly decreases the likelihood of somebody being expelled in the course of that year.

In Connecticut, where Yale University is located, we have a fairly high rate of expulsions in our State-funded preK programs and as a result of that, the State of Connecticut decided to invest increasing amounts of money in early childhood mental health consultation. They created in 2002, the early childhood consultation partnership program, and you can see here from the information on this slide some information about what that program looks like.

It's available to literally every single private and public-funded early care and education program serving children 0-to-5 years old throughout the entire State of Connecticut. If a teacher or a director requests the services, then an early childhood mental health consultant, who is trained and credentialed, is placed in that classroom to provide supports to that teacher. The intervention is brief. It's only three months long, but it's fairly intensive during the time that the consultant is in the classroom.

The consultant spends at least 6 to 8 hours per week and in some cases more than that, coaching and consulting directly to the teacher, while the teacher is working with the children. Definitely modeled after a coaching model with lots of home-based intervention as well and working with the teacher and the parent together in order to create a more solid partnership between the parent and the teacher.

We have been evaluating this program in three different randomized control trials throughout the State of Connecticut. The first two studies were within preschool classrooms and the third study was with infant-toddler centers. In most cases, these were child care centers with a few HS centers thrown in and every once in a while some public school programs as well.

What we found basically was this. In a three-month period of time, significant reductions in comparison to control children as rated in terms of oppositionality by the teacher. When the teachers were rating hyperactivity, significant decreases as well, in comparison to the control, restlessness and impulsivity, and overall externalizing or acting out behavior problems. That was study one. Study two largely replicated those findings. Again, significant differences in the

treatment group over a three-month period of time and no significant differences at all in the control group.

In the infant-toddler centers, some of the things that we found was that in the course of the intervention, after three months the teachers in the programs rated the level of family involvement for the children as significantly higher, in large part due to the fact that the intervention was largely aimed at trying to get the parents and the teachers to work and collaborate together and to meet on a regular basis regarding the children's development as well as significant improvements in peer social competence, and this is actually looking at the children who were not the focus of the intervention.

In children who were not the focus of the intervention in the treatment classrooms, those children were rated as being significantly more socially competent in relationship to their experiences with their peers and the thing to highlight with this is that we're talking about a three-month intervention and to be able to get these kinds of impacts in a three-month intervention is really quite staggering.

Here's a cartoon that ran at about the time that the expulsion data were first coming out. This mother says, "This is your fifth expulsion. If you don't stop your constant name calling, do you know where you might end up?" And the child says, "In Congress?" Now of course, I don't know if this child is going to be in Congress, but we've been very happy to know that many of the expulsion policy recommendations that we have been making on the basis of some of these data have indeed made it to the highest levels of U.S. government and Congress and to the White House.

Some of the recommendations that we've made are this. First, preK programs should not be expelling preKindergarteners. We need to instead be assessing the needs and the developmental needs of these children and providing supports and facilitating direct and supported transfers if necessary from that program to another program that might be more well equipped, but certainly in no instances just expelling the child without any supports offered or without some kind of a guided transfer to another appropriate setting.

All preK teachers should have regular access to behavioral consultants, but unfortunately only about 1 in 5 in the United States do have something like this. Also, all preK teachers should be in classrooms with no more than 10 children in there per adult, however, unfortunately 16 percent of our State-funded preK programs during the time that we collected this data reported having significantly more than 10 children per adult.

Supportive policies and services regarding teacher job stress, these could include reasonable hours with rates for our preschool teachers, better conditions, compensations, and supports. In the end, the degree to which these teachers can do a good job for our children has to do with the degree to which these teachers feel supported in their work, and if we treat them poorly, it shouldn't come as to much of a surprise when some of our teachers in turn might treat our children less kindly than what we would hope.

Also, supportive services focusing specifically on teacher job stress. Early childhood mental health consultation really shouldn't be just about the mental health of the children, but also it should be about the families and the support staff, the teachers that are in those classrooms as well.

Federal and State funding for these types of services to support early childhood mental health consultation and reduce teacher job stress, tracking expulsion rates and disproportionality at the Federal level as well as the State level, and implementing and evaluating promising models and programs for reducing challenging behaviors. and reducing expulsion and suspension practices for all of our children.

If you want to know more about these, I encourage you to go visit the Zigler Center's Web site, [www.ziglercenter.el.edu](http://www.ziglercenter.el.edu), where you can download a variety of different policy briefs on all the topics that we talked about today. Now, we're open for questions. Thank you.

**Tricia Haley:** Thanks, Walter. So, feel free to please type in your questions in the chat box and we'll funnel those over to Walter. One question that we got, I think this is in reference to the preK study that you talked about, was "What did the studies find for Latino boys?" Walter?

**Walter Gilliam:** Well, what we found for Latino boys was that the -- yes, I'm still here. Can you hear me?

**Tricia Haley:** Yes, we got you, yep.

**Walter Gilliam:** We found for the Latino children that the rate of expulsion in the program that we were surveying anyway, these were State-funded preK programs was no different than other European-descent children. The real race and ethnicity outlier here was the African American children.

**Linda Smith:** And then I think one of the things—another question, Walter, that we got was access to behavior staff for the teacher, the child, or both. I mean, when these consultants go into the classroom, I think is what they're asking about here.

**Walter Gilliam:** Now the answer will be yes. Yes, yes, and yes, that the role of these supports really should be to go into the classroom and to provide coaching and support directly to the teacher.

That the idea behind this is not that these would be people who would go into the classroom, pull the child out and do some kind of therapeutic magic on the child and insert the child back into the classroom, but rather instead what these people should be is people who can be a support to the teacher, who can come into the classroom, provide some objective eyes on what's happening in the classroom and then coach the teacher in terms of ways in which that teacher can be interacting differently with that child as well as having more developmentally appropriate behavioral expectations for the classroom on the whole.

We're never going to be able to get ahead of this problem if we try to address the simply one child at a time with specialists. We really need to be providing much better, clearer coaching strategies for all of our teachers so that once the consultant leaves the classroom, they've left behind a greater degree of competencies and expertise with the teachers who are going to remain.

**Linda Smith:** Walter, we have a question about the credentials of the people doing the work and I think this is something that people are interested in for the people going into the classroom. What are you finding there and what are your recommendations?

**Walter Gilliam:** Well, the program that we have here in Connecticut is a program where all of the consultants are Master's degrees and some form of mental health or mental health services are also given specialized training in how to work with young children and how to understand the culture of early childhood care and education.

Head Start programs, State-funded preK programs, programs in public schools, as well as child care programs all have a unique culture to them and so the mental health consultant would also have to have some understanding of that. So in Connecticut, the program that we've been evaluating, all of those people who are providing this support to teachers are all mental health professionals at the Master's level, but they've been given specialized training in how to consult and how to consult specifically with early care and education providers.

I do know that there are other States that have programs like this that might use consultants who have less than a Master's degree and in some places they might even have not only a Bachelor's degree. They might be paraprofessionals. We don't know of any compelling research to suggest that that's a smart way to go. I think instead what we should be thinking about is providing the same level of expertise in social and emotional development as what we would provide for speech language consulting or occupational and physical therapy consulting in our classrooms.

Our early care and education teachers often times, and if they're in the public schools, will have access to speech language pathologists and these speech language pathologists are not people with a high school diploma who are interested in speech. These are people who have very specific training in early language development who can be coaches and resources to the teacher. We think the same should go as true as well for social and emotional development.

**Tricia Haley:** We're getting a lot of questions about early childhood mental health consultation. I'll just remind folks that the third webinar is actually going to focus a big chunk of time on early childhood mental health consultation and give a lot more information and resources, but a follow up question, somebody asked. Delaware's early childhood mental health consultation service maintains a 97 percent success rate in avoiding expulsions. Is that a standard effect you see in other States with this service?

**Walter Gilliam:** It's hard to say. I don't know of a lot of State early childhood mental health consultation programs that have been able to document the exact rate of expulsion for children who went through the program versus those who didn't.

In Connecticut, we were doing randomized control trials, and so we were randomly assigning classrooms to either get the intervention or randomly assigning them to wait three months and because the intervention was only three months, it allowed us to be able to do that because we were already running a wait list anyway. But because our control group also gets the intervention later, it doesn't allow us to look at long-term impacts.

And so in Connecticut, we haven't reported out what the rate of expulsion was for children getting the treatment versus those who don't, because eventually everybody who requests the treatment gets it. And so we were only able to look at short-term impacts. I'd love to be able to answer the question, but I don't think that we have good data across a multitude of different programs like that across the nation to be able to say so.

**Tricia Haley:** We've gotten a few questions on disabilities on kids in early intervention and special ed. preschool programs. Did your study find anything specific with those groups of kids?

**Walter Gilliam:** No. We weren't able to actually find out anything specifically on that, because we weren't able to address those questions in there. It was part of a much, much larger survey that was asking about everything you could possibly imagine that could happen in these State-funded preK programs. We weren't able to put in a lot of the questions that we would have liked to, but if we were to do this survey over again with funding to do another national survey, I would certainly want to look at rate of expulsions among children with developmental disabilities.

It's a tricky question, though, because you'd want to know what the rate of expulsion is for children who have a disability, not just those who have been identified as having a disability, and it's quite possible that some of these children who are being expelled are children who do have developmental challenges and developmental disabilities, who instead of being expelled, really should be identified and referred for special education services.

**Linda Smith:** Here's another one, Walter. I'm going to read this one, and it is a very interesting question. "Do you see any different rates based on the racial ethnic mix of children or the staff?" In other words, if there are few African American students, is expulsion of African American students more likely and are African American teachers more or less likely to suspend African American students?

**Walter Gilliam:** Linda, that's a terrific question and every time that I've presented on these findings for the past 9, 10 years, eventually if the Q&A session goes long enough that question comes up, because it's a very compelling question. I can tell you this. We found disparities in gender and we found disparities in race. In terms of gender, it allowed us to then be able to ask the question of "Do male teachers expel boys more likely than girls the same as female teachers?"

That was a fairly easy question for us to answer, because even though we only had—2 percent of our sample was male teachers, we had a very large sample and male teachers, men, tend to have about 50 percent boys in the classroom and 50 percent girls in the classroom, the same as our

female teachers. And so when we looked at the data, we found that female teachers, women, tended to expel boys at 4.5 times the rate of girls and male teachers tended to expel boys at 4.5 times the rate of girls. And so there was no significant difference between men and women, however, when we tried to answer the same question for race, it was much more complicated.

The reason why, is that the racial composition of the children is not random in comparison to the racial composition of the teachers. In other words, if the lead teacher is African American, then in our sample, overwhelmingly the likelihood was that the vast majority, if not all the children, were African American as well. And the same thing if the teacher were Latino or Latina and spoke Spanish, then pretty much every single one of the children in the classroom were the Spanish-speaking children in that school district.

Race and ethnicity of the children isn't randomly assigned on the basis of the race and ethnicity or even balanced assigned on the race and ethnicity of the teacher, so we really couldn't answer that question. It's an important question and it's something that we want to get at, but it's not something that we can answer with that kind of methodology. However, I can tell you that it's a question that we're pursuing, but we're wanting to pursue it with much more in-depth, fine-grain studies that we can do in the future.

**Tricia Haley:** We've got another really interesting question. It says, "What do we know about how the relationship between parents and teachers influences the likelihood of expulsion?"

**Walter Gilliam:** Well, we know from on some of the studies that we're doing here on the early childhood consultation partnership program that when teachers are given access to the mental health consultation, that means that the parents are given access to it too, and one of the byproduct findings we have is that it tends to increase the amount of cooperation and collaboration between the parents and the teachers and that that seems to play some role in decreasing the likelihood of children expressing challenging behaviors in the classroom, just having the teachers and the parents on the same page.

I can tell you this much too, and I guess this really isn't based on hard data as much as it's based on just my own experiences, having seen many children being expelled from State-funded preK programs and child care programs and consulting myself and doing early childhood mental health consultant work for many years. I've never seen a case where a child was expelled from a preschool or child care program where the teacher and the parents knew and liked each other. I've never seen it happen once.

And so when I'm providing early childhood mental health consultation in these programs, my first task is to meet with the teacher, then meet with the parent, find out the story from the parent and then once I find out that story from the parent, ask that parent, how comfortable is that parent in sharing that information with the teacher and then using that as an opportunity to build some empathy and some shared degree of understanding of the child between the parent and the child. If that doesn't solve the problem, it will at least buy me a lot of time to actually be able to provide some consultation to the teacher in order to try to have some solution that can work.

I'm a firm believer in the importance of parent involvement, but I'm also a firm believer in the importance of teacher involvement in the lives of the family as well. It's a bidirectional street and that we really should be focusing on trying to create as strong of a collaboration between our parents and teachers as possible.

**Linda Smith:** Here's another question that's interesting. "Are the consultants that you've trained or been working with able to identify poor teaching or environments that could be causing or contributing to the behavior issues?"

**Walter Gilliam:** Yes, often. As a matter of fact, in many cases when consultants go out into early childhood classrooms, they find things that could be done differently in the classroom that would be beneficial to every single child in the classroom, not just the child who prompted the referral in the first place. Now, in some cases, the teacher does seem to be having very developmentally appropriate and very consistent behavioral strategies that she's employing in the classroom and nonetheless, there's a child with some very severe, challenging behaviors, but in many cases it's not just about the child.

It might be about the teacher's practices along behavioral management as well or the fit between that child and that teacher. And so a big part of the consultation really isn't necessarily specific about the child, it's really much more about what can this teacher be doing differently that would be beneficial to not just this child, but all the other children in the classroom as well as all the other children who will come after these children in the course of this teacher's career.

**Tricia Haley:** Great. So I think we have time for one more question. We had a lot of questions and a lot of them on mental health consultations. Again, the third webinar will really dig into that, but we have all these questions and we'll look forward to thinking about them more.

The last question, "How are we addressing teacher bias that might lead to disproportionality? Are early childhood mental health consultants trained in culturally responsive practices?"

**Walter Gilliam:** I can't speak to that nationally. I don't really know what every State is doing in that, but I do know in the Connecticut model that there is quite a bit of attention that's paid to that, and when you're talking about teacher bias and potential for teacher bias and decisionmaking, it's definitely something that we're looking at much more closely, but it's something that we're having to look at with some very specialized research protocols that we're going to have to follow in order to be able to get at that.

You can't just survey teachers regarding do you think you're biased, because most biases are probably at a fairly subconscious level. You have to have some very specific strategies for how to go about that and that's something that we're pursuing right now.

We're hoping to have some better information on that fairly soon. It's an extremely compelling issue, and it's extremely important, and we need to be making sure that all of our children get a good start as possible to their educational career and that begins in our preschool and our child care programs. If there are biases that are involved in the decision regarding who is being

expelled or suspended from our programs, then we absolutely have to get as good a handle on it as possible and be able to get rid of that problem and reduce that problem to the degree possible.

Expulsion and suspension is not a child behavior. Expulsion and suspensions are adult decisions. The child's behavior might impact that decision, but there's probably a whole host of other things that impact those decisions as well, and we really need to be able to get our head wrapped around that much better in order to be able to make better suggestions on how to help our teachers.

**Tricia Haley:** I'll just add to that, that the third webinar is also going to be looking specifically at culturally responsive practices and diversity-informed tenets of working with children and families.

**Linda Smith:** Yeah, I think that we do have a lot of other questions which we are not going to be able to get to in this particular webinar, but we will try to get answers to. It was an excellent conversation and we want to thank our speaker, Walter Gilliam, and all of you who participated and for the excellent questions.

We really hope and suggest that you tune into the next three, because I think you'll get more answers to some of these questions that we weren't able to get to today. Just finally, as Tricia will say, yes, we've gotten more questions and we will ultimately have these webinars posted online. It does take us a little bit of time to make sure they're compliant with Federal regulations. Stay with us, ultimately, you will get them.

**Tricia Haley:** And just this slide, a bunch of free tools and resources on the ACF website looking at all of the different components of expulsion and suspension. Walter, if you'd got to the last slide, just a reminder on times and dates for the last three webinars. So, the next three Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m. eastern time for the rest of the webinars.

Thank you again to Walter and Linda and thank you all for joining. We look forward to the next one. Have a great day.

**Walter Gilliam:** Thank you.

(END)