

CHAPTER 222 SCHOOL DISCIPLINE COALITION*

We are facing a national [children's mental health emergency](#). Schools should address students' behaviors and mental health needs with **SUPPORT, prevention, and conflict resolution strategies, NOT punitive discipline.** Suspension and expulsion will not fix the problem and will contribute to the **SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE.**

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has stated that this school year:

“Exclusionary discipline should only be used as a measure of last resort, after alternatives to suspension have been tried, and only after ... making efforts to address the student's needs.”

[Click Here to Read DESE's Full Guidance](#)

What Can I Do if My Child Is Facing Suspension or Expulsion?

- Know your rights!: [Measuring Up](#) and [When My Child is Disciplined at School](#)
- Ask whether “alternatives to suspension” were tried first
- If your child is having ongoing behavioral/mental health challenges, consider requesting a 504 Plan or a special education evaluation
- If your child already has an IEP or 504 Plan, ask for a Team Meeting to discuss your child's need for additional support or services

What Can Students and Families Do to Reduce Suspension and Expulsion in Your Community's School District?

Ask your school to IMMEDIATELY INVEST federal stimulus “ESSER” funds in:

- More social workers, mental health staff
- Staff to help with families' basic needs (housing, food, income support)
- Training in alternatives to suspension (restorative justice and conflict resolution)
- Training to reduce racial bias in disciplining students
- Social and emotional curriculum embedded into the entire school day
- Training in trauma sensitive schools and healing centered engagement

Alternatives to Suspension and Best Practices to Suggest to Your School:

*[Center for Restorative Justice](#)

*[Mass. School Mental Health Consortium](#)

*[Engaging Schools](#)

*[Rethinking Discipline Resources](#)

*[Collaborative and Proactive Solutions](#)

*[Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#)

For Help, contact Massachusetts Advocates for Children Helpline: **617-357-8431** or [MAC's online Helpline form](#); For help with a short-term suspension in Boston, call the Center for Law and Education's Lay Advocacy Project: **617-451-0855**

*The C. 222 School Discipline Coalition is made up of attorneys and advocacy organizations which represent the interests of parents and students and work collectively to end the school-to-prison pipeline. 11/2021