

# Pandemic Stress: Supporting Young Children, Families, and the Early Childhood Workforce

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Advocates for Children of New Jersey

October 18, 2021



# Early Expulsions, Suspensions, and Other Exclusions

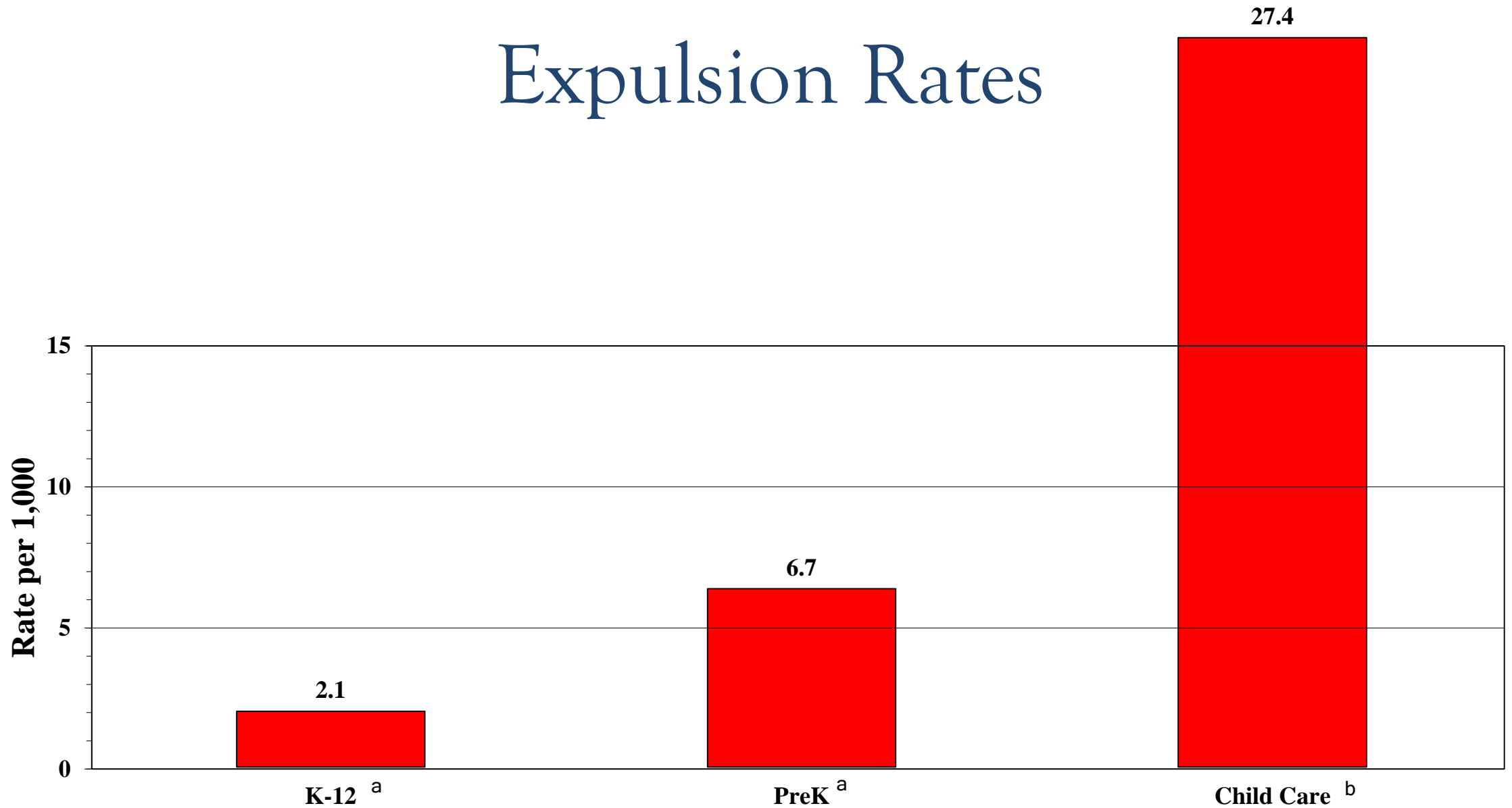
## Harm children now...

- Denies access to early education
- Undermines child/family relationship with schools/education
- Obscures root causes that should be addressed
- Further calcifies biases regarding whom we serve and whom we exclude

## Harm children later...

- Academic failure and disengagement
- School dropout
- Increased rates of law enforcement contact and later incarceration

# Expulsion Rates



a. Gilliam, WS (2005). Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion Rates in state prekindergarten programs. *FCD Policy Brief, Series No. 3*. Available: [www.ziglercenter.yale.edu/publications/briefs.html](http://www.ziglercenter.yale.edu/publications/briefs.html)

b. Gilliam, WS & Shahr, G (2006). Preschool and child care expulsion and suspension: Rates and predictors in one state. *Infants and Young Children, 19*, 228-245.



# National Rates per Year

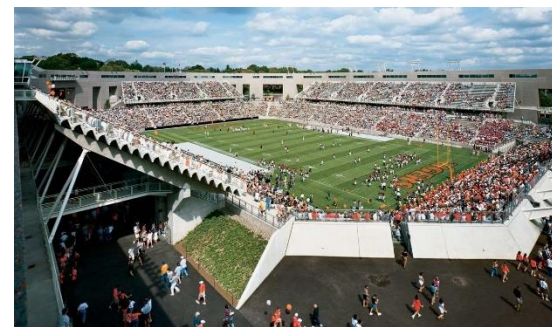
|                      |      |                 |
|----------------------|------|-----------------|
| Preschool Suspension | 2.0% | ~174,309        |
| Preschool Expulsion  | 0.2% | ~ 17,248        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         |      | <b>~191,557</b> |



MetLife Stadium  
82,500



SHI (Rutgers) Stadium  
52,454



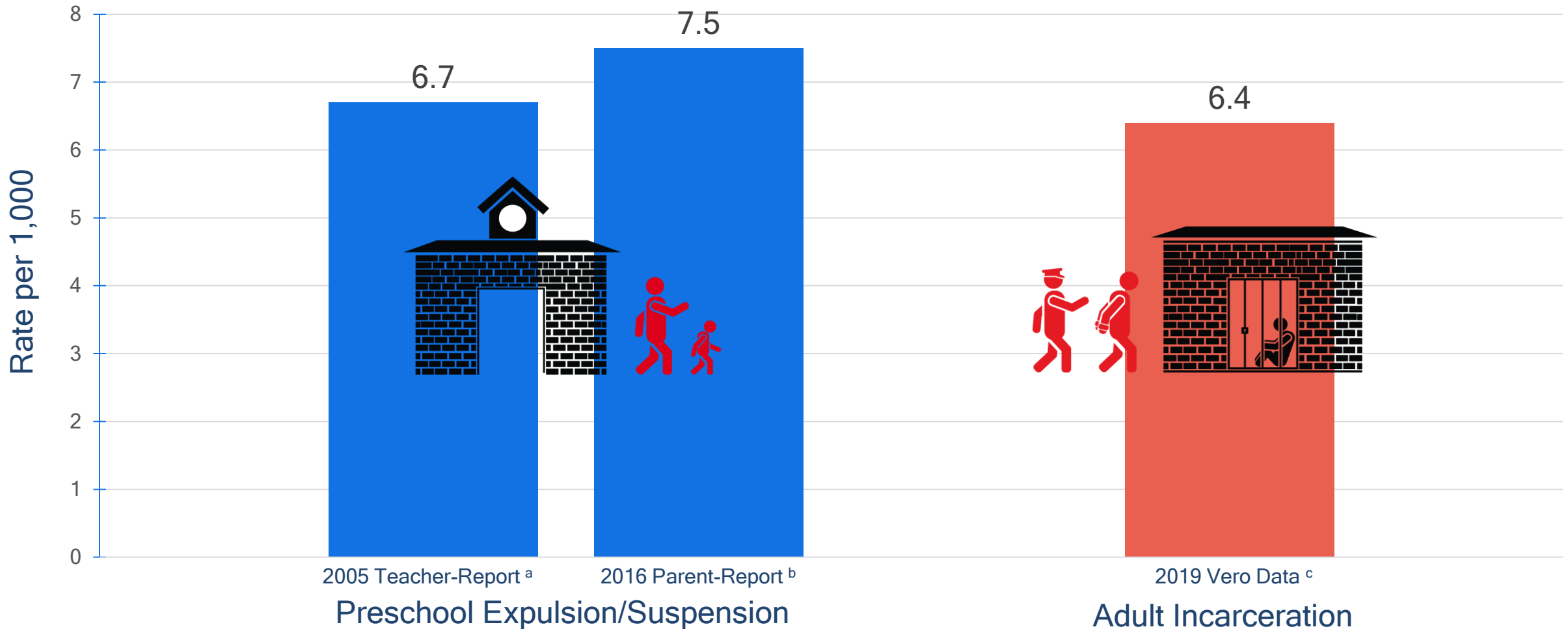
Princeton Stadium  
27,800



Red Bull Stadium  
25,189

*In the Parking Lot = 3,614*

# Preschool Expulsion & Adult Incarceration Rates



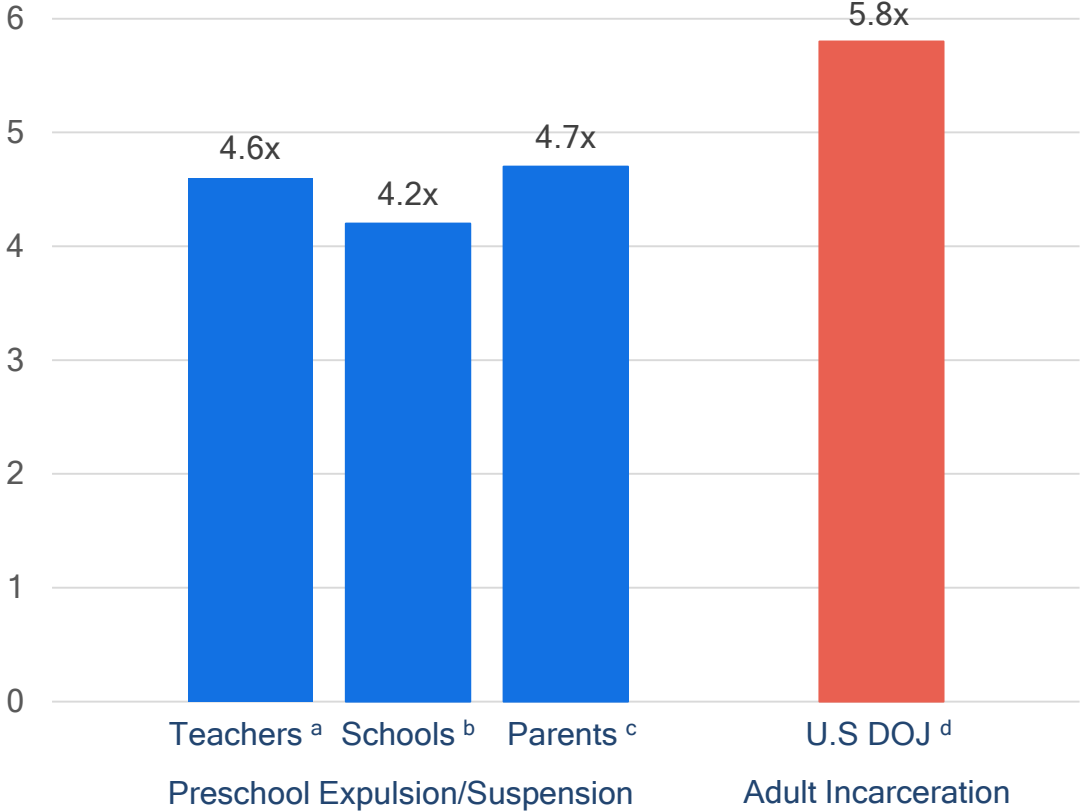
a. Gilliam (2005). *Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten systems*. New Haven, CT: Yale University.

b. Zeng et al. (2019). Adverse childhood experiences and preschool suspension/expulsion: A population study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 97, 104149.

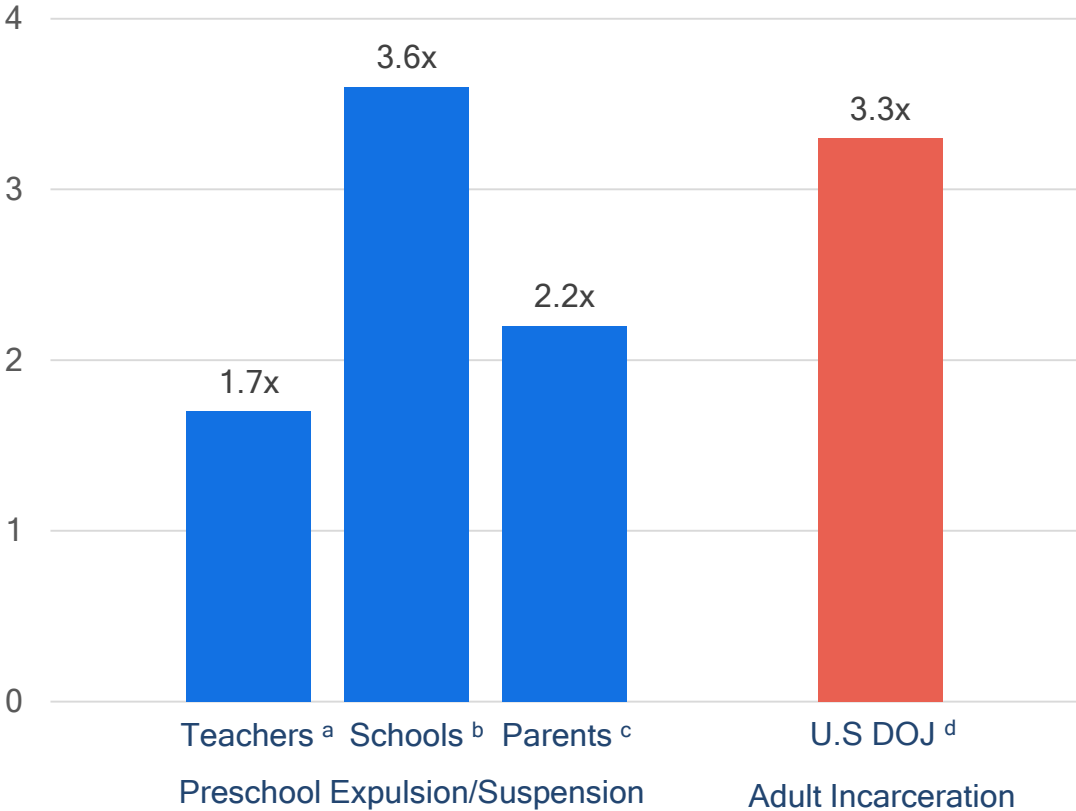
c. Kang-Brown et al. (2021). *People in jail and prison in 2020*. Brooklyn, NY: Vera Institute of Justice.

# Gender & Race Disparities from Preschool to Prison

Boys/Men Compared to Girls/Women



Black Compared to White



a. Gilliam (2005). *Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten systems*. New Haven, CT: Yale University.  
 b. U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2016). *2013-2014 civil rights data collection: Key data highlights on equity and opportunity gaps in our nation's public schools*. Washington, DC: Author.  
 c. Zeng et al. (2019). Adverse childhood experiences and preschool suspension/expulsion: A population study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 97, 104-149.  
 d. Zeng & Minton (2021). *Jail inmates in 2019* (Report NCJ 255608). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.





# Early Expulsion/Suspension Predict:

1. Negative school attitudes
2. Academic failure and grade retention
3. Later expulsion and suspension
4. High school drop-out (10x)
5. Incarceration (8x)

American Psychological Association. (2008). *Zero Tolerance Task Force report: An evidentiary review and recommendations*. Washington, DC: Author.

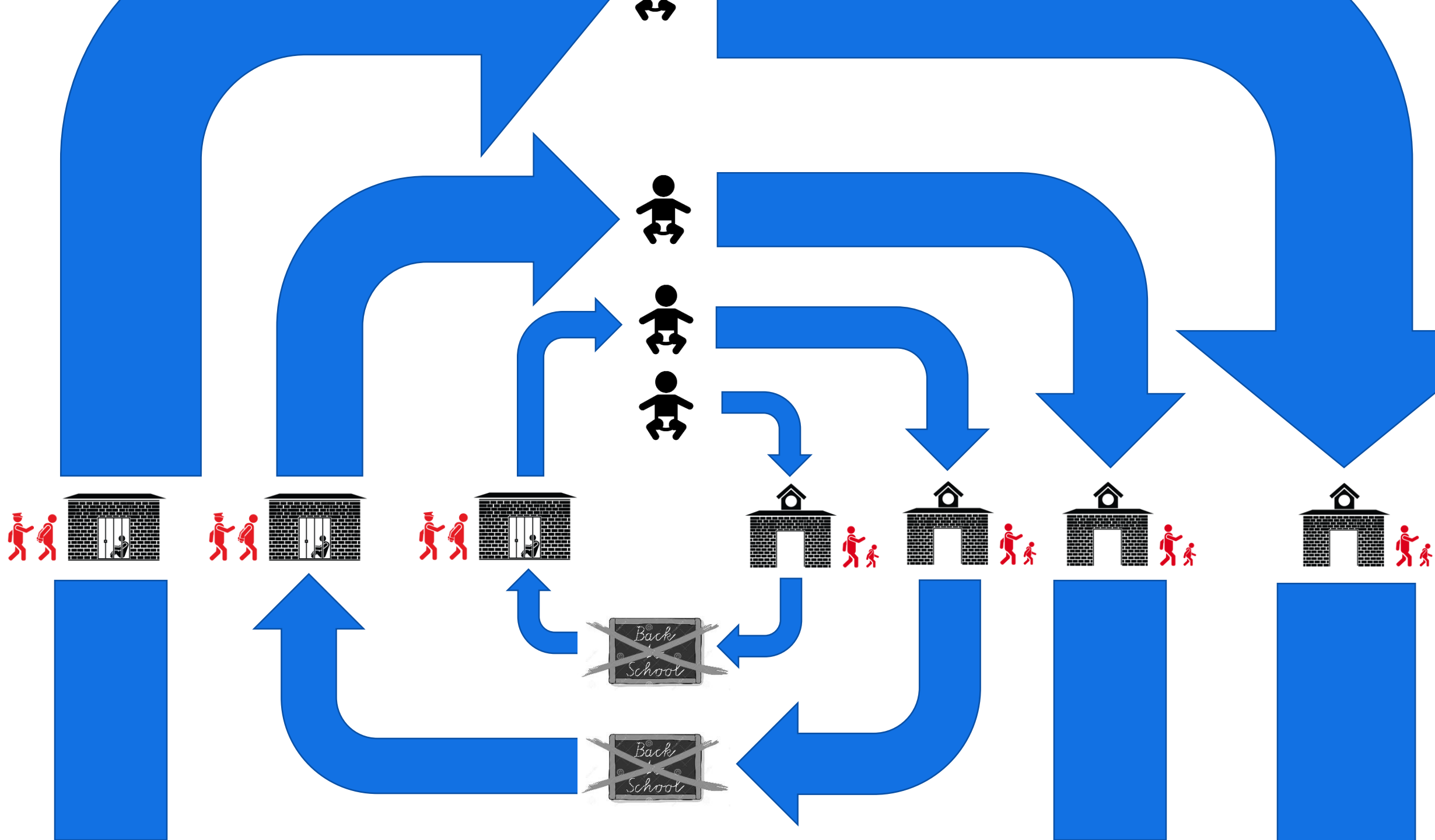
Council on School Health. (2013). Out-of-school suspension and expulsion. *Pediatrics*, 131(3):e1000-e1007.

Petras et al. (2011). Who is most at risk for school removal? A multilevel discrete-time survival analysis of individual- and context-level influences. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103:223–237.



Children of  
incarcerated parents  
are at 3 times greater  
risk of being expelled  
from preschool.

Zeng et al. (2019). Adverse childhood experiences and preschool suspension/expulsion: A population study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 97, 104149.

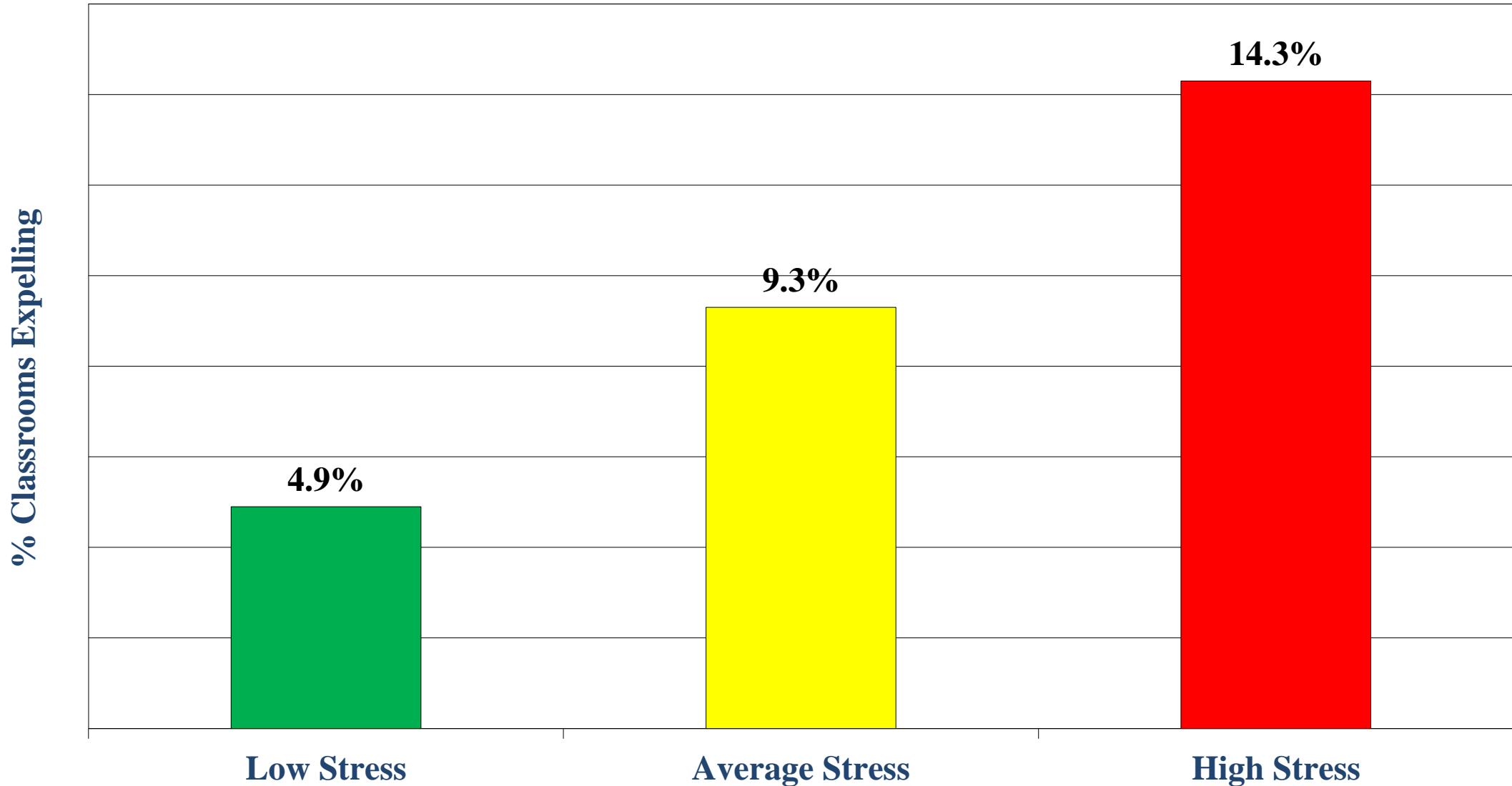


# ACEs & Preschool Expulsion/Suspension

|                            |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Domestic Violence          | OR = 10.6, p<.001 |
| Family Mental Illness      | OR = 9.8, p<.001  |
| Adult Substance Abuse      | OR = 4.8, p<.001  |
| Victim/Witness of Violence | OR = 4.5, p<.01   |
| Poverty                    | OR = 3.9, p<.001  |
| Parental Divorce           | OR = 3.3, p<.001  |
| Parental Incarceration     | OR = 3.0, p<.01   |



# Teacher Stress & Expulsion



# Impact of COVID-19 on Early Educators (PRELIM!)

## Illness & Loss

- Tested Positive for COVID-19 14.6%
- Hospitalized for COVID-19 0.5% (ICU = 21.6%; Intubated = 15.3%)
- House member hospitalized 1.7% (House member died = 0.6%)

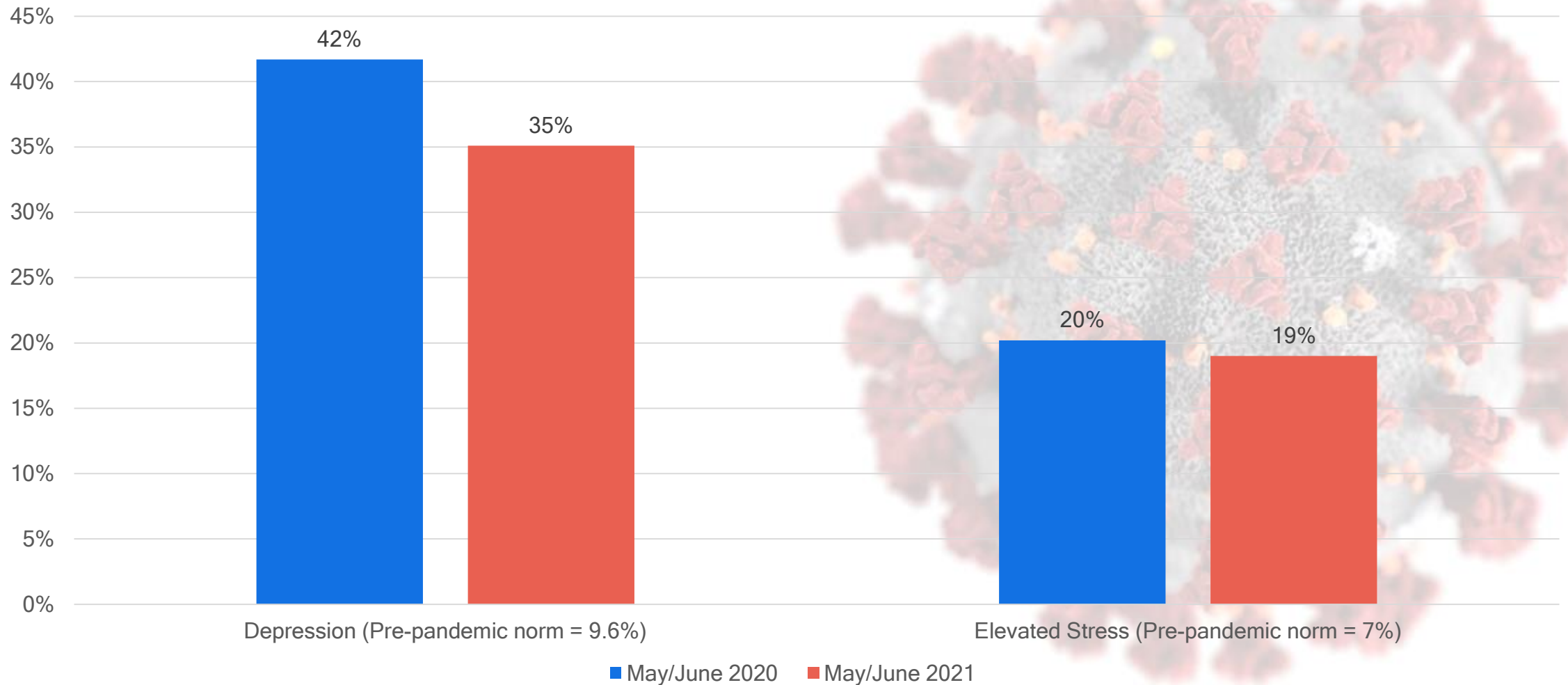
## Economic Stress

- Unemployed 3 months into Pandemic 35%
- Program Closed at some time due 44.6%

## Racial Aggression/Exclusion

- Experienced 6.9% (Someone close 12.6%)
- Witnessed 15.5%

# Impact of COVID-19 on Early Educators (PRELIM!)



# Impact of COVID-19 on Young Children (PRELIM!)

**At Least 1 Child with Family Member Hospitalized** 24.2% (5+ = 17.8%)

**At Least 1 Child with Family Member Died** 11.9% (5+ = 6.5%)

## **Children More Externalizing** (Aggressive, Oppositional, Hyperactive, etc.)

• At least a few in group 56.0% (About half or more = 16.3%)

## **Children More Internalizing** (Shy, Withdrawn, Anxious, Worried, Clingy, etc.)

• At least a few in group 55.3% (About half or more = 9.9%)

## **Children More Bio/Physical** (Sleep, Eating, Wetting/Soiling, Unexplainable Pain, etc.)

• At least a few in group 37.4% (About half or more = 6.0%)



**Child/Family Stress x Teacher Stress = Expulsions**

**Child/Family Stress<sup>2</sup> x Teacher Stress<sup>2</sup> = Expulsions<sup>4</sup>**

“I am looking for insight on legalities involving asking a child to leave a program if we are unable to meet their needs. There is no IEP in place and the child is preschool age

Any help would be greatly appreciated”

And then there is bias...







Video Courtesy of NPR



# Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

## NEW RESEARCH

### Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: Results of a Statewide Random-Controlled Evaluation

Walter S. Gilliam, MD, Angela N. Maupin, MD, Chin R. Reyes, MD

**Objective:** Despite recent federal recommendations calling for increased funding for early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC) as a means to decrease preschool expulsions, no randomized-controlled evaluations of this form of intervention have been reported in the scientific literature. This study is the first attempt to isolate the effects of ECMHC for enhancing classroom quality, decreasing teacher-rated behavior problems, and decreasing the likelihood of expulsion in targeted children in early childhood classrooms.

**Method:** The sample consisted of 176 target children (3–4 years old) and 88 preschool classrooms and teachers randomly assigned to receive ECMHC through Connecticut's statewide Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP) or waitlist control treatment. Before randomization, teachers selected 2 target children in each classroom whose behaviors most prompted the request for ECCP. Evaluation measurements were collected before and after treatment, and child behavior and social skills and overall quality of the childcare environment were assessed. Hierarchical linear modeling was used to

evaluate the effectiveness of ECCP and to account for the nested structure of the study design.

**Results:** Children who received ECCP had significantly lower ratings of hyperactivity, restlessness, externalizing behaviors, problem behaviors, and total problems compared with children in the control group even after controlling for gender and pretest scores. No effects were found on likelihood of expulsion and quality of childcare environment.

**Conclusion:** ECCP resulted in significant decreases across several domains of teacher-rated externalizing and problem behaviors and is a viable and potentially cost-effective means for infusing mental health services into early childhood settings. Clinical and policy implications for ECMHC are discussed.

**Key words:** early childhood mental health consultation, preschool children, behavioral outcomes, early childhood education, preschool expulsion

*J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 2016;55(9):754–761.

On December 10, 2014, the US Department of Health and Human Services and the US Department of Education issued a rare joint policy and recommendations statement<sup>1</sup> during the White House Summit on Early Childhood Education. This joint policy statement called for a drastic decrease in early childhood expulsions. Specifically, it mentioned early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC), an intervention in which qualified mental health providers serve early childhood teachers and professionals as classroom-based consultants, as a promising intervention for decreasing and ultimately eliminating preschool expulsions. Unfortunately, no randomized-controlled evaluation of ECMHC has been published in the scientific literature to support this recommendation. Furthermore, the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill 2016 (July 10, 2015)<sup>2</sup> called for the US

Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education to highlight evidence-based approaches to decrease suspension and expulsions in all US early care and education programs. The present study is the first true randomized-controlled evaluation designed to isolate the effects of ECMHC on decreasing the challenging classroom behaviors that often lead to expulsions, thus addressing a federally recognized urgent need.

Severe behavior problems during the preschool years are meaningful predictors of continued behavior problems, poor peer standing, and academic difficulties during kindergarten,<sup>3,4</sup> later elementary school, and middle school.<sup>5,6</sup> Externalizing and internalizing behavior problems in young children that occur frequently and intensely are of clinical concern because they result in significant disruptions to academic, social, and emotional development.<sup>7,8</sup> Externalizing behaviors include inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, aggression, emotional lability, and oppositionality, whereas internalizing behaviors often include anxiousness, shyness, perfectionism, and sadness. Although high-quality early education and intervention programs can prevent severe behavior problems in young children from low-income communities and families, some preschoolers unfortunately begin

This article is discussed in an editorial by D. Jeff Q. Rasic on page 740.  
Clinical guidance is available at [www.jaacap.org](http://www.jaacap.org).  
An interview with the author is available by podcast at [www.jaacap.org](http://www.jaacap.org) or by scanning the QR code to the right.



Connecticut 2016

*Development and Psychopathology* (2021), 1–13  
doi:10.1017/S0954579420001790

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## Special Issue Article

### Addressing challenging behaviors in challenging environments: Findings from Ohio's early childhood mental health consultation system

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Edward Zigler Center in Child Development & Social Policy, Yale Child Study Center, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT, USA

#### Abstract

Early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC) has been promoted by the federal government as a promising model for reducing early childhood expulsions and suspensions and is now implemented by numerous states. Despite growing ECMHC proliferation, this study is only the second randomized controlled trial of ECMHC, extending the methodologies of the first to include assessment of effects on random peers. Classrooms were assigned randomly to treatment or waitlist-control condition ( $n = 51$  classrooms, 57 preschool teachers, and 190 preschoolers). Evaluation measures were collected at both pretreatment and posttreatment, following approximately six consultation visits. Classroom and teacher outcomes were evaluated with ordinary least squares regressions, while hierarchical linear modeling was used to evaluate child-level outcomes, accounting for the nested study design. Treatment children (both the target children who prompted the referral for ECMHC and random peers) evidenced significant improvements in social and emotional skills. Promising trend findings were noted for child behavior problem reduction and teacher pedagogical approach and locus of control. No significant effects were found on likelihood of expulsion and classroom mental health climate. This is the first ECMHC to demonstrate effects on nontarget peers in a rigorous randomized controlled trial. Programmatic and methodologic limitations and implications are discussed.

**Keywords:** behavioral outcomes, early childhood education, early childhood mental health consultation, Edward Zigler, preschool children, preschool expulsion

(Received 23 September 2020; accepted 26 September 2020)

We need mental health strategies not only for children and parents, but for preserving the well-being of staff as well. (Zigler, 1997, p. 5)

Mental health supports have been considered a core component of effective early childhood programming, dating back to at least the advent of Project Head Start in 1965 (Zigler & Valentine, 1979). However, the effective implementation of mental health supports infused into early childhood programs is often challenging and sometimes results in suboptimal uptake of services (Zigler, Piotrowski, & Collins, 1994). Early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC) has been promoted by both the US Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education (2014) as one of the most promising systemic strategies for promoting mental health and reducing exclusionary discipline (expulsions and suspensions) in early childhood settings. ECMHC is an indirect service where trained mental health consultants work with adults in the child's proximal environment (e.g., classroom, home) to address behavioral challenges (Heppburn, Perry, Shivers, & Gilliam, 2013). Capitalizing on the

growing momentum of ECMHC implementation across states (Caputo, 2016; Grossman-Kahn, Reyes, Maupin, & Gilliam, 2018), the current study evaluates the effectiveness of Ohio's ECMHC system in a statewide randomized controlled trial (RCT). This is the second RCT of a statewide ECMHC program, the first being Connecticut's (Gilliam, Maupin, & Reyes, 2016).

#### ECMHC as a promising practice

A foundational premise of mental health consultation is that a child's behavior is highly influenced through their interactions with the adults with whom they have authentic relationships (Caplan, 1970), including early childhood settings (Zigler & Gilman, 1998). The focus of consultation should therefore be on strengthening practices that improve teaching and promote early relational health (Condon, 2017). Below, we identify the various relational pathways by which ECMHC, theoretically, changes adult behaviors, reduces challenging behaviors, and ultimately eliminates expulsions.

**Pathway 1: Strengthening adult-child relationships.** Children's development is facilitated by their strong relationships with the caring and supportive adults who meet their needs for safety and emotional connection (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), including their relationships with teachers. Close teacher-child relationships are associated with decreases in externalizing behaviors in young children, especially among those with the highest levels of



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**Cite this article:** Reyes CR, Gilliam WS (2021). Addressing challenging behaviors in challenging environments: Findings from Ohio's early childhood mental health consultation system. *Development and Psychopathology* 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579420001790>

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Social Justice  
& Civil Rights  
Are Often Matters of  
Access







MCCORMICK'S



ROLL DONUT

PLACE YOUR  
Lemon Pie  
NOW

BAKERY



OLD  
FASHIONED  
POUND



YOU HAVE  
the  
FREEDOM  
to  
VOTE







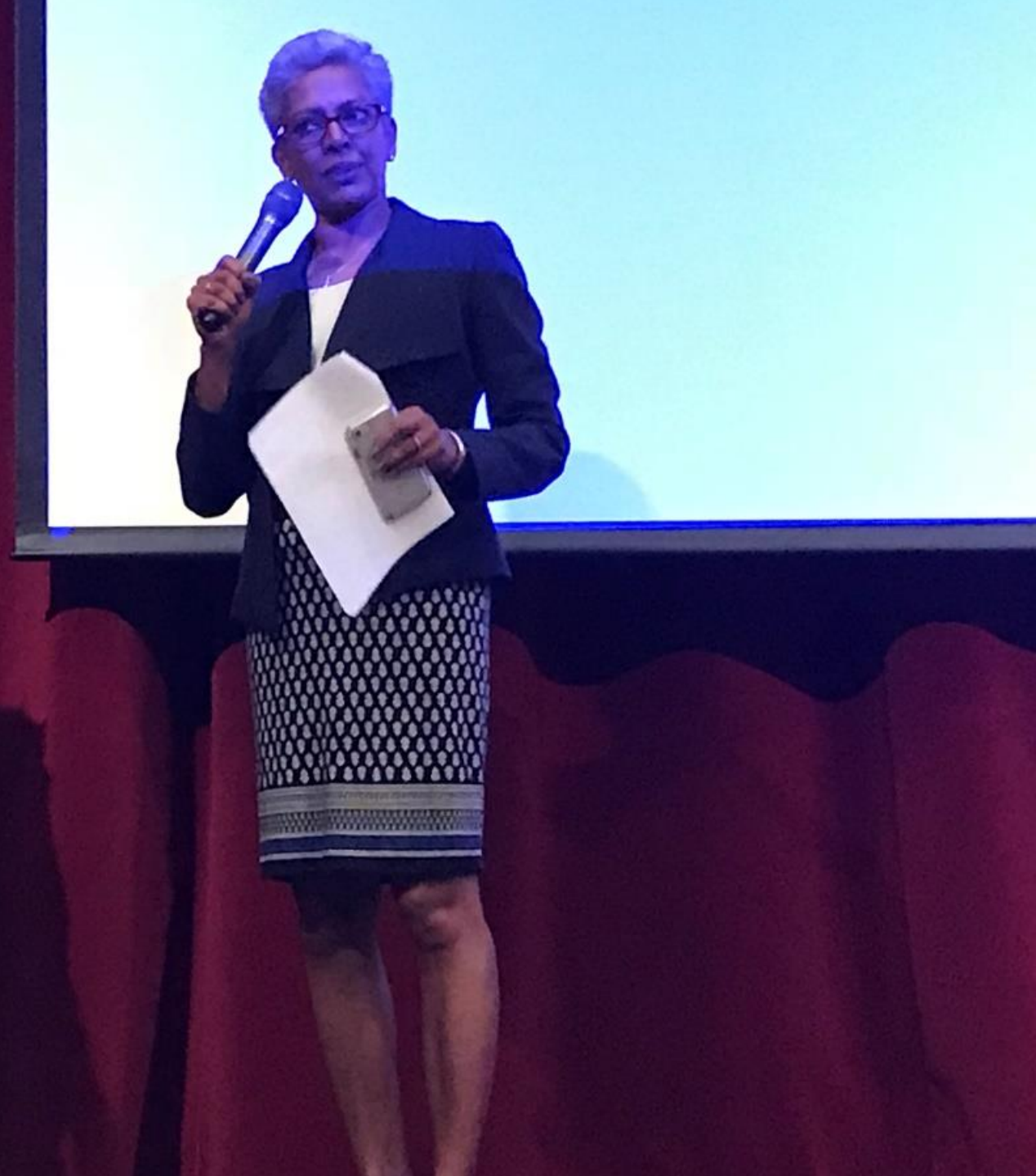








Las Vegas, Nevada – Feb 1, 2018



# Thanks to...

- Our Funders
  - A.L. Mailman Family Foundation
  - Caplan Foundation for Early Childhood
  - Child Health and Development Institute
  - Early Educator Investment Collaborative
  - Foundation for Child Development
  - Heising-Simons Foundation
  - Klingenstein Family Philanthropies
  - Pew Charitable Trusts
  - Scholastic, Inc.
  - W.K. Kellogg Foundation

# Thanks to...

- The early educators, parents and children participating in our studies

*Our subjects in all these studies are children. They are our partners in this learning enterprise, and we have a special responsibility to use this knowledge—not to fill up journals, but to make the lives of these children better.*

Edward Zigler (2007)



THANK YOU!

 Twitter: @WalterGilliam