The Voices of Michigan's Early Care and Education Teachers:

Children's Challenging Behavior, Expulsion, Disparities, and Needed Program Supports

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September 2020

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is a non-partisan public policy research center at Bank Street Graduate School of Education. Founded in 1989 with endowments from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Ford Foundation, NCCP is dedicated to promoting the economic security, healthy development, and well-being of America's low-income children and families. Using research to inform policy and practice, the center seeks to advance family-oriented solutions and strategic use of public resources at the state and national levels to produce positive outcomes for the next generation.

Suggested Citation

Granja, M.R., Smith, S., and McCann, C. (2020) The Voices of Michigan's Early Care and Education Teachers: Children's Challenging Behavior, Expulsion, Disparities and Needed Program Supports. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Bank Street Graduate School of Education.

Introduction

Michigan policymakers have a long history of leadership in addressing the social-emotional needs of the state's infants and young children so that they can learn and thrive in their homes and in early care and education programs. The state's investments in healthy social-emotional development of very young children include home visiting services by infant mental health consultants from the prenatal period through the first year of life and a highly regarded infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC) program designed to strengthen supports for infants and young children with challenging behavior in early care and education (ECE) settings.[1] Established through a partnership between Michigan's Departments of Education (MDE) and Health and Human Services (MDHHS), IECMH consultation still serves this role in the state but reaches fewer programs due to reduced funding.[2] The State Board of Education and MDE have also developed policies aimed at preventing expulsion and suspension in early care and education programs, as well as extensive guidance concerning social-emotional learning in early care and education programs and K-12 education.[3]

Michigan leaders and stakeholders are now working to further strengthen a system of supports for young children's mental health. Leaders participating in a cross-sector expulsion and suspension workgroup identified a need for current data on ECE teachers' experiences related to children's challenging behavior, including perceptions about supports that could increase children's social-emotional well-being and reduce exclusionary practices in center- and home-based ECE settings. To obtain this information, a core team of leaders from MDE and MDHHS and the Head Start State Collaboration Office partnered with the BUILD Initiative and the National Center for Children in Poverty to design and implement a survey of ECE teachers in center-based and home-based ECE settings (pre-kindergarten, child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, and family child care home settings).

Key questions addressed by the survey include:

- How common are different types of challenging behavior in early care and education settings?
- How many children with challenging behavior, in different age groups, do teachers have in their classrooms or child care homes in the course of a year?
- What are the consequences of challenging behavior and how often does removal from the ECE setting occur?
- Are there disparities in removal of children related to race, disability, or home language?
- What are the family circumstances of children with challenging behavior?
- How do teachers address challenging behavior and what barriers do they face?
- What supports do teachers believe will help them address the needs of children with challenging behavior?

This report presents results of this statewide survey and recommendations for further strengthening social-emotional supports for children in Michigan's ECE settings. The following are key sections in the report:

- Preview of Key Findings
- Methods
- Results
- Summary of Findings
- Discussion and Recommendations

Preview of Key Findings

This section highlights key findings to provide the "big picture" of what teachers reported in the survey. (A full summary of the survey's results can be found on pages 24-26 of this report.) It is clear from these results that children's challenging behavior is a frequent and serious concern for teachers across all of the state's ECE settings.

- 91 percent of teachers reported having a child with challenging behavior, and on average, reported having 4 children with challenging behavior in their classroom or home-based setting in the past year. (The survey defined challenging behavior as a "repeated pattern of behavior" to distinguish it from the more occasional expressions of frustration or distress commonly seen in young children.)
- A high percentage of teachers (46 percent) reported that serious challenging behavior occurred very often (4 or 5 days a week), including behavior such as hitting, throwing things, and biting.

Adverse family circumstances were common among children with challenging behavior. For example, 39 percent of teachers reported an average of two children whose families experienced domestic violence, parent incarceration, or other involvement with the criminal justice system. Almost three-quarters of teachers viewed family difficulties in resolving these and other problems as an obstacle to reducing children's challenging behavior in the ECE setting. Other barriers included a lack of access to infant and early childhood mental health consultants who could work with teachers and families to address children's challenging behavior and support their social-emotional well-being.

Fifteen percent of teachers reported an average of four children leaving their setting due to challenging behavior. These children left settings under one of three circumstances: parents removing children, staff telling parents the child must leave, and parents and staff agreeing the child should leave. Other exclusionary practices that were reported included teachers asking a parent to pick a child up early (23 percent of teachers) and telling a parent a child must stay home one or more days (6 percent of teachers).

Due to almost a quarter of teachers omitting responses about the race of children who left their setting due to challenging behavior, evidence about racial disparities was not conclusive. Among teachers who provided this information, overall results do not show that a disproportionate percentage of non-white children were removed due to challenging behavior. An exception is Head Start, which had higher percentages of biracial/multiracial and Black/African American children being removed compared to white children. Also, almost four times as many children with disabilities or suspected disabilities were removed due to challenging behavior as compared to typically developing children.

Although most teachers reported receiving professional development focused on children's social-emotional (SE) growth, about half the teachers expressed a desire for more SE-focused professional development linked to on-site coaching. Additional strategies teachers believe would be most helpful to them in meeting the needs of children with challenging behavior were: increased access to infant and early childhood mental health consultation (68 percent of teachers) and more assistance to families to help them address serious problems that contribute to children's distress and challenging behavior (55 percent of teachers).

Overall, the survey gave voice to teachers who are struggling to meet the needs of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with challenging behavior in diverse ECE settings. In addition to reporting on the high incidence of

children with behavior difficulties and the frequent exclusion of children from ECE settings, teachers identified supports that could best help them promote children's social-emotional well-being and positive behavior. The three core recommendations discussed at the end of this report strongly reflect the voice of Michigan's ECE teachers, as well as evidence on effective policies and practice:

1. Building on the state's current program, establish a state-wide infant and early childhood mental health consultation initiative that can support center- and home-based settings serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers
2. Expand professional development and coaching that focus on research-informed social-emotional teaching practices
3. Provide and evaluate professional development (PD) on culturally responsive practices, implicit bias, and inclusion of children with special needs for teachers, PD providers, and consultants.
4. Identify and support the use of effective strategies in ECE settings that help connect families to services and supports that meet critical health, mental health, financial, and other basic needs

Methods

Michigan leaders from the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services partnered with the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) and the BUILD Initiative to develop the Michigan Early Care and Education Survey on Children's Social-Emotional Needs and Supports. The survey was adapted from surveys that NCCP administered in Maine and Virginia, and tailored to Michigan's ECE settings and professional development opportunities.[4]

The survey was designed and delivered in Qualtrics, a secure online data collection system. Intended participants in the survey were lead preschool teachers of publicly funded center-based child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, Great Start Readiness Program and home-based child care providers in Michigan. Teachers were asked to answer the survey questions thinking back to the previous year (from fall 2018 to summer 2019). Michigan leaders from the Department of Education, Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Michigan's Quality Rating and Improvement System, and Michigan Great Start to Quality Resource Centers sent out survey invitations to all programs and home-based providers who could be reached by a working email. The invitation included a survey link and an information sheet with details about the study. No identifying information was collected. In the case of center-based programs, the invitation was sent to program directors and principals asking them to forward the emails to their lead teachers; home-based child care providers received invitations directly. In addition, two reminder emails, and an email explaining when the survey would be closed were also sent. As compensation for completing the survey, respondents were given the option to be entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of 100 electronic gift cards worth $50 each.

A total of 8,002 invitations were sent and 1,563 completed surveys were received. Because the project team could not determine the number of teachers who received forwarded invitations from principals or directors, an accurate response rate could not be calculated. In addition, the number of classrooms in each program was not known. Sample sizes across analyses varied for a few reasons. A small number of responses were missing on some surveys. For the analysis of the racial/ethnic composition of settings, surveys with inconsistent data on the number of children and racial/ethnic composition were omitted. Similarly, for the analysis of English language learners, surveys with inconsistent data on the number of children, racial/ethnic composition of settings, and number of English

language learners were omitted. In cases where the sample size was too small to be reported individually (i.e., for teachers in one type of ECE setting), data are included when reporting on a larger group (e.g., all teachers).

Results

The results presented in this report are based on 1,563 surveys completed and submitted by lead teachers in center-based programs and providers in child care homes. For convenience, all participants are referred to as "teachers," and the term "program" is used to refer to both center-based programs and child care homes, unless there is a need to specify results related to different types of settings.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMS AND TEACHERS?

Location, Types, and Features of Programs

Teachers were asked to report the region where their ECE program is located, but more than half (52 percent) did not provide this information. The responses reported from 48 percent of teachers suggest that data from teachers throughout all regions are represented in this sample. See **Table 1** for complete results. Teachers were more comfortable reporting their program's distance from a larger city (described as having over 20,000 residents). Eighty-five percent of teachers indicated their programs are within one hour driving distance from a larger city.

Table 1. Regions Where Teachers Work (n=755)

Regions	Percent of teachers
Oakland Macomb Resource Center	8%
Wayne Resource Center	7%
Southeast Resource Center	6%
Southwest Resource Center	6%
Kent Resource Center	5%
Central Resource Center	4%
Northwest Resource Center	4%
Western Resource Center	4%
Eastern Resource Center	3%
Northeast Resource Center	3%
Upper Peninsula Resource Center	1%

808 teachers did not respond (52%)

Teachers from the following types of settings are represented in the sample:

- **73% (n=1,135) are center-based teachers**
  - 45% from the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)
  - 28% from a licensed child care center
  - 20% from a Head Start program
  - 5% percent from an Early Head Start program
  - 2% from a Preschool Special Education program

- **26% percent (n=409) are home-based child care providers**
  - 59% percent from a licensed family child care home (serving 1-6 unrelated children)
  - 41% percent from a licensed group child care home (serving 7-12 unrelated children)

Figure 1. Percent of Teachers in the Sample by Type of ECE Setting

- Great Start Readiness Program (n=515)
- Licensed Child Care Center (n=316)
- Licensed Family Child Care Home (n=242)
- Head Start (n=229)
- Licensed Group Child Care Home (n=167)
- Early Head Start (n=53)
- Preschool Special Education (n=22)
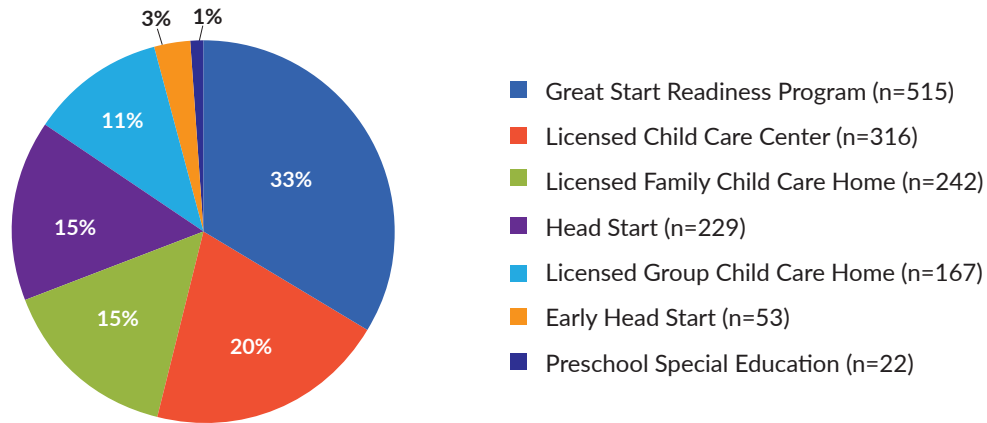
When asked about teaching half-day sessions with different children in center-based programs, 13 percent of teachers reported having two half-day sessions. See **Figure 2** for complete results by setting.

Figure 2. Percent of Teachers Who Taught Two Half-Day Sessions
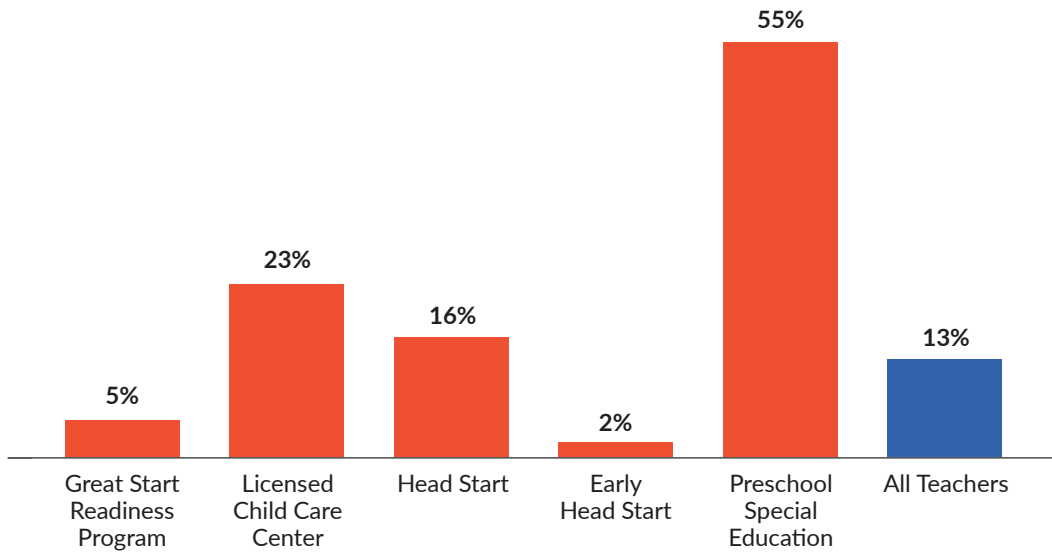
Teachers were also asked about the number of classrooms at their site; stakeholders were especially interested in how many sites had only one classroom—a feature that might increase teachers' experience of isolation. With the exception of Early Head Start, about 15 percent of teachers across center-based programs reported being at sites with only one infant/toddler or preschool classroom. See **Figure 3** for complete results by setting.

Figure 3. Percent of Teachers at Sites With Only One Infant/toddler or Preschool Classroom

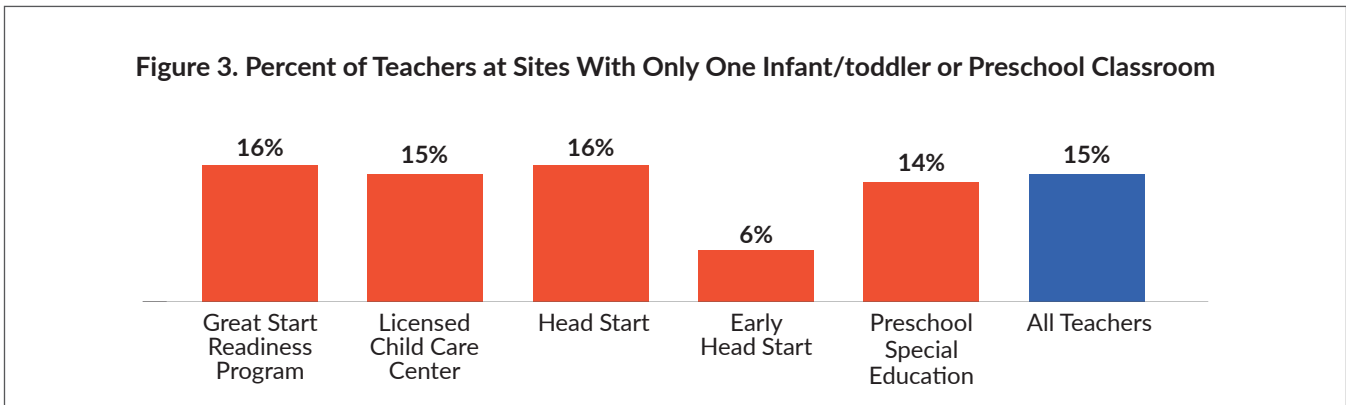|	Great Start Readiness Program	Licensed Child Care Center	Head Start	Early Head Start	Preschool Special Education	All Teachers
Percent	16%	15%	16%	6%	14%	15%

WORK HOURS AND STAFFING

Home-based child care providers reported longer work hours compared to teachers in center-based programs. Home-based providers reported having children in their programs for 10 hours a day on average while teachers in center-based programs reported having children for 8 hours a day on average. See **Table 2** for complete results by type of program.

Table 2. Teachers' Average Work Hours a Day by Type of Program

	Center-based teachers					Home-based Child Care providers		All Teachers
	Great Start Readiness Program	Licensed Child Care Center	Head Start	Early Head Start*	Preschool Special Education	Licensed Family Child Care Home	Licensed Group Child Care Home	
Average work hours a day	8 hrs	8 hrs	8 hrs	8 hrs	6 hrs	10 hrs	10 hrs	8 hrs
	8 hrs					10 hrs		

A small number of Early Head Start teachers appear to be home-based, but there was not enough data to categorize them.

Teachers in center-based programs were asked about the number of days per month their class did not have a full teaching team. Eighteen percent of teachers in center-based programs reported that their classrooms lacked a full teaching team for five or more days a month. See **Figure 4** for complete results by type of setting.

Figure 4. Percent of Teachers who Reported Being Short-staffed for Five or More Days Per Month

Setting	Percent
Great Start Readiness Program	14%
Licensed Child Care Center	17%
Head Start	26%
Early Head Start	30%
Preschool Special Education	32%
All Teachers	18%
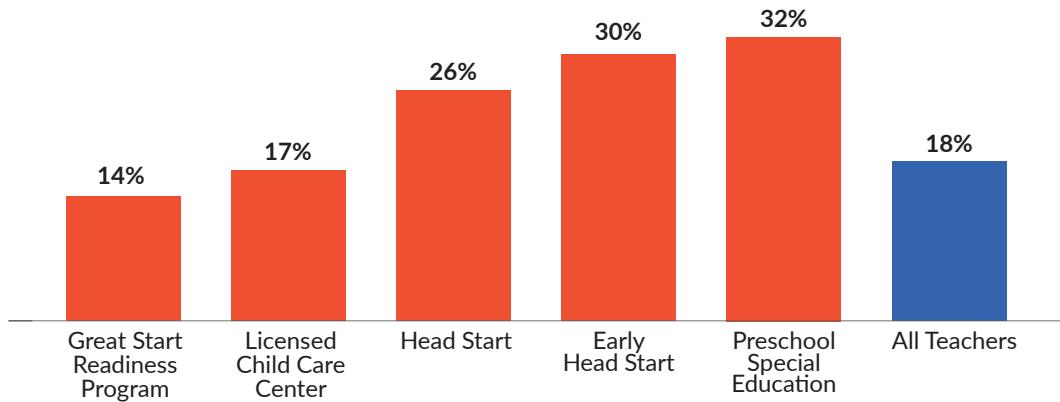
Education of Teachers

Teachers in center-based settings reported higher levels of education than home-based child care providers. In center-based settings, 77 percent of teachers had a master's or bachelor's degree, while 22 percent of home-based child care providers had this level of education. See **Figures 5 and 6** for complete results.

Figure 5. Teachers' Highest Education Level in Center-based Settings
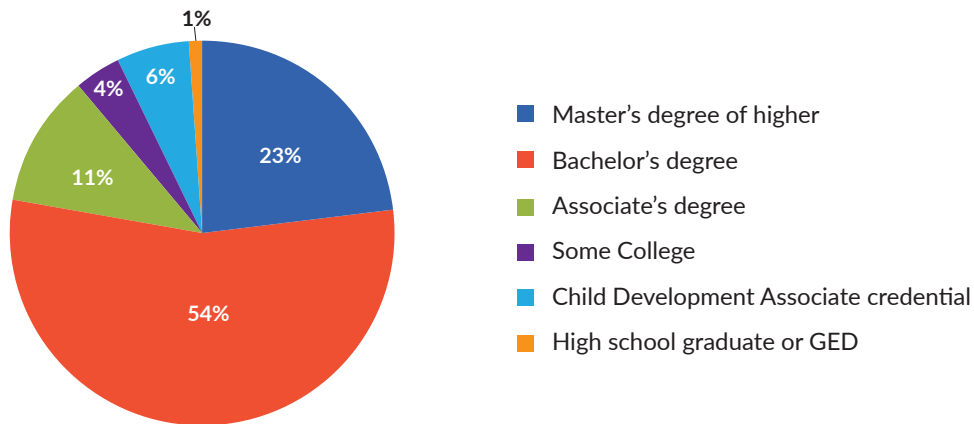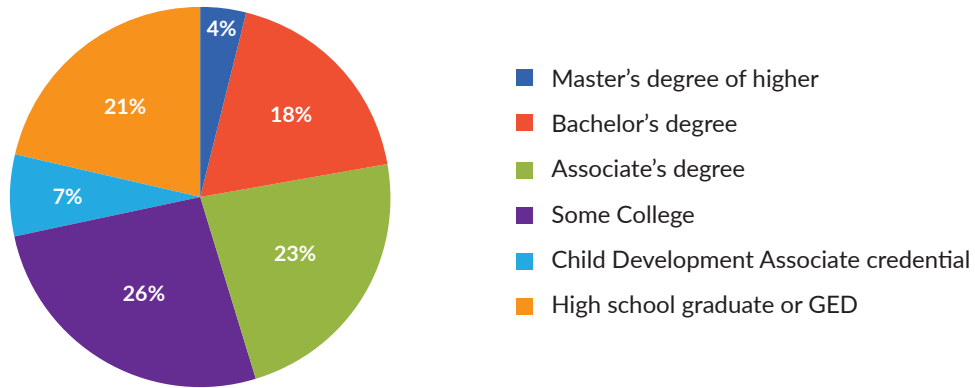
Education Level	Percent
Master's degree of higher	23%
Bachelor's degree	54%
Associate's degree	11%
Some College	4%
Child Development Associate credential	6%
High school graduate or GED	1%

Figure 6. Teachers' Highest Education Level in Home-based Child Care Settings

Legend:
- Master's degree of higher
- Bachelor's degree
- Associate's degree
- Some College
- Child Development Associate credential
- High school graduate or GED

Teachers in Great Start Readiness Program had the highest education levels, while teachers in licensed family child care homes reported the highest percentages of teachers with high school or GED degrees. See **Table 3** for complete results.

Table 3. Teachers' Highest Education Level by Type of Program

	Great Start Readiness Program	Licensed Child Care Center	Licensed Family Child Care Home	Head Start	Licensed Group Child Care Home	Early Head Start	Preschool Special Education	All Teachers
Master's degree or higher	36%	12%	5%	10%	4%	9%	64%	18%
Bachelor's degree	55%	43%	17%	71%	20%	47%	36%	44%
Associate's degree	4%	19%	24%	15%	23%	26%	0%	15%
Some college	2%	10%	26%	1%	26%	6%	0%	10%
Child Development Associate credential	3%	15%	7%	3%	8%	9%	0%	7%
High school graduate or GED	<1%	1%	21%	0%	19%	2%	0%	6%

The percentage of teachers reporting "early childhood education" as their major area of study ranged from 91 percent in preschool special education programs to 43 percent in licensed family child care homes. Fewer teachers across all settings reported "Child Development Associate Credential" as their major area of study; licensed child care centers had the highest percentage of teachers (29 percent) with this major area of study. See **Table 4** for complete results.

Table 4. Teachers' Major Area of Study by Type of Program

	Great Start Readiness Program	Licensed Child Care Center	Licensed Family Child Care Home	Head Start	Licensed Group Child Care Home	Early Head Start	Preschool Special Education	All Teachers
Early Childhood Education	87%	65%	43%	82%	46%	79%	91%	70%
Child Development Associate credential	13%	29%	16%	17%	26%	25%	0%	19%

Years of Experience With Younger and Older Children

Most teachers reported that they have four or more years of experience teaching children under age six. A small percentage have more experience teaching older children than younger children, and 5 percent report inexperience (i.e., less than four years) with all children.

- 92 percent of teachers reported having four or more years of experience teaching children under age 6
- 2 percent of teachers reported having four or more years of experience teaching children age 6 and older and less than four years of experience teaching children under age six
- 5 percent of teachers reported having less than four years of experience teaching children under age 6, as well as with children age 6 and older

Professional Development and Support From Supervisor

Teachers reported on their participation during the previous year in four types of professional development that have social-emotional content and are commonly offered in the state. In the survey, these were described as professional development activities designed to promote children's social-emotional development and reduce challenging behavior. Most teachers, 77 percent, reported that they had participated in social-emotional-focused professional development. Conscious Discipline was the most frequently reported type of social-emotional-focused professional development with especially high participation among Head Start (69 percent) and Early Head Start teachers (58 percent). Overall, Head Start and Early Head Start teachers showed the highest levels of participation in professional development with social-emotional content. See **Table 5** for complete results. When asked about their participation in other social-emotional-focused professional development, teachers listed several types, including Second Step, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Promoting Positive School Climate (PPSC), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) trainings, Great Start to Quality trainings, Texas A&M trainings, Creative Curriculum training, and Building Early Emotional Skills (BEES).

Table 5. Teachers' Participation in Professional Development Activities by Type of Program

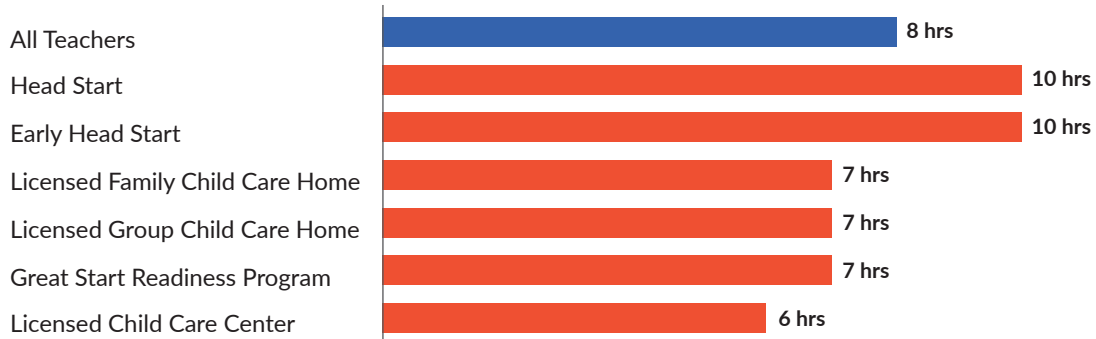|	Great Start Readiness Program	Licensed Child Care Center	Licensed Family Child Care Home	Head Start	Licensed Group Child Care Home	Early Headstart	Preschool Special Education	All Teachers
Conscious Discipline	28%	30%	22%	69%	17%	58%	23%	33%
HighScope	46%	24%	15%	19%	23%	36%	5%	29%
Trauma Smart	21%	13%	6%	24%	6%	30%	18%	16%
Pyramid/ CSEFEL	13%	5%	1%	19%	3%	9%	0%	9%

Teachers also reported on the number of hours of social-emotional-focused professional development they participated in last year; 87 percent of teachers provided complete responses. Sixty-seven percent of teachers reported receiving an average of 13 hours of professional development, including on-site technical assistance and/or coaching. Teachers in Head Start and Early Head Start programs reported receiving the most: 17 hours of social-emotional-focused professional development. See **Figure 7** for complete results.

Figure 7. Teacher-reported Average Hours of All Social-emotional-focused Professional Development, Including Coaching

	Hours
All Teachers	13 hrs
Head Start	17 hrs
Early Head Start	17 hrs
Great Start Readiness Program	14 hrs
Licensed Group Child Care Home	12 hrs
Licensed Child Care Center	10 hrs
Licensed Family Child Care Home	8 hrs

Over a third of teachers who reported receiving social-emotional-focused professional development, reported receiving on-site technical assistance and/or coaching; on average, they reported receiving 8 hours of on-site, social-emotional-focused technical assistance and/or coaching. Teachers in Head Start and Early Head Start programs reported receiving 10 hours of social-emotional-focused technical assistance and/or coaching, the highest amount among programs. See **Figure 8** for complete results.

Figure 8. Teacher-reported Average Hours of Social-emotional-focused On-site Professional Development and/or Coaching

All Teachers	8 hrs
Head Start	10 hrs
Early Head Start	10 hrs
Licensed Family Child Care Home	7 hrs
Licensed Group Child Care Home	7 hrs
Great Start Readiness Program	7 hrs
Licensed Child Care Center	6 hrs

ECE teachers are among several types of professionals who can obtain and document training and experience that make them eligible for the Michigan Association of Infant Mental Health Endorsement. One percent of teachers, across all settings, reported that they had a Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health Endorsement in the period from fall 2018 to summer 2019.

Professional Development for Teachers of Infants/toddlers Compared to Teachers of Preschoolers

Teachers of infants and toddlers received two fewer hours of social-emotional-focused professional development, on average, than teachers of preschoolers. Infant-toddler teachers received one more hour of social-emotional-focused on-site technical assistance and/or coaching, on average, than teachers of preschoolers. See **Tables 6 and 7** for complete results.

Table 6. Teacher-reported Average Hours of All Social-emotional-focused Professional Development (Including Coaching) by Age Group Served

Providers of Infants & Toddlers n=107	Providers of Preschoolers n=684
12 hours	14 hours

Table 7. Teacher-reported Average Hours of Social-emotional-focused On-site Technical Assistance and/or Coaching by Age Group Served

Providers of Infants & Toddlers n=52	Providers of Preschoolers n=299
9 hours	8 hours

Program Characteristics

Teachers in center-based settings were asked additional questions about how frequently they met with supervisors to talk about what works with different children to promote children's social-emotional development and positive behavior. The greatest number of teachers (43 percent) reported talking with supervisors one or two times a month, while 11 percent reported talking with supervisors once a week; more than a third of teachers reported rarely talking with supervisors. See **Table 8** for results by program.

Table 8. Percent of Teachers Reporting Different Frequencies of Meetings With Supervisors About Promoting Children's Social-emotional Development and Positive Behavior

	Great Start Readiness Program	Licensed Child Care Center	Head Start	Early Head Start	Preschool Special Education	All Center-based Teachers
Once a week	8%	14%	14%	11%	14%	11%
One or two times a month	45%	33%	52%	36%	32%	43%
Rarely	39%	35%	27%	42%	36%	35%

Teachers were also asked about meeting regularly with supervisors to talk about their emotional responses to work with families and staff, and how this affected their relationships and interactions with families and staff (a type of support often called "reflective supervision"). Forty percent of teachers across all settings reported that they regularly met with supervisors for this type of support; Head Start teachers represent the largest percentage of teachers, 51 percent, who reported meeting with supervisors about their emotional responses to work with families. See **Table 9** for complete results by program.

Table 9. Percent of Teachers Reporting Regular Meetings With Supervisors to Talk About Emotional Responses to Work With Families

Great Start Readiness Program	Licensed Child Care Center	Head Start	Early Head Start	Preschool Special Education	All Center-based Teachers
32%	47%	51%	36%	41%	40%

Characteristics of Children

Teachers were asked to report the race/ethnicity of all children in their program, as well as the number of English language learners and children who were diagnosed with or suspected to have a disability.

With the exception of Early Head Start, teachers reported that most children were white. However, racial/ethnic diversity is also apparent across the programs. Teachers in three programs reported that almost a quarter or more of the children are Black/African-American, and five programs reported having 7 percent or more Hispanic/Latino or biracial/multiracial children. See **Table 10** for complete results.

Table 10. Teacher-reported Race of Children by Type of Setting

	Great Start Readiness Program	Licensed Child Care Center	Licensed Family Child Care Home	Head Start	Licensed Group Child Care Home	Early Head Start	Preschool Special Education	All Teachers
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1%	<1%	1%	2%	1%	8%	<1%	1%
Asian	1%	3%	<1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%
Black/African American	24%	9%	10%	24%	13%	38%	14%	18%
Hispanic/Latino	7%	3%	2%	8%	3%	8%	7%	5%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	<1%
White	58%	78%	77%	54%	73%	31%	70%	65%
Biracial/ multiracial	6%	5%	7%	9%	5%	7%	4%	6%
Other race/ ethnicity	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%

Across all programs, teachers reported that 10 percent of the children were English language learners. Teachers in Early Head Start reported the highest percentage (21 percent) of children who were English language learners. See **Table 11** for complete results.

Table 11. Teacher-reported Percent of Children Who Were English Language Learners by Type of Setting

Great Start Readiness Program	Licensed Child Care Center	Licensed Family Child Care Home	Head Start	Licensed Group Child Care Home	Early Head Start	Preschool Special Education	All Teachers
9%	7%	8%	12%	11%	21%	7%	10%

The highest percentage of children with a disability or suspected disability was reported by teachers in preschool special education programs, while in other settings teachers reported between 7 to 14 percent of children with a disability or suspected disability. See **Table 12** for complete results.

Table 12. Teacher-reported Percent of Children Who Were Diagnosed With or Suspected to Have a Disability by Type of Setting

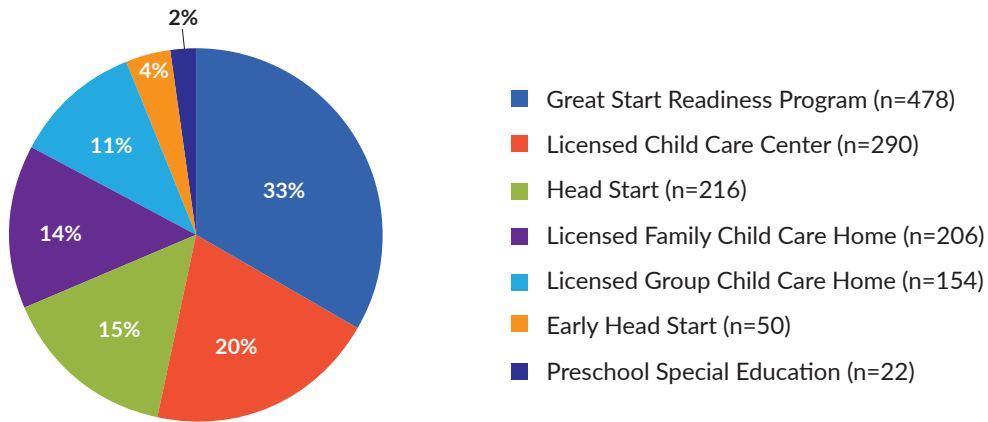| Great Start Readiness Program	Licensed Child Care Center	Licensed Family Child Care Home	Head Start	Licensed Group Child Care Home	Early Head Start	Preschool Special Education	All Teachers
11%	7%	8%	14%	7%	13%	78%	11%

HOW MANY CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR DO TEACHERS REPORT?

"Challenging behavior" was defined in the survey as "a repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with the child's ability to play, learn, and get along with others." Teachers reported on the number of children with challenging behavior in their class or home-based child care settings in the previous year (fall 2018 to summer 2019).

Across settings, 91 percent of teachers reported having at least one child with challenging behavior; on average, teachers reported that four children had challenging behavior. See **Figure 9** for complete results by setting. The number of children with challenging behavior varied across age groups.

- Among teachers of preschoolers, 85 percent identified at least one preschooler with challenging behavior; on average, they reported three preschoolers with challenging behavior.
- Among teachers of toddlers, 71 percent identified at least one toddler with challenging behavior; on average, they reported two toddlers with challenging behavior.
- Among teachers of infants, 36 percent identified at least one infant with challenging behavior; on average, they reported two infants with challenging behavior.

Figure 9. Percent of Teachers Who Reported Having at Least One Child With Challenging Behavior by Type of ECE Setting

- Great Start Readiness Program (n=478)
- Licensed Child Care Center (n=290)
- Head Start (n=216)
- Licensed Family Child Care Home (n=206)
- Licensed Group Child Care Home (n=154)
- Early Head Start (n=50)
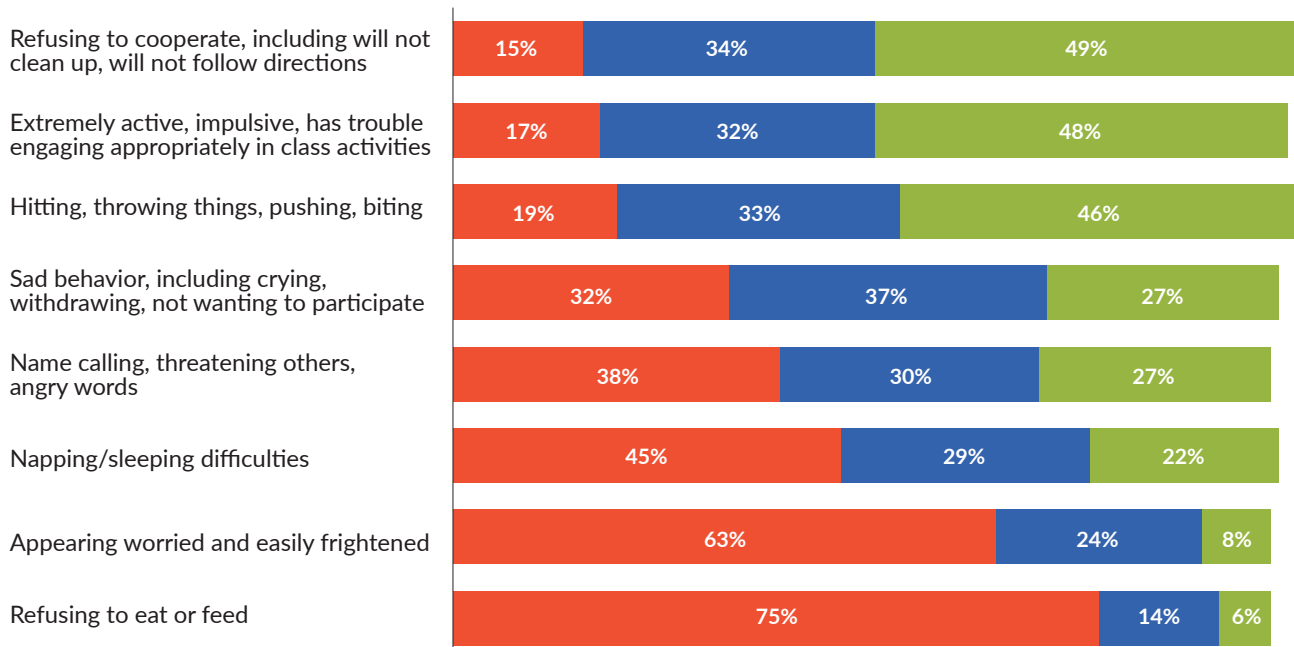- Preschool Special Education (n=22)

HOW COMMON ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS?

As shown in **Figure 10,** nearly half the teachers rated three types of disruptive behavior (e.g., refuses to cooperate; extremely active, impulsive; and hitting or throwing things) as very common (occurring 4 to 5 days on most weeks). A little more than a quarter of teachers also reported that sad behavior (e.g., crying, withdrawn) is very common.
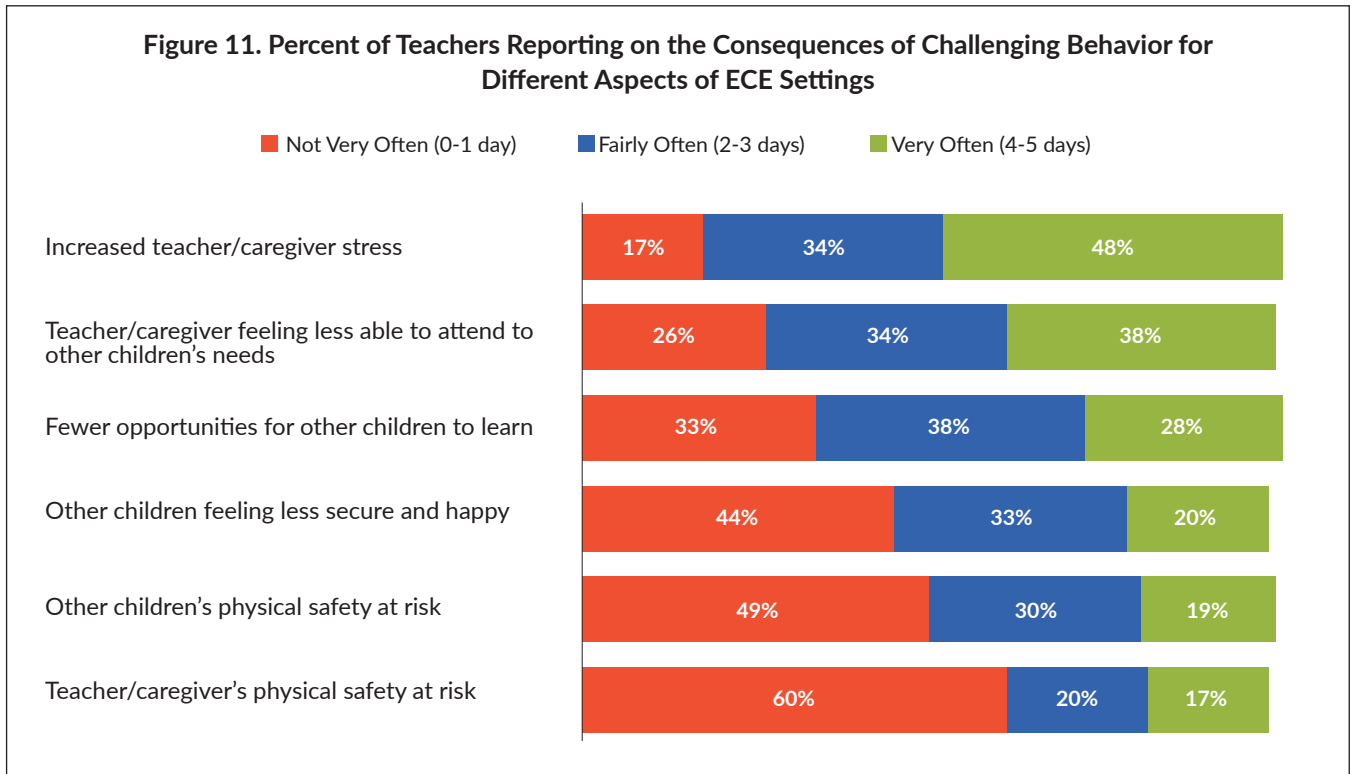
Figure 10. Percent of Teachers Rating Different Challenging Behaviors

Legend: ■ Not Very Common (0-1 day) ■ Fairly Common (2-3 days) ■ Very Common (4-5 days)

Behavior	Not Very Common (0-1 day)	Fairly Common (2-3 days)	Very Common (4-5 days)
Refusing to cooperate, including will not clean up, will not follow directions	15%	34%	49%
Extremely active, impulsive, has trouble engaging appropriately in class activities	17%	32%	48%
Hitting, throwing things, pushing, biting	19%	33%	46%
Sad behavior, including crying, withdrawing, not wanting to participate	32%	37%	27%
Name calling, threatening others, angry words	38%	30%	27%
Napping/sleeping difficulties	45%	29%	22%
Appearing worried and easily frightened	63%	24%	8%
Refusing to eat or feed	75%	14%	6%

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS?

The survey asked about the consequences of challenging behavior on different aspects of the ECE setting and how often these occurred on most weeks. Almost half of the teachers reported experiencing increased stress, while over a quarter of the teachers reported feeling less able to attend to other children's needs and having fewer opportunities for other children to learn very often (occuring 4-5 days on most weeks) as a result of children's challenging behavior. See **Figure 11** for complete results.

Figure 11. Percent of Teachers Reporting on the Consequences of Challenging Behavior for Different Aspects of ECE Settings

■ Not Very Often (0-1 day)　　■ Fairly Often (2-3 days)　　■ Very Often (4-5 days)

Aspect	Not Very Often (0-1 day)	Fairly Often (2-3 days)	Very Often (4-5 days)
Increased teacher/caregiver stress	17%	34%	48%
Teacher/caregiver feeling less able to attend to other children's needs	26%	34%	38%
Fewer opportunities for other children to learn	33%	38%	28%
Other children feeling less secure and happy	44%	33%	20%
Other children's physical safety at risk	49%	30%	19%
Teacher/caregiver's physical safety at risk	60%	20%	17%

Removal of Children, Initiated by Parents, Staff, or Both Due to the Child's Own Challenging Behavior

Teachers reported on the number of children with challenging behavior who left their classroom in the past year under three different conditions: 1) Parents told staff they were leaving because the program could not meet the child's needs; 2) Staff told parents the child must leave because the program could not meet the child's needs; or 3) Parents and staff agreed the child must leave because the program could not meet the child's needs. Overall, **15 percent of teachers reported that children with challenging behavior were removed from their classroom or home-based child care setting under any of these three conditions;** on average, teachers reported that two children with challenging behavior were removed.

About the same percentage of teachers reported the removal of children with challenging behavior across the three conditions.

- **6 percent of teachers** reported that children with challenging behavior were removed **when parents told staff** they were leaving because the program could not meet the child's needs; on average, they reported one child with challenging behavior was removed.
- **6 percent of teachers** reported that children with challenging behavior were removed when **staff told parents** the child must leave because the program could not meet the child's needs; on average, they reported one child with challenging behavior was removed.

- **7 percent of teachers** reported that children with challenging behavior were removed because **parents and staff agreed** the program could not meet the child's needs; on average, they reported one child with challenging behavior was removed.

Among all teachers who reported the removal of children, 75 percent reported the removal of preschoolers (one preschooler on average), 23 percent reported the removal of toddlers (one toddler on average), and 10 percent reported the removal of infants (two infants on average).

Across the different program types, licensed child care centers had the highest percentage of teachers (24 percent) who reported that at least one child with challenging behavior left their program; on average they reported the removal of two children. The rate of removal was 28 for every thousand children in licensed child care centers. See **Table 13** for complete results.

Table 13. Percent of Teachers Reporting the Removal of Children With Challenging Behavior Across Different ECE Settings Under Any Condition (i.e., Parents Told Staff, Staff Told Parents, or Parents and Staff Agreed That the Child Must Leave)

Type of Program	Percent of Teachers	Average Number of Children who Left Their Program	Removal Rate for Every 1,000 children
Licensed Child Care Center	24%	2	28
Licensed Group Child Care Home	19%	2	30
Preschool Special Education	18%	2	23
Early Head Start	18%	1	19
Licensed Family Child Care Home	14%	2	27
Head Start	13%	1	9
Great Start Readiness Program	9%	1	6
Total Teachers Across All Programs	**15%**	**2**	**16**

Removal of Children Initiated by Staff Due to the Child's Own Challenging Behavior

The condition described in the survey as "staff told parents child must leave because the program could not meet the child's needs," can be considered "involuntary dismissal" of children, or expulsion. Overall, **6 percent of teachers reported that children with challenging behavior were involuntarily removed from their classroom or home-based child care setting; on average, they reported 1 child was removed.** Teachers reported involuntary dismissal of preschoolers at a higher rate compared to other age groups. Among the teachers who reported involuntary removal of children, the highest percentage (68 percent) reported the removal of preschoolers (one preschooler on average). Over a quarter (28 percent) reported the removal of toddlers (one toddler on average) and 13 percent reported the removal of infants (two infants on average). Across the different programs, Licensed Child Care Centers and Licensed Group Child Care Homes had the highest percentage of teachers (both 12 percent) who reported the removal of children with challenging behavior under the condition "staff told parents that the child must leave." The rate of removal was highest (18 for every thousand children) for Licensed Group Child Care Homes. See **Table 14** for complete results.

Table 14. Percent of Teachers Reporting the Removal of Children With Challenging Behavior Across Different Early Care and Education Settings When Staff Told Parents That the Child Must Leave

Type of Program	Percent of Teachers	Average Number of Children Who Left Their Program	Removal Rate for Every 1,000 Children
Licensed Group Child Care Home	12%	2	18
Licensed Child Care Center	12%	1	10
Licensed Family Child Care Home	7%	1	9
Preschool Special Education	9%	1	8
Early Head Start	4%	1	3
Great Start Readiness Program*	2%	1	1
Head Start	1%	2	1
Total Teachers Across All Programs	**6%**	**1**	**5**

Gilliam's 2005 study found that 4 percent of teachers from Great Start Readiness Programs reported expelling children. They reported a removal rate of 2 per 1,000 children.[5]

Removal of Children Initiated by Parents Due to the Challenging Behavior of Peers

Teachers also identified another group of children who left classrooms and home-based child care settings; these were children whose parents removed them due to concerns about the challenging behavior of other children. Across all settings, **13 percent of teachers reported the removal of children due to the challenging behavior of peers;** on average, they reported 2 children were removed. Teachers in licensed child care centers reported the highest percentage of these children leaving programs; 17 percent of teachers in licensed child care centers reported that, on average, two children were removed due to the parent's concerns about the challenging behavior of children's peers. The rate of removal was 16 for every thousand children in licensed center-based child care programs. See **Table 15** for complete results.

Table 15. Percent of Teachers Reporting the Removal of Children Across Different Early Care and Education Settings Due to the Challenging Behavior of Peers

Type of Program	Percent of Teachers	Average Number of Children who Left Their Program	Removal Rate for Every 1,000 Children
Licensed Child Care Center	17%	2	16
Licensed Group Child Care Home	16%	2	23
Licensed Family Child Care Home	14%	2	30
Head Start	14%	2	16
Great Start Readiness Program	9%	2	11
Early Head Start	8%	1	7
Preschool Special Education	5%	1	4
Total Teachers Across All Programs	**13%**	**2**	**15**

Removal of Children Initiated by Parents, Staff, or Both Due to Their Own Challenging Behavior or the Challenging Behavior of Peers

Overall, **21 percent of teachers reported the removal of children due to their challenging behavior or the challenging behavior of peers;** on average, they reported two children were removed. The highest percentage of children were in licensed child care centers; 30 percent of teachers in licensed child care centers reported that on average, two children were removed due to the child's challenging behavior or the parent's concerns about the challenging behavior of children's peers. The rate of removal was 44 for every thousand children in licensed child care centers. See **Table 16** for complete results.

Table 16. Percent of Teachers Reporting the Removal of Children Across Different Early Care and Education Settings Due to Their Challenging Behavior or the Challenging Behavior of Peers

Type of program	Percent of Teachers	Average Number of Children who Left Their Program	Removal Rate for Every 1,000 Children
Licensed Child Care Center	30%	2	44
Licensed Group Child Care Home	27%	2	53
Licensed Family Child Care Home	22%	2	57
Head Start	21%	2	25
Preschool Special Education	18%	2	27
Early Head Start	18%	2	26
Great Start Readiness Program	14%	2	17
Total Teachers Across All Programs	**21%**	**2**	**31**

IN WHAT TYPES OF SETTINGS ARE CHILDREN PLACED AFTER THEY ARE REMOVED FROM A PROGRAM DUE TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR?

For children who were removed from a program due to their challenging behavior, teachers were asked to report on the type of setting the child transitioned to, with choices that included a licensed setting, an unlicensed setting, parental care, or no setting due to the parent's inability to find a program. While the highest percentage of teachers (24 percent) reported that children moved to licensed settings, about one-fifth of the teachers (21 percent) reported that when children with challenging behavior left their program, parents decided to care for the child at home rather than look for another program; teachers reported one child, on average. See **Table 17** for complete results.

Table 17. Types of Settings That Children Moved to When They Were Removed From Their Programs or Home-based Child Care Settings Due to Their Challenging Behavior

	Percent of Teachers	Average Number of Children Who Left Their Program
Licensed setting (must comply with state requirements)	24%	3
Parent decided to care for the child at home	21%	1
Parents were unable to find another program	8%	1
Unlicensed setting or exempt from license	5%	2
I don't know for some or all children	19%	1

ARE THERE DISPARITIES IN REMOVAL FROM PROGRAMS RELATED TO CHILDREN'S RACE/ETHNICITY, ENGLISH PROFICIENCY, OR DISABILITY STATUS?

Among all teachers (n=212) who reported removing children due to their challenging behavior, 24 percent did not report the race of the children removed. The highest percentages of teachers who did not report the race/ethnicity of children who were removed were in licensed child care centers (8 percent) and Great Start Readiness Program (5 percent).

Among the 73 percent of teachers who reported the race/ethnicity of children who were removed due to challenging behavior, there was variation across types of settings in the percentages of children in different racial/ethnic groups who were removed. In center-based settings, the highest reported rates of removal are among biracial/multiracial (10 percent), white (9 percent), and Black/African American children (7 percent). Among children in home-based settings, the highest rates of removal are among white (14 percent) and biracial/multiracial children (7 percent). Overall findings do not show disproportionate percentages of non-white children being removed from ECE settings. However, Head Start stands out as a setting where more Black/African American and biracial/multiracial children are removed due to challenging behavior compared to white children. For example, in the GSRP, which has classrooms with racial compositions similar to Head Start, 5 percent of biracial/multiracial children are removed compared to 21 percent in Head Start. See **Tables 18 and 19** for complete results.

Table 18. Average Percent of Children by Race/Ethnicity Who Were Removed Due to Challenging Behavior by Type of Setting

	Center-based Child Care Settings n=109	Home-based Child Care Settings n=44	All Teachers n=154*
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	2%	1%
Asian	1%	0%	1%
Black/African American	7%	2%	6%
Hispanic/Latino	2%	1%	1%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%
White	9%	14%	11%
Biracial/multiracial	10%	7%	9%
Other race/ethnicity	1%	0%	<1%

Includes 1 teacher from a setting where sample size was too small to be reported individually.

Table 19. Average Percent of Children by Race/Ethnicity Who Were Removed Due to Challenging Behavior by Type of Setting

	Great Start Readiness Program n=31	Licensed Child Care Center n=54	Licensed Family Child Care Home n=22	Head Start n=17	Licensed Group Child Care Home n=22
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	3%	0%	0%	0%	5%
Asian	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Black/African American	6%	7%	4%	10%	1%
Hispanic/Latino	1%	2%	2%	3%	0%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
White	6%	10%	15%	6%	12%
Biracial/multiracial	5%	8%	11%	21%	2%
Other race/ethnicity	<1%	1%	0%	0%	0%

It is notable that 79 percent of teachers reported on the race/ethnicity of all children in their classrooms, while only 60 percent reported the race/ethnicity of all children who were removed due to challenging behavior. A greater number of teachers seem reluctant to identify children by race/ethnicity when asked about children who were removed from their ECE setting due to challenging behavior compared to when they are asked about the racial/ethnic composition of the setting. In view of the growing number of states that have established or are developing policies to reduce expulsion, it is likely that many teachers are aware of current concerns being raised by researchers, policymakers, and practitioners about racial disparities in expulsion.[6] In this survey, some teachers in all settings did not answer questions about the race/ethnicity of children who were removed. However, the highest percentages of non-responders were found in licensed child care centers (8 percent) and Great Start Readiness Programs (5 percent).

Overall, given the lack of complete data, it is not possible to report with confidence on racial/ethnic disparities in expulsion among children whose teachers participated in this survey. At the same time, the high percentage of non-responders to a question about the race/ethnicity of children removed from ECE settings suggests the possibility that disparities exist.

REMOVAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS INITIATED BY PARENTS, STAFF, OR BOTH DUE TO THEIR OWN CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

Overall, a higher percentage of English language learners (ELLs) were removed from ECE settings due to their challenging behavior (17 percent) compared to non-ELLs (13 percent), but there are differences across types of settings. While a higher percentage of ELLs were removed from center-based programs, a higher number of non-ELLs were removed from home-based settings. See **Tables 20 and 21** for complete results by setting.

Table 20. Average Percent of English Language Learners Removed From Programs Due to Their Challenging Behavior by Type of Setting

Center-based Settings n=38	Home-based Settings n=30	All Teachers n=68
15%	20%	17%

Includes one teacher from a setting where sample size was too small to be reported individually.

Table 21. Average Percent of Non-English Language Learners Removed From Programs Due to Their Challenging Behavior by Type of Setting

Center-based Settings n=110	Home-based Settings n=25	All Teachers n=136*
11%	25%	13%

REMOVAL OF CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY INITIATED BY PARENTS, STAFF, OR BOTH DUE TO THEIR OWN CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

Nearly a quarter of all teachers who reported removal of children due to challenging behavior, reported removal of children who were diagnosed with or suspected to have a disability. Across settings, a much higher percentage of children with (or suspected to have) disabilities were removed (62 percent) than children without a disability (16 percent). See **Tables 22 and 23** for complete results by type of setting. With the exception of a very small number of special education programs, the settings represented in this survey serve mostly typically developing children. While such settings are often called "inclusive," it is clear that a disproportionate number of children with (or suspected to have) disabilities are excluded due to challenging behavior.

Table 22. Average Percent of Children With a Disability Removed From Programs Due to Their Challenging Behavior by Type of Setting

Center-based Settings n=42	Home-based Settings n=7	All Teachers n=49
58%	88%	62%

Includes one teacher from a setting where sample size was too small to be reported individually.

Table 23. Average Percent of Children Without a Disability Removed From Programs Due to Their Challenging Behavior by Type of Setting

Center-based Settings n=106	Home-based Settings n=50	All Teachers n=157*
13%	21%	16%

WHAT ARE THE FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR?

Teachers reported on their knowledge of whether children with challenging behavior were experiencing certain adverse family circumstances. A high percentage of teachers reported that children with challenging behaviors face serious adverse family situations.

- 40 percent of teachers reported that children's parents had serious financial problems (e.g., had trouble with child care co-pays, asked program staff for information about food or housing assistance); on average, they reported four children in families with these problems
- 39 percent of teachers reported that children's families experienced domestic violence, parental incarceration, or other involvement with the criminal justice system; on average, they reported two children in families with these problems
- 38 percent of teachers reported that children's families had health or mental health challenges; on average, they reported two children in families with these circumstances
- 32 percent of teachers reported that children were in foster care or were in families monitored by Child Protective Services (CPS); on average, they reported two children in foster care or monitored by CPS
- 30 percent of teachers reported that children were in families with one or two absent parents (e.g. military obligations); on average, they reported two children had an absent parent or two

- 29 percent of teachers reported that children's families experienced substance abuse challenges; on average, they reported two children in families that experienced substance abuse challenges
- 17 percent of teachers reported that children were homeless; on average, they reported one child who was homeless

HOW DO TEACHERS ADDRESS CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR?

A high percentage of teachers reported that they requested a meeting with parents concerning a child's challenging behavior and nearly half reported that they requested supports from early childhood mental health consultants. Teachers also reported using other strategies to address children's challenging behavior, such as exclusion from the setting (e.g., nearly a quarter asked parents to pick children up early).

- 72 percent of teachers reported that they requested a special meeting with parents to discuss child's behavior
- 47 percent of teachers reported that they requested a consultation with an early childhood/mental health specialist
- 43 percent of teachers reported that they recommended/facilitated referral for early intervention or preschool special education evaluation
- 30 percent of teachers reported that they recommended referral to the child's pediatrician to ensure medical screenings and exams were up to date
- 23 percent of teachers reported that they asked parents to pick up the child early from the program
- 6 percent of teachers reported that they required that the child not attend the program for one or more days

WHAT RESOURCES USED BY TEACHERS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE IN HELPING THEM RESPOND TO CHILDREN'S CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR?

Teachers were asked about resources they have used that have been most effective in reducing children's challenging behavior. Early childhood mental health consultation was the resource selected as highly effective by the largest percentage of teachers (40 percent).

- 40 percent of teachers selected early childhood mental health consultation
- 20 percent of teachers selected social-emotional-focused group training
- 18 percent of teachers selected social-emotional-focused on-site coaching

WHAT BARRIERS DO TEACHERS FACE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR?

Teachers were asked about whether they encountered different types of barriers when addressing the needs of children with challenging behavior. The highest percentage of teachers (73 percent) reported "families' difficulty addressing child's challenging behavior" as a barrier. Over half (52 percent) also identified families' difficulty managing adverse circumstances, such as parent mental health or severe financial problems, as a barrier. High percentages of teachers identified other barriers related to difficulties obtaining assistance from the early intervention and special education programs (47 percent) and from early childhood mental health consultants (40 percent).

WHAT SUPPORTS DO TEACHERS BELIEVE WILL HELP THEM ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR?

A high percentage of teachers identified "on-site consultation" and "increased support for families" as supports that could help them address the needs of children with challenging behavior from among those listed in the survey.

- 68 percent of teachers selected increased access to early childhood mental health specialists who can visit settings to provide consultation to teachers and families
- 55 percent of teachers selected increased support for families such as staff to help families access services that address housing, mental health, substance abuse problems, and other challenges
- 49 percent of teachers selected additional staff
- 49 percent of teachers selected increased opportunities for group training linked to on-site coaching
- 45 percent of teachers selected a curriculum that has a strong focus on children's social-emotional development

Summary of Findings

The following are key findings from the survey of Michigan's teachers in center-based and home-based early care and education programs. A discussion and recommendations follow this section.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMS, TEACHERS, AND CHILDREN

- While the survey did not recruit a representative sample of teachers in early care and education programs, survey participants were teachers in center-based and home-based programs in every region of the state; programs included the Great Start Readiness Program (33 percent), Licensed Child Care (20 percent); Licensed Family Child Care Homes (15 percent), Head Start (15 percent); Licensed Group Child Care Homes (11 percent), Early Head Start (3 percent) and Preschool Special Education (1 percent).
- Teachers in center-based programs reported higher levels of education than those in home-based settings; across settings, nearly half of teachers (44 percent) had a bachelor's degree and almost a fifth (18 percent) had a master's degree or higher.
- Most teachers (77 percent) reported participation in social-emotional-focused professional development (PD); Head Start and Early Head Start teachers reported the most hours of PD, including on-site coaching (17 hours) while licensed child care centers and family child care homes reported the least (10 hours for centers, 8 hours for child care homes).
  - Across settings, teachers reported participation in 8 hours of on-site coaching, with Head Start and Early Head Start teachers reporting the most (10 hours) and licensed child care centers the least (6 hours).
- As reported by teachers across all settings, children in the programs were mostly white (65 percent) while 18 percent were Black/African American, 5 percent were Hispanic/Latino, 6 percent were biracial/multiracial, and 2 percent or less were in other racial groups.
- Teachers reported that 10 percent of children were English Language Learners across all settings.
- Excluding special education programs, the percentage of children reported to have an identified or suspected disability ranged from 7 percent in licensed child care to 14 percent in Early Head Start. Seventy-eight percent of children in Preschool Special Education Programs (comprising only 1 percent of the program sample) were identified as having a disability.

PREVALENCE OF CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

- "Challenging behavior" was defined in the survey as "a repeated pattern of behavior..." to distinguish it from the types of occasional distress and briefly disruptive behavior commonly seen in young children; 91 percent of teachers across settings reported having at least one child with challenging behavior, and teachers reported an average of four children.
- The prevalence of challenging behavior was highest among preschoolers (85 percent of teachers reporting an average of three preschoolers) and also high among toddlers (71 percent of teachers reporting an average of two toddlers); challenging behavior among infants was also fairly common with 36 percent of teachers reporting an average of two infants.
- The most common types of challenging behavior reported as very common by over 45 percent of teachers were: "refusing to cooperate," "extremely active, impulsive behavior," and "hitting, throwing things, pushing, or biting." Behaviors that infants might exhibit included refusing to eat (reported as very common by 6 percent of teachers), appearing worried (reported as very common by 8 percent of teachers) and sad or withdrawn behavior (reported as very common by 27 percent of teachers).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

- The consequences of children's challenging behavior that teachers report as occurring "very often" were increased teacher stress (48 percent of teachers), teachers feeling less able to meet children's needs (38 percent of teachers), and fewer opportunities for children to learn (28 percent of teachers).
- Teachers reported on the removal of children with challenging behavior from classrooms under three conditions: 1) Parents told staff they were leaving the program because it could not meet the child's needs, 2) Staff told parents the child must leave because the program could not meet the child's needs, and 3) Parents and staff agreed that the child must leave because the program could not meet the child's needs.
    - 15 percent of teachers reported that at least one child left their program under one of these conditions and on average, reported that two children left.
    - Among teachers who reported the removal of children, 75 percent of teachers reported the removal of preschoolers (one toddler on average), 23 percent reported the removal of toddlers (one toddler on average), and 10 percent of teachers reported the removal of infants (two infants on average).
    - Licensed child care centers had the highest percentage of teachers (24 percent) reporting the removal of at least one child due to challenging behavior while Great Start Readiness Programs have the lowest percent (9 percent).

FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

- Teachers reported on a range of adverse family circumstances experienced by children with challenging behavior. For example,
    - 40 percent of teachers reported that children's families had severe financial problems (teachers reported four children, on average)
    - 39 percent of teachers reported that children's families experienced domestic violence, parent incarceration, or other involvement with the criminal justice system (teachers reported two children, on average)

DISPARITIES IN THE REMOVAL OF CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR FROM ECE SETTINGS

- Almost a quarter of teachers omitted responses about the race/ethnicity of children who were removed from their ECE setting due to challenging behavior; due to this gap in data, it is not possible to reliably report on whether the percent of children removed from ECE settings is disproportionately high in one or more racial/ethnic groups
- Among teachers who reported on the race/ethnicity of children removed from settings, overall results do not show that disproportionate percentages of non-white children were removed due to challenging behavior. An exception is Head Start, which has higher percentages of biracial/multiracial and Black/African American children being removed compared to white children.
- A slightly higher percentage of English language learners (15 percent) was removed from center-based ECE programs due to challenging behavior than non-English language learners (11 percent), while in home-based settings, the percentage of English language learners removed was lower (20 percent) than for non-English language learners (25 percent).
- Across settings, a higher percentage of children with or suspected to have disabilities was removed (62 percent) due to challenging behavior compared to without disabilities (16 percent); this disparity was similar across both center-based and home-based ECE settings.

SUPPORTS TEACHERS BELIEVE COULD HELP THEM ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

- Teachers identified key supports that they believe could help them better address the needs of children with challenging behavior, including supports for teachers and families
  - Increased access to early childhood mental health specialists who can provide on-site consultation to teachers and families (68 percent of teachers)
  - Increased support for families to help them address housing, mental health, substance abuse, and other challenges (55 percent of teachers)
  - Increased opportunities for group training and on-site coaching (49 percent)

Discussion and Recommendations

The survey's key findings indicate that serious challenging behavior is common in Michigan's ECE classrooms, including in settings serving the youngest children. Teachers identified increased stress as one of the most frequent consequences of challenging behavior. Given evidence from other research that teacher stress is associated with less positive teacher behavior, it is not surprising that teachers also reported less ability to meet the needs of children and fewer learning opportunities for children as a consequence of challenging behavior.[7] The results also point to the removal of too many children with challenging behavior from ECE settings, especially among children identified as having, or suspected of having, a disability. Because a high percentage of teachers did not respond to a question about the race/ethnicity of children who were removed from their ECE setting due to challenging

behavior, we lack conclusive results concerning racial/ethnic disparities. Previous research has shown that a disproportionate number of Black children experience preschool expulsion and suspension.[8] The harmful effects of early expulsion include children's missed opportunities to acquire social-emotional and other early learning competencies that are critical to later success in school, and a higher risk of school dropout and contact with the juvenile justice system.[9]

Teachers reported on the additional supports they need to better address the needs of children with challenging behavior, most frequently citing the need for increased access to infant and early childhood mental health consultants who can work with teachers and families to address behavioral concerns. Infant and early childhood mental health consultation has been found to improve teachers' use of effective strategies and to improve children's behavior and reduce expulsion.[10] Markedly reducing expulsion may be the most effective way to eliminate disparities in children's exclusion from ECE programs.

The recommendations that follow reflect the voices of the early care and education teachers who participated in the survey and broad agreement among leaders and stakeholders who reviewed the survey's results. These recommendations address two critical concerns: **1) the need for stronger support for teachers and other staff in ECE center- and home-based settings to help them promote young children's social-emotional growth and address challenging behavior so that children can remain in and benefit from ECE settings; and 2) the need to help families connect with services and supports that increase family members' health, mental health and well-being, stability, and financial security. In addition to these core recommendations, Michigan stakeholders reflected on additional strategies that will be further developed in the expulsion and suspension workgroup.**

1. **Building on the state's current program, establish a state-wide infant-early childhood mental health consultation initiative that can support center- and home-based settings serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers: Design and finance this program through an interagency partnership between Michigan's Department of Human Services and the Michigan Department of Education's Office of Great Start.** High-quality infant-early childhood mental health consultation has been shown to increase teachers' ability to promote the social-emotional skills of young children and reduce behavior difficulties that interfere with children's learning and development in ECE settings.[11] Many states are working with the National Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) to expand or build statewide consultation and the implementation supports needed for effective delivery of IECMHC. [12]

2. **Expand professional development and coaching that focuses on research-informed social-emotional teaching practices.** Several models of group training linked to coaching have been found to improve teaching practices that support young children's social-emotional growth and competencies. A growing number of states have expanded the Pyramid Model to serve large numbers of ECE settings through a network of trainers who support high fidelity implementation. Because this model includes social-emotional support strategies appropriate for all children, as well as for children who need more intensive supports, it has been used in conjunction with infant and early childhood mental health consultation. Some states coordinate infant and early childhood mental health consultation and social-emotional focused professional development, tailoring supports to the needs of each ECE site.[13]

3. **Provide and assess the impacts of professional development on culturally responsive practices, reduction of implicit bias, and inclusion of children with special needs for early childhood mental health consultants, professional development providers, and teachers.** Theory and emerging research suggest that teacher training designed to encourage teacher empathy, a focus on the child's individual needs, and consideration of multiple factors outside the child that contribute to negative behavior can reduce implicit bias, a contributor to disparities in exclusionary practices.[14] There is also evidence that training can improve practices that support the well-being of children with special needs and attitudes towards including these children, effects that are likely to reduce children's challenging behavior and expulsion.[15] Given the still limited evidence on different types of training as a driver of reduced disparities in expulsion, it will be important to evaluate changes in factors that may contribute to these disparities (e.g., teachers' perceptions of children and their behavior) as part of training initiatives.

5. **Identify and support the use of effective strategies in ECE settings that help connect families to services and supports that meet critical health, mental health, financial, and other basic needs.** ECE programs, especially home-based child care, often have limited resources available to help parents connect with resources that help them address family problems that may contribute to children's challenging behavior. Many states have invested in Help Me Grow and Family Resource Centers that can help ECE programs and the families they serve obtain needed supports. Help Me Grow, which already exists in some MI counties, is a national model that also provides developmental and social-emotional screening for young children as well as assistance obtaining with child development and family support services.[16]

Other strategies discussed by Michigan stakeholders address additional ways to support ECE programs, young children, and families. These include:

- Developing opportunities for teachers to gain infant and early childhood mental health competencies through training, certification, and use of reflective supervision
- Increased use of trauma-informed curricula and professional development
- Increased use of social-emotional screening of children
- Closer collaboration with Early Intervention to ensure supports for infants and toddlers
- Professional development that increases teachers' understanding of how adverse family circumstances affect children's development and behavior

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