



## Summary

### In Brief: Enrollment, Expulsion and Resource Use in Wisconsin Child Care

**Purpose.** This summary highlights information from a survey of Wisconsin’s providers of regulated early care and education services about how they address the needs of young children with challenging behaviors. It also highlights the use of external resources and updates data on expulsion from a 2010 survey.\*

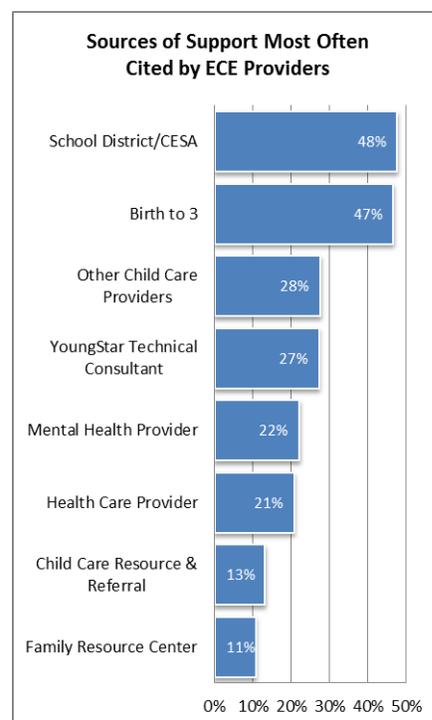
**Rationale.** Children’s earliest experiences matter. During the first few years of children’s lives, the brain undergoes its most rapid development. Brain science confirms that early experiences determine whether there will be a solid or weak foundation for development of the architecture of the brain and sets the stage for all future learning, behavior and health. Negative experiences, such as expulsion from child care, constant stress and trauma, can set a trajectory for young children that impacts their ability to be successful in school, establish trusting relationships with adult caregivers and be physically and emotionally healthy.

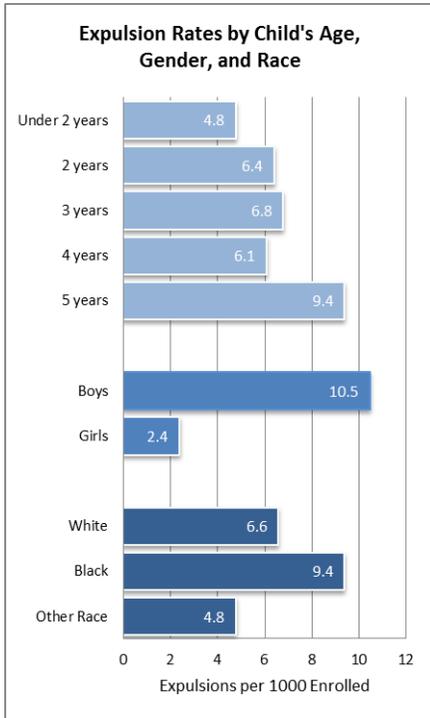
**The Survey.** The survey was distributed to 5,100 providers of early care and education (ECE) – child care, public preschools and Head Start – in November 2015. Responses were received from 621 providers for a return rate of 12 percent. The majority of respondents were group and family child care providers.

Respondents reported a total enrollment of 30,500 children ages 5 and under with an almost equal split between boys and girls. About 66 percent of the children enrolled were white, 15 percent were black and 19 percent were other races. About 19 percent of all reported children received a federal subsidy for the cost of care.

**Findings.** About half of the survey respondents indicated that they used external resources as aides for addressing children’s challenging behaviors. Of these, the majority found the resources helpful. As seen in the chart to the right, respondents who sought outside support turned to a number of different community and regional resources such as school staff, Birth to 3 early intervention specialists, peers, mental health specialists and primary care providers for help in managing children’s behavior.

The survey asked ECE providers whether any children had been requested to leave their program (expelled) or removed from the program by parents in the previous 12 months. The majority of respondents (71 percent) indicated that no children had been expelled or removed. About 20 percent indicated that one or more children had been expelled and 13 percent reported that one or more children had been removed. The expulsion rate among respondents was 6.5 per 1,000; the removal rate was 4.9 per 1,000.



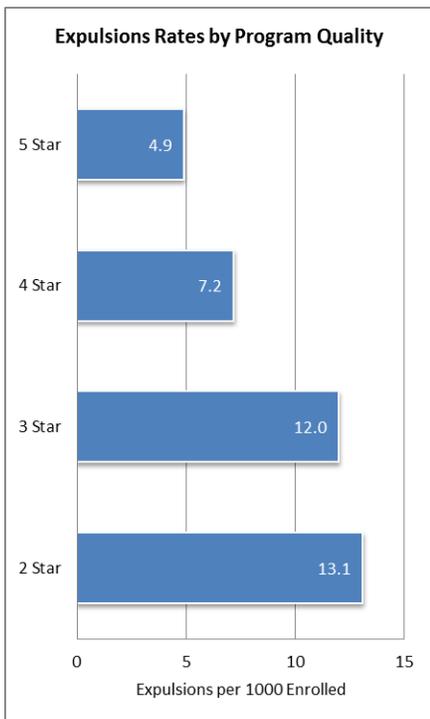


The chart to the left indicates that older children were reported to be expelled more frequently than younger children; 5 year olds were expelled at a rate of 9.4 per 1,000, children under age 2 were expelled at a rate of 4.8 per 1,000. Boys were expelled at a rate that was 4.4 times greater than the rate at which girls were expelled.

Providers reported that black children were expelled and removed from programs at higher rates than white children or children of other races. Black children were reported to be expelled 1.4 times more often than white children and 2 times more often than children of other races.

Respondents indicated that the majority of expulsions were due to children's challenging behaviors (72 percent) rather than due to staff-family conflict (18 percent) or the program's inability to meet the child's needs (27 percent).

As shown below, the study also found that higher quality programs, i.e., those rated 4 Star or 5 Star based on Wisconsin's quality rating and improvement system, had lower expulsion and removal rates than programs rated 2 Star or 3 Star. However, an important limitation of the survey was that higher quality programs are overrepresented among respondents and compared to the Wisconsin population of ECE programs.



**Conclusions.** The study confirms national research on child care and preschool expulsions and points to several approaches for increasing ECE providers' ability to work with children with challenging behaviors. These include: strengthening relationships with mental health specialists, increasing awareness of and access to existing community and regional resources, enhancing positive relationships with parents and implementing evidence-based strategies for supporting children with challenging behaviors.

There is growing awareness that the achievement gap in academic performance between black and non-minority students begins before kindergarten. A robust body of research confirms that low-income minority children benefit the most from participation in high quality early care and education. There is also growing evidence that these children – young and poor and black – are the most likely to be expelled or removed from ECE settings due to challenging behaviors. These children are also the most likely to drop out of school and enter the juvenile justice system than those that are not expelled.

This project was a collaborative undertaking by the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health, Supporting Families Together Association, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association and the Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health with support from the Wisconsin Departments of Children and Families, Health Services and Public Instruction.

\*For the full report, please see <http://supportingfamilies.together.org/>.