OECOSL Suspension and Expulsion Policy Guidance for Programs

Indiana early childhood education programs that are eligible to accept Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) vouchers are required to have a policy on suspension and expulsion—and that policy must be clearly communicated to families before enrollment.

The policy must promote positive social and emotional growth and should include age-appropriate positive behavior supports. It should limit—or eliminate altogether—the use of expulsion, suspension and other disciplinary practices that center on excluding children.

The program's policy must include the following information:

1. How teachers will provide a purposeful, engaging environment that represents and supports cultural diversity and the different stages of child development.
2. How classroom environments encourage children's sense of self, help with self-regulation, supports for conflict resolution and relationship-building.
3. How teachers will support children's social and emotional development by helping them understand their own (and others') feelings, regulate and express their emotions appropriately, build relationships and support positive interactions with others in group settings.
4. How the program will access SPARK Learning Lab (or appropriate support organization/internal resource, e.g., school counselor) for coaching and professional development on positive social/emotional and behavioral development to ensure children's developmental needs are being met.
5. The process for engaging in prompt family collaboration regarding a child's behavior, including solutions that have worked at home or in other settings.
6. The process to support the family in identifying agencies for services including but not limited to:
    a. Supports to address challenging behaviors
    b. Early childhood mental health consultations
    c. Part C early intervention (First Steps)
    d. Part B intervention (preschool special education)
7. How teachers will be supported through job-embedded professional learning around implicit bias and distinguishing concerning behaviors from developmentally appropriate behaviors.
8. How educators will collect and analyze information on suspensions and expulsions that are occurring in their early education environment and set goals to limit or prohibit such disciplinary actions in the future.
9. How exclusionary processes will be used as a last resort. Exclusionary measures should only be taken when a serious safety threat exists and can't be addressed with reasonable modifications and/or the use of positive behavioral supports.

A child cannot be expelled due to behavioral challenges unless the procedures outlined in the suspension and expulsion policy have been followed. The suspension and expulsion policy must clearly define the steps that must be followed when a child engages in challenging behaviors that cannot be resolved using ordinary classroom strategies. For support or assistance creating this policy, please reach out to SPARK Learning Lab at https://indianaspark.com/.