

Reducing Exclusionary Discipline & Increasing Behavioral Supports

Improving Systems at the School, Local, and State Levels to Reduce Exclusionary Discipline

Overview

Reducing exclusionary discipline starts with building systems at the state, local, and school levels to support the implementation of evidence-based practices. These systems establish the way schools and programs operate and include elements such as conducting a needs analysis, identifying relevant evidence-based practices, actively engaging with stakeholders and families, and aligning with other systems or initiatives. A positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is a framework that, when implemented with fidelity, results in -

- fewer removals of students from instruction;
- improved exposure to and success in academics (grades and completion);
- increased educator satisfaction and retention; and
- better overall ratings of school safety and climate.

Building systems to support the implementation of a PBIS MTSS can result in reducing exclusionary discipline.

In July 2022, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), published the guide [*Positive, Proactive Approaches to Supporting the Needs of Children with Disabilities: A Guide for Stakeholders*](#), which provides actions state educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, early childhood programs, and educators can take to implement positive, proactive, and preventative practices that seek to better address a child's behavioral needs while decreasing the use of exclusionary discipline. These practices reinforce core pillars of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including: (a) how addressing the behavioral needs of children with disabilities is part of IDEA's requirement to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE), and (b) the IEP as the vehicle for fulfilling this obligation. When implementing practices associated with these positive and proactive approaches, children with disabilities can access an educational environment that is nondiscriminatory, supportive, positive, and nurturing for both their academic and behavioral development.

OSEP Technical Assistance Center Resources

The resources listed in the following tables can support schools and early childhood programs in reducing exclusionary discipline and responding to children's behavioral needs more effectively.

RESPONSIVE DISCIPLINE PRACTICES AT DISTRICT AND STATE LEVELS

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Resource Link
Website	District & State PBIS	Local and District Agencies, Researchers, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	Initiating, expanding, and sustaining PBIS at the school level requires systemic support from the district, state, or region. Organizing across multiple schools improves efficiency in resources, implementation efforts, and organizational management. PBIS at the district and state levels provides a supportive context for implementation at the local level.	https://www.pbis.org/topics/districtstate-pbis
Evaluation Brief	Are Fewer Students With Disabilities Suspended When Schools Implement PBIS?	Local and District Agencies, Researchers, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This evaluation brief explores the relationship between (a) schools' implementations of Tier 1 (universal) PBIS and (b) the percentage of students with disabilities who were suspended.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/are-fewer-students-with-disabilities-suspended-when-schools-implement-pbis
Website	State Implementation and Scaling-Up of Evidence-Based Practices (SISEP)	School Administrators, Local and District Agencies, State and Regional Agencies	The SISEP website helps state and local leaders support implementation of evidence-based practices and the scaling up of those practices to schools and districts that can use them.	https://sisep.fpg.unc.edu/

Note. PBIS = positive behavioral interventions and supports.

RESPONSIVE DISCIPLINE PRACTICES AT SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEVELS

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Resource Link
Technical Assistance Product	Addressing School Climate: 5 Ways Schools Can Positively and Proactively Support All Students	Educators, School Administrators, Parents and Families, Local and District Agencies	Bullying, aggression, noncompliance, and other concerning behaviors present educators with significant, immediate challenges in supporting students. Rather than waiting for these behaviors to occur and reacting, educators are encouraged to adopt positive and proactive practices to support students and prevent these behaviors from occurring.	www.pbis.org/resource/addressing-school-climate-5-ways-schools-can-positively-and-proactively-support-all-students
Website	Restorative Justice: Resources	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators	Use this website to find restorative justice resources, including an implementation guide and relevant research.	https://osepideasthatwork.org/jj/restorative-justice
Technical Assistance Product	Creating and Sustaining Discipline Policies That Support Students' Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Academic Well-Being and Success: Strategies for School and District Leaders	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators	This fact sheet describes approaches to create effective, evidence-based school discipline policies that focus on responsive rather than punishment-based discipline practices. This fact sheet includes steps and resources to help school administrators and leaders examine why certain discipline policies exist. It also includes steps to engage students and community members in revising the district's approach to discipline.	https://t4pcenter.ed.gov/SupportiveSchools
Technical Assistance Product	Supporting Students With Disabilities in the Classroom Within a PBIS Framework	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators	Students with disabilities are more likely to be sent to the office, suspended, and expelled. This practice brief shares the top 10 intervention strategies effective educators implement to support all students, including students with disabilities, in their classrooms.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/supporting-students-with-disabilities-in-the-classroom-within-a-pbis-framework

IMPLEMENTING PBIS

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Resource Link
Website	Getting Started With PBIS	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This website describes initial steps everyone can take to get started with PBIS, whether you are a classroom teacher, school leader, or district or state leader.	https://www.pbis.org/pbis/getting-started
Technical Assistance Product	Why Implement PBIS?	Educators, Local and District Agencies, Parents and Families, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies, Early Childhood Programs	PBIS is a framework for creating safe, positive, equitable schools, where every student can feel valued, connected to the school community, and supported by caring adults. By implementing evidence-based practices within a PBIS framework, schools support their students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral success; engage with families to create locally meaningful and culturally relevant outcomes; and use data to make informed decisions that improve the way things work for everyone.	www.pbis.org/pbis/why-implement-pbis
Website	Classroom PBIS	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators	This website includes information needed to support the implementation of PBIS within a classroom.	https://www.pbis.org/topics/classroom-pbis
Website	School-Wide PBIS	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators	This website provides resources to support school-wide implementation of PBIS, as a multi-tiered framework that focuses on three critical features—systems, practices, and data—which work together to promote positive, predictable, safe environments for everyone in all school settings.	https://www.pbis.org/topics/school-wide
Technical Assistance Product	Why Implement Tier 1 PBIS for Students With Disabilities? What Does Research Say?	Local and District Agencies, Researchers, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This brief summarizes research on the effects of Tier 1 PBIS for students with disabilities. In general, when schools implement PBIS with fidelity, students with disabilities experience (a) improved social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes and (b) fewer exclusionary discipline actions (i.e., office discipline referrals, suspensions, restraint, seclusion). Given the promising, research-supported effects of Tier 1 PBIS, it is recommended that schools continue to prioritize Tier 1 supports that are inclusive and supportive of all students, including students with disabilities.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/why-implement-tier-1-pbis-for-students-with-disabilities-what-does-research-say

IMPLEMENTING PBIS

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Resource Link
Technical Assistance Product	Providing Access to School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports for Students With Significant Cognitive Disabilities	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This brief discusses ways to design PBIS systems that are accessible to all students. It describes the importance of including all students in PBIS structures, gives practical strategies to help schools achieve this goal, and includes the story of a student who benefited from full access to the school's PBIS system.	www.pbis.org/resource/providing-access-to-school-wide-positive-behavioral-interventions-and-supports-for-students-with-significant-cognitive-disabilities
Technical Assistance Product	Supporting Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders Through School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports	Educators, Parents and Families, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	The use of school and class-wide PBIS shows promise in helping educators integrate evidence-based practices for the benefit of all students, including students diagnosed with ASD. The purpose of this brief is to provide educators with a quick and easy resource for identifying effective practices for supporting all students, especially students diagnosed with ASD within general education contexts.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/supporting-students-with-autism-spectrum-disorders-through-school-wide-positive-behavior-interventions-and-supports
Toolkit	PBIS District Systems Fidelity Inventory (DSFI) Manual	Local and District Agencies, Researchers, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	The purpose of the DSFI is to guide district leadership teams in the assessment, development, and execution of action plans that promote the capacity for sustainable, culturally and contextually relevant, and high-fidelity implementation of multi-tiered social, emotional, and behavioral systems of supports and practices. The DSFI and process have been designed to serve as a guide for initial action planning, progress monitoring, and annual evaluation of fidelity of implementation and impact.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/dsfi
Technical Assistance Product	Drilling Down District Data: Analyzing Reach and Fidelity of PBIS Implementation	Local and District Agencies, State and Regional Agencies, School Administrators	This brief outlines strategies for district leadership teams to review multiple data courses related to discipline and PBIS implementation to guide professional learning and technical assistance.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/drilling-down-district-data-analyzing-reach-and-fidelity-of-pbis-implementation

IMPLEMENTING PBIS				
Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Resource Link
Research Product	Do Schools Implementing SWPBIS Have Decreased Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality in School Discipline?	Local and District Agencies, Researchers, State and Regional Agencies, School Administrators	This large-scale study examined different uses of discipline in PBIS schools versus schools not using PBIS. The main question is whether and when PBIS implementation changes discipline practices for students from different backgrounds.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/do-schools-implementing-swpbis-have-decreased-racial-and-ethnic-disproportionality-in-school-discipline
Technical Assistance Product	The Pyramid Equity Project: Promoting Social Emotional Competence and Addressing Disproportionate Discipline in Early Childhood Programs	Early Childhood Programs, Local and District Agencies, State and Regional Agencies	This fact sheet was developed to raise awareness of the issue of implicit bias and preschool suspensions and expulsions. The purpose is to provide information to change adult responses to challenging behaviors to reduce preschool suspensions and expulsions and create safe and nurturing environments for young children, particularly children of color.	www.pbis.org/resource/the-pyramid-equity-project

Note. ASD = Autism Spectrum Disorder; PBIS = positive behavioral interventions and supports.

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Resource Link
Website	PBIS and Equity	Educators, Local and District Agencies, Researchers, School Administrators, Parents and Families, State and Regional Agencies	Educational systems cannot be considered effective until they are effective for all student groups. PBIS offers an ideal framework for increasing equity in student outcomes. Schools implementing PBIS with fidelity have greater equity in school discipline, specifically for Black or African American students. However, most PBIS teams will need to include equity-centered strategies in their action plans to achieve equitable outcomes for all student groups. Multiple research studies show that schools implementing the Center on PBIS's equity approach have significantly increased racial equity in school discipline.	www.pbis.org/equity
Webinar, Video	Using PBIS to Ensure Racial Equity in School Discipline	State and Regional Agencies, Researchers, School Administrators	Schools across the United States are implementing PBIS in efforts to reduce racial disproportionality in school discipline, and, overall, research shows that schools implementing PBIS with fidelity have more equitable school discipline. Yet, eliminating disparities through standard PBIS implementation, without attention to the sociocultural context and systems that perpetuate inequities, is unlikely to produce desired outcomes. The presenters in this webinar share strategies and free resources to increase equity in PBIS systems.	https://www.pbis.org/video/using-pbis-to-ensure-racial-equity-in-school-discipline
Webinar, Video	Resources for Enhancing Equity in School Discipline, (School Climate Transformation Grant Webinar)	Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This recorded webinar describes differences in how children from diverse backgrounds experience school discipline. It also explores an intervention for making school discipline more equitable.	https://www.pbis.org/video/resources-for-enhancing-equity-in-school-discipline-sctg-webinar

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Resource Link
Webinar, Video	Reducing the Effects of Implicit Bias in School Discipline	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators	Research shows that disproportionality in school discipline is related to implicit (unconscious) bias. This presentation provides an overview of this concept and describes a training approach for reducing the effects of implicit bias in discipline decision making.	www.pbis.org/resource/reducing-the-effects-of-implicit-bias-in-school-discipline
Research Product	Centering Equity Within the PBIS Framework: Overview and Evidence of Effectiveness	Local and District Agencies, Researchers, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	Racial and ethnic inequities in school discipline are widespread and persistent, even in schools implementing PBIS with fidelity. Yet, integrating components of a multicomponent equity-centered approach into existing tiered frameworks is showing promise for improving equity in student outcomes. This brief describes the Center on PBIS's 5-Point Equity Approach and the evidence for its positive effects on discipline disproportionality.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/centering-equity-within-the-pbis-framework-overview-and-evidence-of-effectiveness

Note. PBIS = positive behavioral interventions and supports.

BUILDING EDUCATOR CAPACITY

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Resource Link
Toolkit	High-Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities	Local and District Agencies, Researchers, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	These high-leverage practices help special educators and teacher candidates use effective practices for collaboration, assessment, social and emotional and behavioral supports, and instruction.	https://highleveragepractices.org/
Training	Behavior and Classroom Management Online Training Modules and Resources	Educators, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators	The IRIS Center develops and disseminates free, engaging online resources that help educators, leaders, and families use evidence-based instructional and behavioral practices to support the education of learners who are struggling and learners with disabilities. These resources can be used in professional development activities for practicing professionals, as well as in college teacher preparation programs. Training modules include addressing challenging behaviors for early childhood-, elementary-, and secondary-aged students.	https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/

ENHANCING SCHOOL–FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Resource Type	Resource Title	Audience	Description	Resource Link
Technical Assistance Product	Questions for Families to Consider when Concerned about their Child's Behavior	Parents and Families, Local and District Agencies	This document helps families of children who have an IEP ask questions to learn more about their children's behavior in school. The document includes sample questions and resources.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/questions-for-families-to-consider-when-concerned-about-their-childs-behavior
Technical Assistance Product	Family Plan for Positive Behavior at Home	Parents and Families, Local and District Agencies	Families can use this resource to make a family schedule; choose family expectations; and make a plan to teach, remind, reward, and respond to behavior at home.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/family-plan-for-positive-behavior-at-home
Toolkit	Family Resources	Parents and Families, Local and District Agencies	Use this list to find PBIS resources for families.	https://www.pbis.org/resource/family-resources
Technical Assistance Product	Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Academic Well-Being and Success: Strategies for Schools to Enhance Relationships With Families	Educators, Parents and Families, Local and District Agencies, School Administrators, State and Regional Agencies	This fact sheet illustrates ways to improve communication and collaboration between schools and families to support students' needs. Strategies include engaging families in decision-making processes regarding student supports, discipline, and school climate. A key strategy is providing family engagement training to all district and school leaders and educators and establishing family engagement councils.	https://t4pacenter.ed.gov/SupportiveSchools
Technical Assistance Product	IDEA Discipline Resources for Families	Parents and Families	This website helps families understand and navigate IDEA's discipline policies.	https://www.parentcenterhub.org/resourcelibrary/index/d/d2/d21/

Note. IDEA = Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; IEP = individualized education program; PBIS = positive behavioral interventions and supports.

OSEP Technical Assistance Centers

The following are descriptions of additional information that OSEP Technical Assistance Centers can provide to support schools in implementing practices to reduce exclusionary discipline and respond to children's behavioral needs.

- **Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)** | The CPIR provides universal technical assistance to the network of Parent Centers funded by OSEP. The CPIR's priorities include (1) providing Parent Centers with products and materials to support their work with families; (2) increasing Parent Centers' knowledge and capacity in specific domains; and (3) increasing the coordination of parent training efforts throughout the network. Among the products and services the CPIR provides to the Parent Center network are its information-rich website in English and Spanish (called the Parent Center Hub); a twice-monthly e-newsletter called the Buzz from the Hub; the eLearning Hub, which features online, self-paced learning modules for all Parent Center staff as part of capacity building; frequent webinars about high-priority topics; national Parent Center capacity-building conferences; private communication spaces where Parent Centers can share resources and collaborate with their colleagues (CentersConnect); and coordination of annual data collection and reporting of Parent Center activities, training contacts, and services provided to families, professionals, and youth with disabilities.
<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/>
- **Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)** | The Center on PBIS was initially funded in 1998. In October 2018, a new 5-year funding cycle was launched. The purpose of the Center on PBIS is to improve the capacity of SEAs, LEAs, and schools to establish, scale up, and sustain the PBIS framework to (a) scale up Tiers 2 and 3 systems to improve outcomes for students with or at risk for disabilities, (b) enhance school climate and school safety, and (c) improve conditions for learning to promote the well-being of all students. The Center on PBIS is grounded in the values of comprehensive prevention; based on human-centered science; and implemented through collaborative partnerships, centered in equity, to improve social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes. *Prevention* includes holistic approaches, organized within a tiered prevention framework (PBIS), to proactively support each and every student, family, and educator through safe, positive, and inclusive instruction and support. *Science* includes empirical research, informed and supported by local data and practice, that honors identities, improves outcomes, and enhances experiences of students, families, and educators, who also inform and improve science. *Partnerships* describes active collaborations with national, state, and local (students, families, and educators) stakeholders to co-create affirming, culturally sustaining, and productive learning environments. *Equity* refers to actions that elevate historically marginalized voices; honor individual, family, and community identities; and reflect equitable learning opportunities through meaningful participation of each student, family, and educator in the systems we promote. *Improved outcomes*—experienced by students, families, and educators—are the ultimate reason for and test of PBIS implementation.
<https://www.pbis.org/>
- **Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy Center)** | The DaSy Center is a national technical assistance center that works with states to support IDEA early intervention and early childhood special education state programs in building high quality data systems and using data to improve results for young children with disabilities and their families. The DaSy Center builds relationships and provides high quality technical assistance (TA) to build the capacity of states to collect, report, analyze, and use data in the Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education program improvement and federal reporting.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the DaSy Center is operated by SRI in collaboration with AnLar, Applied Engineering Management (AEM), the Center for

Technology in Education (CTE) at Johns Hopkins University, ECDataWorks, the University of North Carolina's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), and Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE).

<https://dasycenter.org/>

- **The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA)** | The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA), funded by OSEP, supports state IDEA Part C and Part B, Section 619 programs in developing more equitable, effective, and sustainable state and local systems, that support access and full participation for each and every young child with a disability, and their family. ECTA Center provides a variety of technical assistance opportunities to support states including: coaching systems change efforts, developing critical new resources for the field, facilitating peer learning communities, co-sponsoring conferences on important national issues, and responding to individual state requests for assistance.

<https://ectacenter.org/>

- **The IDEA Data Center (IDC)** | IDC provides technical assistance to build the capacity of states and LEAs to collect, report, analyze, and use high-quality IDEA, Part B, data. IDC offers a full range of services and resources to support states' efforts to submit 616 (or State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report) data and 618 (or EDFacts) data that meet the U.S. Department of Education's data-quality standards for accuracy, timeliness, and completeness. IDC also partners with states and LEAs to help them use these data to identify programmatic strengths, as well as areas for improvement, including addressing root causes of poor performance and evaluating progress toward goals and desired outcomes.

<https://ideadata.org/>

- **IRIS Center** | Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's OSEP and located at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, the IRIS Center develops and disseminates free, engaging online resources about evidence-based instructional and behavioral practices to support the education of all students, particularly learners who are struggling and learners with disabilities. These resources, designed to bridge the research-to-practice gap, are intended for use in college teacher preparation programs, in professional development activities for practicing professionals, and by independent learners. The array of IRIS Center resources includes modules, case studies, fundamental skill sheets, information briefs, course and professional development activities, a high-leverage practices alignment tool, and an online glossary of disability-related terms.

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>

- **National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII)** | NCII is housed at the American Institutes for Research® and works in conjunction with many of our nation's most distinguished data-based individualization (DBI) experts. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's OSEP and is part of OSEP's Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network. The mission of NCII is to build knowledge and capacity of state and local leaders, faculty and professional development providers, educators, and other stakeholders to support implementation of intensive intervention for students with severe and persistent learning and/or social, emotional, or behavioral needs using DBI.

<https://intensiveintervention.org/>

- **National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI)** | NCPMI is funded by OSEP to improve state and local capacity to implement, scale-up, and sustain effective practices and policies to equitably support the social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of young children with, and at risk for, developmental delays or disabilities. The goal of the Center is to assist states and programs in developing sustainable systems for the equitable implementation of the Pyramid Model for Promoting Social-Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children (Pyramid Model) within early intervention and early education programs with a focuses on: improving the social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of young children birth to five; eliminating the use of

inappropriate and disproportionate exclusionary discipline practices; promoting family engagement; using data for decision-making; increasing the use of trauma-informed and culturally and linguistically responsive practices; and fostering inclusion.

<https://challengingbehavior.org/>

- **National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI)** | The National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) provides differentiated support through Universal, Targeted, and Intensive technical assistance to support state educational agencies to best use their general supervision and professional development systems to establish and meet high expectations for every student with a disability. NCSI is funded by OSEP.

<https://ncsi.wested.org/>

This document was produced under U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) contract no. GS-10F-0112J. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service, or enterprise mentioned on this website is intended or should be inferred.

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