



House Bill 2287

Relating to data collection by and consultation with the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services regarding the task force's duties and requiring the Texas Education Agency to report on mental health services provided to public school students

Stress and trauma can affect various aspects of a student's experience in school, including academic performance, behavior in class, physical health, interpersonal relationships, and mental health.¹ Youth behaviors stemming from unidentified mental health concerns, substance use, or trauma can be misunderstood as "bad" behavior, often leading to punitive discipline practices. This issue is crucial for students of color and those with disabilities who experience disproportionate rates of removals from their classrooms.² Research shows that while students of color do not "misbehave" more frequently or more seriously, they are disproportionately disciplined and arrested at school.³ Further, research shows that children identified as having an emotional disturbance had higher rates of discipline than any other category of disability.⁴ The data indicates correlation between classroom removals, racial disparities, and health equity.

HB 2287 recognizes the importance of providing alternatives to punitive discipline and the collection of classroom removal data so that we can better understand the relationship between student mental health and school discipline in Texas. HB 2287 directs the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services (Taskforce) to gather data on "the number of individuals who were placed in a disciplinary alternative education program or out-of-school suspension or expelled," disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, special education status, educationally disadvantaged status, and geographic location. This information is needed in order for the Taskforce to measure the impact of mental health services and training on "reducing student disciplinary proceedings, suspensions, placements in a disciplinary alternative education program, and expulsions." This data is needed so Texas can better understand how to create systems that support strategies that work together to provide all students with the appropriate type and amount of supports they need to be engaged learners and to address systemic inequities and disparities. This collection of data can inform schools and the state on the impact of mental health services, a multi-tiered system of support, and the impact school personnel trainings can have on classroom removals.

The collection of this data is critical for Texas. Despite the lack of evidence that exclusionary discipline is an effective method of changing students' behavior in schools, it is often used. One in 10 Texas students were suspended, expelled, or placed in an alternative education program during the 2018-19 school year.⁵ When students are relocated out of their typical learning environment, research shows an increased likelihood of lowered academic performance, dropping out, antisocial behavior, and future contact with the justice system.^{6,7} Alternatively, cultivating well-being at schools is shown to subsequently improve academic achievement and the school's climate including improved students' test scores, commitment to school, attendance, grades, graduation rates, and truancy and disciplinary rates.⁸

Increased reliance on exclusionary discipline is heightened when schools do not have adequate services to provide alternative responses to disruptive behavior. When there are no other resources at hand, classroom removals may be implemented rather than research-based practices such as: skill building, behavior de-escalation and behavior co-regulation strategies, parent engagement, screening and assessment for mental health needs, counseling, etc.⁹ The effects of punitive discipline can have adverse effects on school climate, often negatively affecting students' sense of safety, well-being, and ability to learn.¹⁰

For more information, please contact:

Shannon Hoffman, MSW, LCDC, Policy Program Specialist | shannon.hoffman@austin.utexas.edu

¹ Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative. (2018). *Helping traumatized children learn*. Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School. Retrieved from <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-problem-impact/>

-
- ² Texas Education Agency. (2019, September 19). *State level annual discipline summary: PEIMS discipline data for 2018-2019*. Retrieved December 10, 2019, from https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_program=adhoc.download_static_summary.sas&district=&agg_level=STATE&referrer=Download_State_Summaries.html&test_flag=&_debug=0&school_yr=19&report_type=html&Download_State_Summary=Next
- ³ U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division & U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2014, January 14). *Joint "dear colleague" letter on the nondiscriminatory administration of school discipline*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.html#ftn7>
- ⁴ Fabelo, T., Thompson, M. D., Plotkin M., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks, M.P., and Booth, E.A. (2011). *Breaking schools' rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to student's success and juvenile justice involvement*. College Station, TX: Public Policy Research Institute. Retrieved from <http://ppri.tamu.edu/breaking-schools-rules/>
- ⁵ Texas Education Agency. (September 19, 2019). *State level annual discipline summary: PEIMS discipline data for 2018- 2019*. Retrieved from https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_program=adhoc.download_static_summary.sas&district=&agg_level=STATE&referrer=Download_State_Summaries.html&test_flag=&_debug=0&school_yr=19&report_type=html&Download_State_Summary=Next
- ⁶ Pufall, Jones, E., Margolius, M., Rollock, M., Tang Yan, C., Cole, M.L., and Zaff, J.F. (2018). *Disciplines and disconnected: How students experience exclusionary discipline in minnesota and the promise of non-exclusionary alternatives*. Washington, DC: America's Promise Alliance
- ⁷ Texas Appleseed. (2019). *Texas: The state of school discipline. A look at the data: 2017-2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.texasappleseed.org/sites/default/files/SchoolDisciplineinTexas-new.pdf>
- ⁸ Suldo, S. M., Gormley, M. J., DuPaul, G. J., & Anderson-Butcher, D. (2014). The impact of school mental health on student and school-level academic outcomes: Current status of the research and future directions. *School Mental Health, 6*(2), 84-98.
- ⁹ The Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services. (2020). *Year 1 report*. Retrieved from <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/HB-906-Mental-Health-Task-Force-Year-1-Report.pdf>
- ¹⁰ Institute for Policy Studies. 2018. *Students under siege: How the school-to-prison pipeline, poverty, and racism danger our school children*. Retrieved from <https://ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/KAREN-REPORT-2.pdf>