

KEEPING KIDS IN CLASS

SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF
CHILDREN AND TEACHERS

MAY 9, 2018
EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL

MARY DUNLAP

MENTAL HEALTH
MANAGER
CHILD INC.

DIANE EWING

MENTAL HEALTH
POLICY FELLOW
TEXANS CARE FOR
CHILDREN

SAMANTHA PLEVNEY

MENTAL HEALTH
CONSULTANT
AUSTIN CHILD
GUIDANCE CENTER

Federal Guidance on Suspension and Expulsions

In 2014, Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education issued a joint Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings.

- Raise awareness
- Guidance on disciplinary policies free of bias and discrimination
- Using data to guide goal setting to reduce/eliminate exclusionary discipline practices
- Invest in workforce training
- Promote the use of evidence-based practices that prevent the use of exclusionary discipline practices



KEEPING KIDS IN CLASS

PRE-K THROUGH 2ND GRADE SUSPENSIONS
IN TEXAS AND A BETTER WAY FORWARD



March 2018

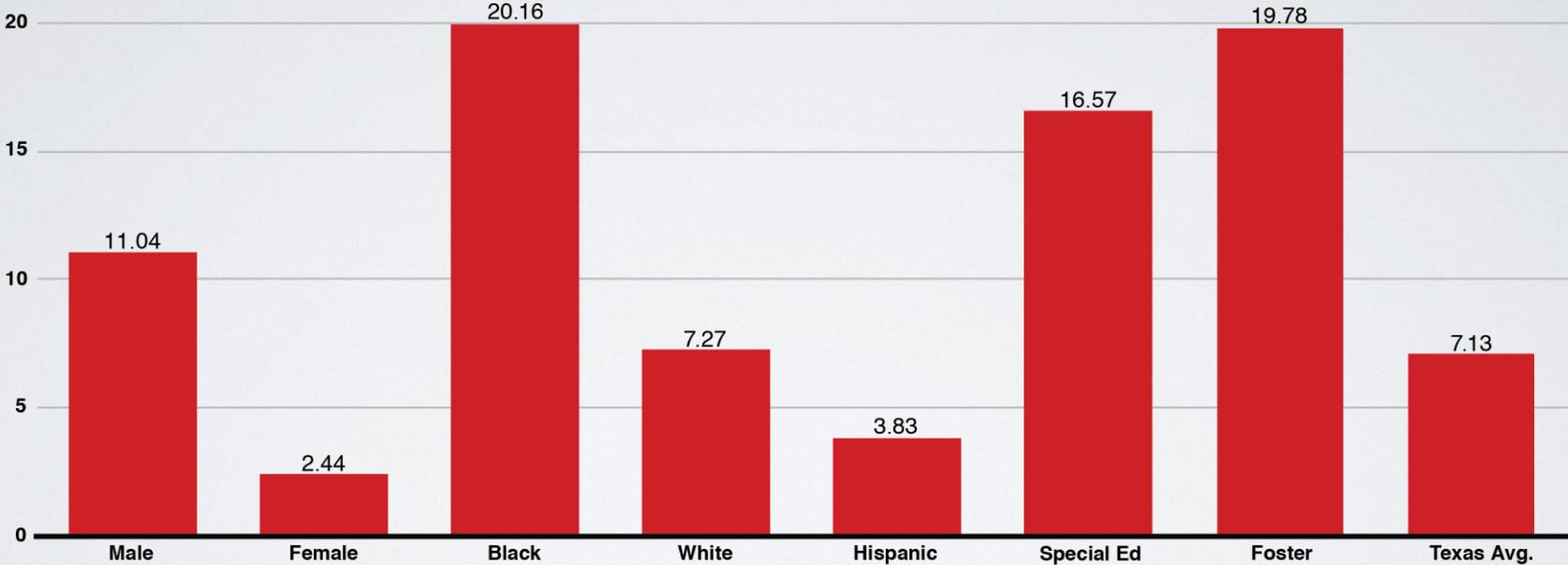
Why Young Students Are Suspended

- Age appropriate behavior
- Unmet basic needs
- Mental, behavioral, or developmental disorders
- Trauma and toxic stress
- Classroom settings and practices
- Teacher stress and depression
- Implicit bias

State Policies That May Contribute

- ECI funding and Medicaid reimbursement rates
- Child care deserts
- Pre-k funding, class size, and teacher-child ratio
- Little to no support for school mental health
- Special education benchmark

Rate of Suspensions Per 100 Pre-k through 2nd Grade Students Show Disproportionate Punishment, 2015-2016



What Works?

- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Restorative Discipline
- Access to coaches, ECMHC, and behavior specialists
- School Counselors
- Training and TA from ESCs (include early childhood providers)
- Collect and analyze data to address disparities

Policies in Early Childhood Settings

Head Start

- In 2016, the federal Office of Head Start new policy on restricting the use of suspensions due to a child's behavior.

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

- In 2017, a new requirement for child care centers' written operational policies to include a policy on suspensions and expulsions.



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Health and Wellness



Taking Care of Ourselves Addressing Our Own Wellness

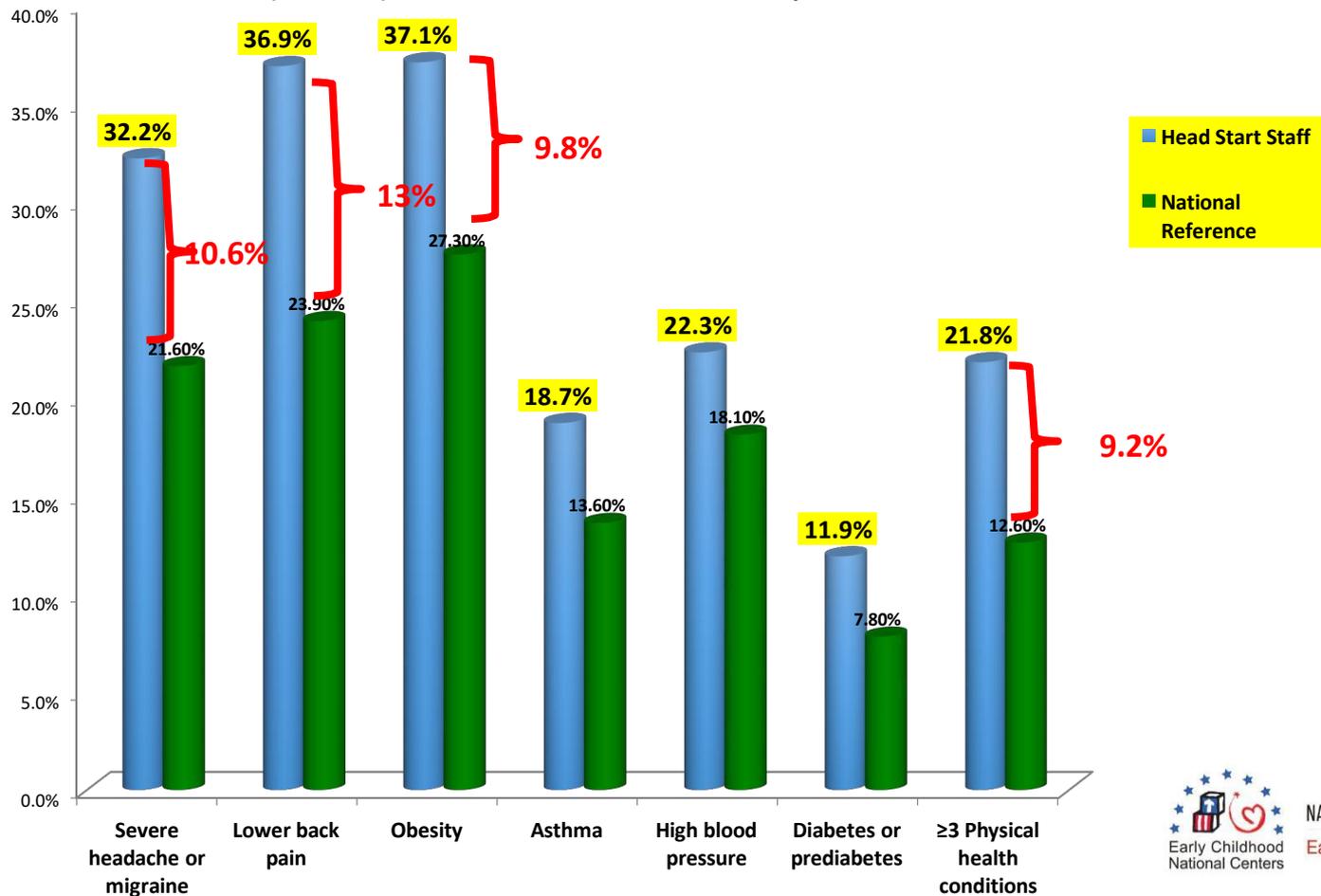
Region V1 2017 Mental Health Institute *Supporting Wellness For Staff, Children, And Families*

Sunyoung Ahn, PhD., Georgetown University

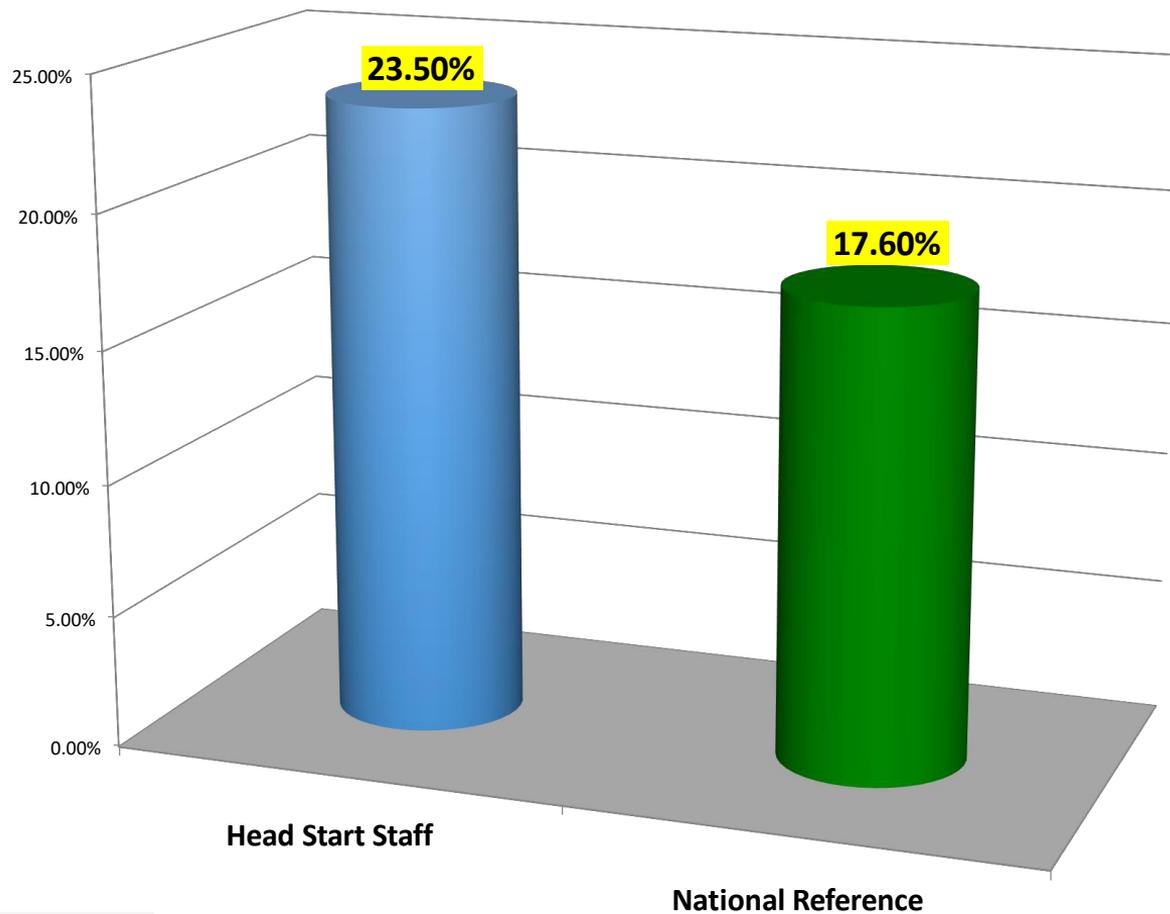
Amy Hunter, LICSW, Georgetown University

January 25, 2017

Table 2. Prevalence of Health Indicators Among Pennsylvania Head Start Staff Survey Participants (N = 2,122) in 2012 and a National Reference Population in 2011: PHYSICAL HEALTH



MENTAL HEALTH Depression diagnosed by health professional



Why should we focus on wellness support for Early Childhood Staff?

- Providing care to young children is an intense and demanding job.
- Parents and teachers are under pressure to meet the demands of running a household/classroom, personal concerns, and responding to the child/children in their care.
- Stress is natural and can be inevitable, but stress can take a toll on your health and effectiveness as a parent or provider.
- Stress doesn't just effect you, it also impacts the child/children in your care.

Why?

Research shows that:

- Caregivers who are stressed find it more difficult to offer praise, nurturance and the structure that young children need.
- Caregivers who are stressed are more likely to use harsh discipline.
- Children whose caregivers are under high stress tend to have more challenging behavior

Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

- What is it?
- Why do we need it?
- What is the model?

What is Mental Health Consultation?

- ▶ Collaborative approach
 - ▶ Includes: teachers, center staff, parents, and children
- ▶ Build staff and parent skills around:
 - ▶ Identifying, addressing and reducing the impact of mental health problems in young children
- ▶ Why consultation, not therapy?
 - ▶ Building capacity increases the number of children impacted, and over time as well

Why Mental Health Consultation?

- ▶ Suspension and expulsion rates for children under 5 are very high
- ▶ Suspension and expulsion in early years is associated with additional risk factors
- ▶ Goals:
 - ▶ Reduce suspensions and expulsions
 - ▶ Reduce challenging behaviors
 - ▶ Increase staff/parent knowledge and ability to intervene effectively

Pyramid model for promoting social-emotional development



Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning: vanderbilt.edu/csefel
Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children: challengingbehavior.org

What is the model?

- ▶ Center support: staff wellness, communication, support
- ▶ Coaching for teachers
 - ▶ Behavioral interventions
 - ▶ Social/emotional learning
 - ▶ Classroom interventions/changes
- ▶ Trainings for staff and parents
- ▶ Coaching for parents

- ▶ Effectiveness:
 - ▶ Decreases behavioral problems
 - ▶ Decreases aggressive behaviors
 - ▶ Improves social skills
 - ▶ Decreases expulsions and suspensions

Recommendations

- Involve community partners in addressing the wellness of early childhood staff
- Support training or technical assistance for early childhood staff
- Support efforts to increase the number of Mental Health Consultants and the number of centers served
- Share any opportunities (grants, learning communities, etc.) and share resources among the groups/members