



Code of Conduct Update Process Recommendations

Background: In December 2016, the Michigan Legislature passed a series of bills that ended zero tolerance in Michigan. These bills, which go into effect August of 2017, as well as many years of research on the harm of zero tolerance, provide an impetus for school districts to carefully update their codes of conduct. Too often, policies such as these are updated quickly without stakeholder input, making implementation challenging. This document shares what works in revising codes of conduct.

1. School districts should map out a process that begins as soon as possible. Delaying work until the summer does not allow for full stakeholder participation.
2. School districts should appoint co-chairs (consider at least one chair to be someone outside the district) to facilitate advisory committees. School districts should consider reaching out to a community partner (perhaps someone involved in their local School Justice Partnership team to help, <http://www.school2prison.com>). Co-chairs should be strong facilitators, collaborative, focused and committed to the work.
3. Representatives from key stakeholder groups should be invited to participate and commit to several months of work. At a minimum, school administration, teachers, parents or guardians, students and community partners (preferably with expertise in restorative practices and alternative discipline strategies) should be invited.
 - a. SJP teams may be able to suggest other team members from stakeholder groups such as community mental health, restorative practices or other alternative discipline strategy experts, the courts, and the Department of Health and Human Services. Special care should be taken to include parents/guardians of students with disabilities, students with disabilities, and agencies working with those with disabilities.
4. Commit to collective learning on the changes in the law and reasons for the changes. Stakeholders should be exposed to the research on harsh school discipline.
 - a. Your SJP team should be able to assist. SAC, ACLU and MPAS are other resources.
5. Data should be shared that help stakeholders understand the scope of the issue in your district. How many students are suspended and expelled? For what infractions? Is there disproportionality? (<http://ocrdata.ed.gov> / local data / ISD)
6. Adopt a shared vision statement to help guide decisions. What is your district's approach to discipline? Is it punitive, corrective, or restorative? This step can take a couple of meetings but makes subsequent meetings easier.
7. Take time to discuss the kinds of alternatives to suspension / removal available in your community.



8. Take time to discuss what infractions should never result in removal.
9. Take time to discuss suspension and expulsion “ceilings” (when alternatives have been exhausted), considering the new definitions of suspension and expulsion.
10. A 1-page “quick guide” is recommended as a final product (possibly part of your code) to share with parents and students. It can list alternatives that will be considered and used, types of infractions and the range of consequences that can be expected.

Resources:

http://www.dignityinschools.org/files/code/ModelCode_Section2.1.pdf