Family and Community Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources: 2022 Update
U.S. Department of Education

Why Are School Climate and Discipline Important?

School climate reflects how members of the school community experience the school. Positive school climates help students stay engaged, learn, and maintain respectful, trusting relationships with each other and school staff. While various practices, conditions, and norms have influence over school climate, a school's discipline policies and practices can send a clear message to students as to whether they are valued in the school community and whether they are seen as partners in their education.

School discipline practices that remove children from schools and classrooms—such as suspension and expulsion—hinder students' ability to learn. Just over 1.5 million K-12 students nationwide received at least one out-of-school suspension in the 2017–2018 school year. Suspensions are linked to poor academic performance, higher dropout rates, lower graduation rates, decreased academic engagement, and increased risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system. Suspensions have been proven to be ineffective ways of improving student behavior or school climate. Additionally, suspensions are not distributed equitably in many school districts across the nation. Often students of color, those with disabilities, and male students bear the brunt of the burden.

Fortunately, research shows that there are practices that support students' physical safety and emotional well-being while contributing to a positive school climate. These practices can reconnect students, particularly historically marginalized groups, to their school environments and prevent behavioral issues that are often disciplined.

Who Should Use This Directory?

The aim of this directory is to support families and community members—including parents of students, local advocates, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders invested in student outcomes—in improving school discipline practices. Because families and communities feel the impact of school policies, these groups are integral to the process of creating and implementing discipline practice.

Improving school discipline requires a shift in mindset and practice, as well as strong community leaders who share a commitment to helping kids stay in school. Families have a critical role in communicating the broad and varied effects of school discipline within their homes. Such stakeholders can work with school staff and local officials to create fair, positive discipline environments for all students.

How to Use This Directory

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education laid out three guiding principles to help communities improve school discipline practice: (1) positive school climates; (2) clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences; and (3) equity and continuous improvement. This directory contains resources to help families and communities become active partners in the creation of supportive school environments.

Directory Resource Topics
• Capacity-Building Tools
• Data, Measurement, and Reporting
• Policy Guidance
• Compilations and Technical Assistance Centers

Capacity-Building Tools

Federal agencies have funded the development of a variety of products to inform families and communities about the relevance of school climate and discipline to the school experience. The items below aim to provide families and communities with tools and strategies to help these groups become partners in the effort to create safer, more supportive school environments.

Title and Link	Topics Covered	Applicable Populations	Description
Guiding Principles for School Resource Officer Programs	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body	The principles in this document are offered as a guide to those jurisdictions that have opted to implement a school resource officer (SRO) program to ensure that the presence of law enforcement in schools is as beneficial as possible and to avoid harmful impacts on students and the learning environment.
Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body	This resource, which is currently under review, focuses on the creation of safe and productive learning environments, including the intentional development of safe climates and prevention of misbehavior, adherence to clear and consistent expectations, and evaluation to improve the equity of school environments.
National Charter School Resource Center: Accelerating Positive School Culture and Discipline Practices through the Charter Sector	• Climate and prevention • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body	This website provides schools, districts, and states with publications, webinars, research briefs, and toolkits to support positive discipline models and practices for use in charter schools.
Parent and Educator Guide to School Climate Resources	• Climate and prevention • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body	This guide provides general information about the concept of school climate improvement, suggestions for leading an effective school climate improvement effort, and additional resources for those interested in more information.
Restraint and Seclusion: Resource Document	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: Disconnected youth/students Students with disabilities	This document outlines 15 principles for educational stakeholders around the use of restraint and seclusion. It strives to promote students' dignity and limit the use of physical restraint to only situations in which there is immediate danger.

Title and Link	Topics Covered	Applicable Populations	Description
Safe School-Based Enforcement Through Collaboration, Understanding, and Respect	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body	This policy guide and rubric includes action steps to ensure that SROs are involved in the creation of safe school climates. Steps range from ensuring that local school–police agreements are constitutional to recognizing good performance from SROs.

Data, Measurement, and Reporting

As part of any effort to improve school climate and discipline practices, it is imperative that families and communities are kept informed about the implementation of new approaches, the understanding the root causes of emerging issues, and progress of school climate improvement efforts. Federal agencies provide a range of products to help families and communities understand data relevant to school climate and discipline practices, including data briefs, interpretation guides, and other tools. This section highlights the most significant products that may assist families and communities with data-informed reflection and decision making.

Title and Link	Topics Covered	Applicable Populations	Description
Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)	• Climate and prevention • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: • Disconnected youth/students • Dual-language learners • LGBTQI+* youth • Students of color • Students with disabilities	This tool from the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights provides detailed data and reports, at the school and district levels, based on data around equity, disability, language learner status, and more. Data include measures of proficiency, discipline, and disparities. Reports are also available at the state and national levels.
CRDC 2017–2018: The Use of Restraint and Seclusion on Children With Disabilities in K-12 Schools	• Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: • Students with disabilities • Students of color	This report covers initiatives to address the inappropriate use of restraint and seclusion, restraint and seclusion data quality improvements, and restraint and seclusion for students with disabilities, using 2017–2018 CRDC data.

Title and Link	Topics Covered	Applicable Populations	Description
CRDC: A First Look 2015–2016	• Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: • Dual-language learners • Students with disabilities • Male students • Students of color	This report covers school safety, law enforcement referrals and school-related arrests, harassment or bullying, restraint and seclusion, and school discipline., using 2015–2016 CRDC data, which can be compared to the 2017–2018 data.
CRDC: A First Look 2013–2014	• Climate and prevention • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: • Dual-language learners • Students with disabilities • Male students • Students of color	This report covers student discipline, restraint and seclusion, early learning, college and career readiness, absenteeism, education in justice facilities, and staff equity, using 2013–2014 CRDC data, which can be compared to the 2015–2016 and 2017–2018 data.
Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC): Exclusionary Discipline Presentation	• Climate and prevention • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: • Students with disabilities • Dual-language learners • Male students • Students of color	This presentation summarizes exclusionary school discipline data from the 2017–2018 CRDC, the most recent biennial collection.

*LGBTQI+ refers to students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, asexual, intersex, nonbinary, and individuals who identify their sexual orientation or gender identity in other ways. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/lgbt.html

Policy Guidance

To encourage the creation of safe, supportive learning environments and compliance with applicable laws, federal agencies have compiled relevant state statutes and clarified federal laws to address specific emerging issues. These include bullying and discipline, as well as their implications for schools' civil rights liability. The following are the primary policies and guidance the federal and state governments have developed related to school climate and discipline.

Title and Link	Topics Covered	Applicable Populations	Description
Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: • Elementary to high school • Disconnected youth/students • Students with disabilities	This listing, which is updated annually, examines discipline guidelines and policies for all 50 states and other local education jurisdictions.
Dear Colleague Letter on Implementation of IDEA Discipline Provisions (2022)	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	Students with disabilities	This letter offers support to the efforts of state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) to fulfill their obligations to appropriately meet the needs of children with disabilities.
Dear Colleague Letter: Nondiscriminatory Administration of School Discipline (2014) *Rescinded in 2018 and currently under review for reinstatement.*	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: • Disconnected youth/students • Dual-language learners • Students of color	This guidance, which is currently under review, focuses on making school discipline procedures more equitable for students of various racial/ethnic groups.
Dear Colleague Letter: Preventing Racial Discrimination in Special Education (2016)	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	• Students of color • Students with disabilities	This letter offers guidance to teachers, school staff, and administrators on reducing racial disparities in special education. It covers issues around access, impact, discipline, and legal framework.
Dear Colleague Letter: Restraint and Seclusion of Students with Disabilities (2016)	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	• Elementary to high school • Students with disabilities	This letter interprets data to show how the use of restraint or seclusion may result in discrimination against students with disabilities. It provides guidance around the regulations that protect students with disabilities regarding discipline.

Title and Link	Topics Covered	Applicable Populations	Description
Dear Colleague Letter: Supporting Students with Disabilities and Avoiding the Discriminatory Use of Student Discipline under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (2022)	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	Students with disabilities	This letter offers guidance to assist SEAs with supporting LEAs and schools in addressing the needs of children with disabilities and describes schools' responsibilities under Section 504 to ensure nondiscrimination against students based on disability when imposing student discipline.
Department of Justice Civil Rights Division: Guidance and Resources	• Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: • Immigrant students • LGBTQI+* students • Students of color • English learner students	This website is a joint effort from the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education providing updated fact sheets for families and educators on confronting discrimination based on protected classes.
Questions and Answers: Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities and IDEA's Discipline Provisions (2022)	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	Students with disabilities	This questions-and-answers document discusses how certain school actions, such as informal removals and the use of threat assessments, may result in the denial of free appropriate public education to children with disabilities.
State Bullying Laws and Regulations	• Climate and prevention • Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations • Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: • LGBTQI+* Youth • Students with disabilities • Students of color	This tool, which is updated annually, allows users to search for state policies and laws designed to prevent and address bullying behaviors in schools.

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Compilations and Technical Assistance Centers

Federal agencies fund several technical assistance (TA) centers that serve a variety of audiences and topics, many of which are related to improving school climate and discipline directly or indirectly. TA centers provide a range of services, which may include direct or web- or phone-based assistance; resource sharing; websites with valuable research and resources; and, in some cases, on-site support to schools, districts, and states.

Title and Link	Topics Covered	Applicable Populations	Description
Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS Center)	- Climate and prevention - Clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations - Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: - Elementary to high school - Disconnected youth/students - Students with disabilities - Students of color	This TA center strives to develop the capacity of states, districts, and schools to improve social, emotional, and academic outcomes for students and promote good behavior using the PBIS framework.
Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety	- Climate and prevention - Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: - Elementary to high school - Disconnected youth/students - Students with disabilities - Students of color	This TA center addresses the critical role of social and emotional learning and school safety in children's overall well-being and education experiences, increasing the numbers of policy makers, educators, and other practitioners who are recognizing them as important pathways for school improvement.
National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE)	- Climate and prevention - Clear, appropriate, consistent expectations - Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: - Elementary to high school - Disconnected youth/students - Dual-language learners - LGBTQI+* students - Students of color - Students with disabilities	This TA center contains comprehensive training and resources for states, schools, and other stakeholders working to improve conditions for learning.
Youth.gov	- Climate and prevention - Clear, appropriate, consistent expectations - Equity and continuous improvement	General student body with a focus on: - Disconnected youth/students - Students of color - Students with disabilities	This website's "School Climate" page includes various resources and data on school climate, school safety, and discipline practices.

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