



Oregon Juvenile Department
Directors' Association
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*Representing Oregon's
County Juvenile Departments*
www.ojdda.org

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HB 2192A: The OJDDA urges your support to maintain youth in public school settings.

The Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association urges the Legislature to support HB 2192A. HB 2192A proposes to make changes in school districts exclusionary discipline policies and provides more guidance to school administrators to utilize a range of approaches and interventions prior to out-of-school suspension or expulsion.

HB 2192A aims to:

- Align Oregon's mandatory expulsion policy with federal law (18 U.S.C. 921) . The current statute requiring mandatory expulsions is confusing and inconsistently applied, leading to expulsions for minor infractions.
- Establishes discipline, suspension and expulsion policies which:
 - Protect students and school employees fro harm;
 - Provide opportunities for students to learn from their mistakes;
 - Foster positive learning communities;
 - Keep students in school and attending class;
 - Impose disciplinary sanctions without bias against minority students;
 - Implement a graduated set of age-appropriate responses to misconduct that are fair, nondiscriminatory and proportionate in relation to each student's individual conduct;
 - Propose alternative programs combined with counseling prior to expulsion;
 - Use expulsion as a last resort and limit suspension and expulsion to only the most serious offenses involving behavior which cause a serious threat to safety.
 - Use approaches that are research based and shown effective at reducing student misbehavior while maintaining safe and productive social behavior.

REASONS THE PROPOSED REVISIONS ARE NECESSARY:

Since the early 1990's, school districts have increasingly expanded "Zero Tolerance" policies to support mandatory suspension and expulsion from public schools.

PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SITUATION:

Expelling a student from school breaks possibly one of the only pro-social bonds a troubled youth may have in their lives. Youth expelled from school are offered some form of alternative education, which in many cases does not meet their educational and social growth. Not only have they been taken out of a pro-social atmosphere they are often placed in a setting which concentrates youth with similar risk factors, therefore strengthening and further supporting the development of relationships with other delinquent youth. Many households are not set up to supervise youth suspended or expelled from school with either one or both parents working during school hours. This leaves youth already at risk in an unsupervised setting thereby continuing to escalate their risky behaviors.

Schools are still the safest place for a youth to be in spite of the rare and sensational stories that appear in the news media. They are much less likely to be victims of adults or other youth in a school setting than in an unsupervised setting in the community.

Typically, the youth being suspended repeatedly or expelled have a host of risk factors. With current research on the effects of trauma and how youth exhibit the symptoms, we as a system need to develop better ways to help youth learn new coping skills. Effects from trauma can be displayed through depression, anxiety, aggression, conduct problems, oppositional or defiant behavior – symptoms that too often result in suspension and expulsion. Trauma also has an impact on a youth's ability to self regulate and they may cope by being indifferent, defiant or aggressive for self protection. They will take risks and break rules. School exclusion fails to address the behavior because it does not address the underlying problems. As a result, exclusion is likely to make these problems worse, not better.

There are many studies which link school failure to juvenile delinquency and studies which show that youth who do not receive an adequate education are much more likely to become involved with juvenile delinquency. For the juvenile justice system we have to look at our highest risk youth and focus our resources on this population because it will have the biggest impact to our community. Some of the youth who currently are frequently suspended and expelled is that high risk population. There are also students who are generally doing well, and their success is endangered when they are suspended for minor offenses. We do not want these low-risk youth to end up in the juvenile justice system.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

The OJDDA strongly urges support of HB 2192A so that all youth have an opportunity for a good education regardless of their race, gender or trauma they have suffered in their lives. It is our responsibility as a system to use the most recent research available to guide policies and procedures in dealing with a difficult population of youth. The youth who are currently being repeatedly suspended or expelled are actually in need of additional services, not fewer services, to help them develop the needed skills to become productive members of our community.

For Further Information Contact:
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