

**Children with Challenging Behaviors: Survey of  
Boulder County Early Care and Education  
Providers**

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October 2009

  
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*Research & Evaluation*

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## **Summary of Key Findings**

The purpose of this study was to provide quantitative information on:

- The prevalence and characteristics of challenging behaviors exhibited by children under age six in Boulder County's early care and education settings.
- Provider responses to those behaviors.

A mail and web-based survey was conducted in June and July 2009 of licensed early care and education providers in Boulder County. The response rate was 42.2%.

Key findings included:

- 82.3% of the 114 responding **providers** experienced one or more children with challenging behaviors in the last 12 months.
  - Of those providers, 37.2% *considered asking* at least one child to leave their program,
  - 18.1% *did ask* at least one child to leave.
- Of the 4,457 **children** enrolled at responding providers:
  - 10.9% exhibited challenging behaviors in the last 12 months.
  - Family child care homes in Boulder County had the highest, and public-school affiliated centers/preschools had the lowest, prevalence of challenging behaviors.
  - Providers considered asking 11.8% of all children with challenging behaviors to leave.
  - 4.1% of all children with challenging behaviors were asked to leave.
  - More than one in three of the children that providers *considered asking to leave, were asked to leave.*
- Boulder County early care/education providers had an expulsion rate of 4.5 of every 1,000 enrolled children under age 6.
  - This rate was 4.5 times the K-12 expulsion rate in Boulder County public schools and almost twice the rate in public schools statewide.
- Several characteristics of providers and children were correlated with expulsion rate:
  - Home providers had the highest expulsion rate, 15.1 per 1,000 enrolled children under age 6, compared to 3.0 per 1,000 for all types of non-home centers/preschools combined.
  - Multiracial children had the highest expulsion rate of any demographic group, 13.2 per 1,000.
  - The male expulsion rate was 7.3 per 1,000, and the female rate was 1.0 per 1,000.
  - The rate for providers with no regular access to mental health consultation was 11.0 per 1,000, compared to 1.3 for providers with some type of regular access, and 1.1 or less for providers with monthly or more frequent visits or an on-site consultant.
- Only 12.5% of child care homes had some type of regular access to mental health consultation compared to 47.7% of centers/preschools.



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- The challenging behaviors that providers most frequently ranked in the top three with the most negative impact on their program were:
  - hurts self or others (54.9% of providers);
  - yells or screams (24.8%);
  - irritable, mad, or easily frustrated (23.9%);
  - excessive whining or crying (21.2%),
  - disrespectful, defiant (19.5%).
- Providers that had expelled one or more children in the last 12 months most frequently mentioned “hurts self or others” as the challenging behavior of most concern.
- The most common strategies used to address challenging behaviors were: talking to the child, redirection, removing the child from the group or situation, talking to parents, and positive reinforcement.
- The least common strategies used to address challenging behaviors were comforting the child, time out and ignoring the behavior.
- More than half of providers believed that the *percentage* and that the *severity* of challenging behaviors in children under age 6 had stayed about the same in the last 12 months.
- About 60% of providers believed that challenging behaviors were having a negative impact on the well-being of their staff.
- The most common resource used by three quarters of the staff/providers for information or help with challenging behaviors was training. Nurse Consultants and Mental Health Consultants were used the least frequently.
- In a list of nine topics relating to children with challenging behaviors, providers most frequently wanted their staff (or themselves, if they were a home provider) to learn more about problem solving strategies for children with challenging behaviors.

This survey was commissioned by Kid Connects Boulder. A three-member study team, consisting of the Director of Kid Connects Boulder, Kid Connects Research Assistant, and the author of the report, designed and implemented the data collection and analysis.

To view the entire report, see [www.earlychildhoodbouldercounty.org](http://www.earlychildhoodbouldercounty.org)

For further information about Kid Connects, please contact Jordana Ash. LCSW @ 720.406.3637.

## Background<sup>1</sup>

Early care and education has played an increasingly important role in the lives of Boulder County's young children and their families. A 2009 Boulder County early care and education needs assessment found that more than three-quarters of the surveyed families with one or more children under age 6 had a child in care, including 85% of families with a child aged 3 to 5. Ten years earlier, 46% of families with a child in that age group had a child in care.<sup>2</sup>

This growing population of young children has likely been accompanied by increased numbers of children in care with social, emotional, and behavior problems. These children are cared for by providers with varying degrees of training, skill, and support in addressing the challenges such children often present. When not effectively dealt with early in life, these problems may follow the child into school and beyond.

*"Behavior problems during the preschool years are meaningful predictors of continued behavior problems, poor peer standing, and academic difficulties during Kindergarten. Fortunately, high-quality early education and intervention programs may prevent severe behavior problems in young children ... Yet some preschoolers may begin their early education programs with severe behavioral problems already present, potentially limiting their ability to participate fully and benefit from the early educational experience."<sup>3</sup>*

Without sufficient and appropriate resources with which to address challenging behaviors in the children they care for, the behaviors may worsen and providers may be left with few alternatives but to expel these children. In fact, a national study found that expulsion rates in state-funded preschools were on average more than three times higher than K-12 expulsion rates and that preschool expulsion rates exceeded K-12 rates in all but three of the 39 states studied.<sup>4</sup> A statewide study in Colorado, conducted in response to the "Joint Resolution Concerning Young Children with Challenging Behaviors" passed by the Colorado State Legislature in 2006, found an expulsion rate of 10 per 1,000 children under age six who were in an early care/education setting.<sup>5</sup> These and other studies have found that preschool expulsion rates vary by types and

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank the many Boulder County early care and education providers who responded to the survey. We would also like to thank the staff of the City of Boulder Child Care Resource and Referral program, specifically Judy Fry, Debbie Heppler, and Annette Crawford, and Danielle Butler of The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County, for their able assistance with this study – providing contact lists, generating mailing labels, reviewing an early questionnaire draft, assisting with the questionnaire pretest, and helping to publicize the study. We would also like to thank Rachel Mudd of The Mental Health Center Serving Boulder and Broomfield Counties for her many contributions to this study.

<sup>2</sup> Laura Appelbaum and Tracey O'Brien, *Early Care and Education Needs Assessment of Boulder County*, Prepared for The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County, University of Colorado at Denver Center for Education Policy Analysis, June 2009; Erin Caldwell and Stephanie Greenberg, *Boulder County Child Care Needs Assessment*, National Research Center, Inc., April 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Walter S. Gilliam, *Implementing Policies to Reduce the Likelihood of Preschool Expulsion*, Foundation for Child Development, FCD Policy Brief: Advancing PK-3, No. 7, January 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Walter S. Gilliam, *Prekindergartners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems*, Foundation for Child Development, FCD Policy Brief Series No. 3, May 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Davidon Hoover, *Children with Challenging Behavior: A Survey of Licensed Early Care and Education Settings in Colorado*, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, 2006; Sarah Hoover, *Report to the Colorado Division of Child Care for Supporting an Environmental Scan and Study of Current Status of Children with Social, Emotional and Behavioral Concerns and the Providers Who Support Them*, JFK Partners at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, 2007.

characteristics of settings, child characteristics, teachers' job stress, and access to mental health consultation.<sup>6</sup>

Evidence from one Boulder County program suggests that appropriate support for providers can prevent many children at risk of expulsion from being expelled. Kid Connects, an integrated health and mental health consultation program, provides program-level and child-specific consultation services to child care centers and family child care homes in the county. A primary outcome and focus of services is reduction of expulsion from these settings. Structured discussions are conducted on a monthly basis with directors or home providers about the number of children whose challenging behavior puts them at risk of expulsion and the number of children expelled. In 2008-2009, the rate of expulsion in Kid Connects settings was 2.2 per 1000, while the number at risk of expulsion was 49 per 1000.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of the present study is to provide quantitative information on the prevalence and characteristics of children exhibiting challenging behaviors in Boulder County's early care and education settings and to describe provider responses to these behaviors. More specifically:

- What is the prevalence of children under age six with challenging behaviors in early care/education settings?
- What is the expulsion rate of children with challenging behaviors?
- Do different types of child care settings have different expulsion rates?
- Do expelled children have different demographic characteristics than all children in care?
- Do teachers who have recently expelled one or more children have different characteristics than those who have not?
- Do different levels of access to mental health consultation make a difference in expulsion rates?
- What types of challenging behaviors do providers most commonly see?
- How do providers most often respond to these behaviors?
- How do providers access support in dealing with children with challenging behaviors, and what types of information would be most helpful?

Challenging behavior was defined in this study as, *a repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with optimal learning and positive relationships.*

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<sup>6</sup> See also: Walter S. Gilliam, "Preschool and Child Care Expulsion and Suspension Rates and Predictors in One State," *Infants & Young Children*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 228-245, July-September 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Jordana Ash and Rachel Mudd, *2009 Kid Connects Evaluation Report*, report submitted to funders and community stakeholders

## Data Collection Methods

A survey was conducted of all licensed early care and education providers in Boulder County. The City of Boulder Child Care Resource and Referral program (CCRR) generated the list of providers and their contact information. The survey was distributed by regular mail to providers with whom CCRR typically communicates in this manner and by e-mail combined with a web-based survey to providers with whom CCRR communicates electronically. A three-member study team, consisting of the Director of Boulder County Kid Connects, Kid Connects Research Assistant, and the author of this report, designed and implemented the data collection and analysis.

### Questionnaire Development

A questionnaire was developed to address the information objectives identified at the outset of the project and to enable the comparison of findings with those in several key studies.<sup>8</sup> The draft questionnaire was pretested with four Boulder County providers – the directors of two centers/preschools and two family child care home providers. Two were given the mail version, and two the web-based version. Following the pretests and debriefings with pretest respondents, final revisions were made in the questionnaire. The mail questionnaire, which is identical to the web-based version, appears in the Appendix.

### Data Collection

A total of 270 questionnaires were distributed. The number according to method of distribution and provider type is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Distribution of Questionnaires by Method of Distribution and Provider Type**

Method of distribution	Centers/preschools	Homes	Total
Regular mail	29	65	94*
Electronic	84	92	176
Total	113**	157	270

\* One questionnaire sent by regular mail was undeliverable and was subtracted from the total.

\*\* The two school district preschool programs have multiple sites but were each treated as one provider.

About one week before the survey was distributed, postcards were sent by regular mail or e-mail to all providers informing them of the study and encouraging them to participate. The survey was sent in the first week of June 2009, and a follow-up mailing was sent two weeks later. A reminder postcard or e-mail was sent about one week after the follow-up mailing. A final e-mail was sent to providers on the electronic list informing them that the web-based survey would be closing down in the following week. During the period of data collection, the staff of the City of Boulder Child Care Resource and Referral program and The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County publicized the study in communications and meetings with providers.

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<sup>8</sup> Walter S. Gilliam, *Prekindergartners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems*, Foundation for Child Development, FCD Policy Brief Series No. 3, May 2005; Walter S. Gilliam, "Preschool and Child Care Expulsion and Suspension Rates and Predictors in One State," *Infants & Young Children*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 228-245, July-September 2006; Sarah Davidon Hoover, *Children with Challenging Behavior: A Survey of Licensed Early Care and Education Settings in Colorado*, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, 2006. Our thanks to Sarah Hoover for sharing the questionnaire used in that study with the Boulder County study team.

## Response Rate

Of the 270 questionnaires distributed, 114 responses were received, a response rate of 42.2%. Child care homes had a response rate of 43.3% (68 of 157 homes), and centers/preschools, 38.9% (44 of 113 centers). Two respondents did not identify their type.

## Comparability of Respondents with Boulder County's Population of Providers and Children

Survey respondents were compared to the total population of both providers and children under age 6 in Boulder County on two characteristics that previous research has found to be related to expulsion rates – provider type and children's race/ethnicity.<sup>9</sup>

The distribution of survey respondents by provider type was very similar to the distribution of all Boulder County providers (Table 2).

**Table 2. Comparison of Boulder County Providers and Survey Respondents, by Type**

Provider Type	Boulder County	Survey respondents
Centers/preschools	41.9%	39.3%
Homes	58.1%	60.7%
Total	100%	100%

The race/ethnic composition of children cared for by survey respondent was similar to the race/ethnic composition of Boulder County's general population of young children, with a slightly larger percentage of White Non-Hispanic children and a slightly smaller percentage of Hispanic children in care than in the population (Table 3). These differences may reflect a higher prevalence of White children and a lower prevalence of Hispanic children in child care, as was found in the Boulder County early care/education needs assessment.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 3. Comparison of Boulder County Population of Young Children and Children in Care of Survey Respondents\***

	Boulder County	Survey respondents: Children in care
White Non-Hispanic	63.8%	70.0%
Other races, 2+ races	9.8%	9.4%
Hispanic (any race)	26.4%	20.6%
Total	100%	100%

\* Boulder County general population of young children = children < age 5. Children in care of survey respondents = children < age 6.

Source: General population: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008 American Community Survey, Tables B01001, B01001B-I.

<sup>9</sup> Walter S. Gilliam, *Prekindergarteners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems*, Foundation for Child Development, FCD Policy Brief Series No. 3, May 2005; Walter S. Gilliam, "Preschool and Child Care Expulsion and Suspension Rates and Predictors in One State," *Infants & Young Children*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 228-245, July-September 2006; Sarah Davidon Hoover, *Children with Challenging Behavior: A Survey of Licensed Early Care and Education Settings in Colorado*, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Laura Appelbaum and Tracey O'Brien, *Early Care and Education Needs Assessment of Boulder County*, Prepared for The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County, University of Colorado at Denver Center for Education Policy Analysis, June 2009.

Because these two characteristics of surveyed providers and children in care were generally representative of Boulder County's total population of providers and young children, weights were not applied to the data.

### **Study Limitations**

- The survey was sent out in June and July, when some providers were closed for the summer. That may have reduced the response rate.
- The survey was sent to the directors of the two public-school affiliated programs instead of the individual sites, which were closed for the summer. That may have reduced the overall variation in types of challenging behaviors and responses to those behaviors, especially since both are large programs.
- Some directors of large centers may not have an accurate understanding of the types of challenging behaviors and the ways in which teachers respond to them in individual classrooms.

## Survey Findings

### Types of Early Care and Education Providers

Nearly two-thirds (59.6%) of the providers that responded to the survey were family child care homes, and most of the remainder were for-profit or non-profit child care centers/preschools (Table 4). Of the 4,457 children under age six enrolled at these providers, over 80% were in a public-school affiliated, non-profit, or for-profit center/preschool, with public-school affiliated centers/preschools having the highest percentage of children, 39.6%.

**Table 4. Early Care and Education Provider Types**

Provider Type	% of Providers	% of Children
Family child care home	59.6%	10.4%
Faith-based child care center/preschool	3.5%	3.5%
For-profit child care center/preschool	15.8%	18.2%
Non-profit child care center/preschool	16.7%	23.0%
Head Start	0.9%	5.1%
Public-school affiliated center/preschool	1.8%	39.6%
Unspecified	1.8%	0.4%
Total	114	4,457

### Children's Ages

Three-quarters of the children enrolled at responding providers were three or four years old (Table 5).

**Table 5. Ages of Children < Age 6 Enrolled at Early Care and Education Providers**

Age of Children	%
0 – 17 months	5.3%
18 – 35 months	11.0%
3 years old	31.1%
4 years old	43.8%
5 years old	8.8%
Total	4,457

### Children with IFSPs or IEPs

One in five children had either an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for children ages 0 to 3 or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for children ages 3 to 6 (Table 6).

**Table 6. Children with IFSPs or IEPs**

	%
IFSP/IEP	19.5%
Total	4,457

## Lead Teacher Experience and Education

Lead teachers were defined as the teachers most responsible for the day-to-day operation of the provider's classrooms, or for home providers, the provider her/himself. Of the 413 lead teachers at responding providers, 41.9% had 10 or more years of experience in early care and education, and 60.8% had a bachelors degree or higher (Table 7).

**Table 7. Lead Teacher Experience and Education**

Teacher Characteristics	%
<b>Years of experience in early care/education</b>	
1 – 5	32.4%
6 - 10	25.7%
10 or more	41.9%
<b>Highest educational level</b>	
< High school	0.3%
High school/GED	15.3%
CDA	8.8%
Other Associates	14.8%
Bachelors	46.6%
Masters or higher	14.2%
Total	413

## Prevalence of Children with Challenging Behaviors

Nearly all providers, 82.3%, reported that they experienced one or more children with challenging behaviors in the last 12 months (Table 8). Of those providers, 37.2% considered asking at least one child with challenging behavior to leave their program, and 18.1% did ask at least one child to leave for that reason. Once a provider considered asking a child to leave due to challenging behaviors, the likelihood of actually expelling a child increased substantially: nearly half of providers (48.6%) that considered asking a child to leave because of challenging behavior expelled one or more children for that reason.

Of the 4,457 children enrolled at responding providers, 10.9% (485) exhibited challenging behaviors in the last 12 months. This is the same percentage found in the Colorado statewide study.<sup>11</sup> Family child care homes in Boulder County had the highest prevalence, 28.9%, followed by for-profit centers/preschools, 17.7%. Public-school affiliated centers/preschools had the lowest prevalence, 1.5%.

Responding providers considered asking 11.8% (57) of children with challenging behaviors to leave. The prevalence was highest among child care homes, 20.9%. Head Start and public-school affiliated centers/preschools reported that they did not consider asking any of these children to leave.

Providers reported asking 20 children to leave their program in the last 12 months due to challenging behaviors, 4.1% of all children with challenging behaviors. However, more than one in three (35.1%) of the children that providers considered asking to leave because of challenging behaviors were expelled. Non-profit centers/preschools had, by far, the highest

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<sup>11</sup> Sarah Davidon Hoover, *Children with Challenging Behavior: A Survey of Licensed Early Care and Education Settings in Colorado*, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, 2006.

percentage, 81.8%. However, it should be noted that these percents are based on a small number of expelled children in each provider type.

**Table 8. Prevalence of Children with Challenging Behaviors, by Provider Type**

Provider Type	% of enrolled children w/challenging behaviors	% of children w/ challenging behaviors that provider considered asking to leave program	% of children w/ challenging behaviors that provider asked to leave program	% of children provider considered asking to leave program that were asked to leave
Family child care home	28.9%	20.9%	5.2%	25.0%
Faith-based child care center/preschool	8.4%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
For-profit child care center/preschool	17.7%	9.8%	2.1%	21.4%
Non-profit child care center/preschool	12.9%	8.3%	6.8%	81.8%
Head Start	10.1%	0.0%	--	--
Public-school affiliated center/preschool	1.5%	0.0%	--	--
Total % of children	10.9%	11.8%	4.1%	35.1%
Total number of children	485	57	20	20
% of providers	82.3%	37.2%	18.1%	48.6%

## Expulsion Rates of Children with Challenging Behaviors

### Early Care and Education Expulsion Rates Compared to Public School K-12 Expulsion Rates

Boulder County early care/education providers had an expulsion rate of 4.5 of every 1,000 enrolled children under age 6 (Table 9). This rate is 4.5 times the K-12 expulsion rate of 1.0 per 1,000 in Boulder County public schools (both school districts combined) in 2008-09 and nearly double the expulsion rate of 2.9 per 1,000 in public schools statewide. The rate for Boulder County providers was substantially lower than the rate found in the Colorado statewide study, 10 in 1,000, and somewhat lower than the national study of publicly-funded preschools, 6.7 per 1,000. However, the difference between the expulsion rate for Boulder County providers and K-12 public schools in the county was similar to the difference found in the national study.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Sarah Davidon Hoover, *Children with Challenging Behavior: A Survey of Licensed Early Care and Education Settings in Colorado*, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, 2006; Walter S. Gilliam, *Prekindergarteners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems*, Foundation for Child Development, FCD Policy Brief Series No. 3, May 2005.

**Table 9. Expulsion Rates, Children < Age 6 Enrolled at Boulder County Early Care and Education Providers, Boulder County Public Schools K-12, and Colorado Public Schools K-12**

	Expulsion rate per 1,000 children
Boulder County children < age 6 in care	4.5
Boulder County public schools, K-12, 2008-09	1.0
Colorado public schools, K-12, 2008-09	2.9

Source: Public schools, K-12: Colorado Department of Education website, 2008-2009 Suspension and Expulsion Data Reported for All Students by District, Fall 2008 Pupil Membership by District and Grade Level.

### Expulsion Rates by Provider Type

Expulsion rates varied substantially by provider type. Home providers had the highest rate, 15.1 per 1,000 enrolled children under age 6, followed by non-profit centers/preschools, 8.8 per 1,000 (Table 10). Three provider types -- faith-based centers/preschools, Head Start, and public-school affiliated centers/preschools -- had no expelled children in the last 12 months. The rate for all types of non-home centers/preschools combined was 3.0 per 1,000. The difference between home and non-home settings is consistent with the findings of the Colorado statewide study, although Boulder County's rates were lower for both provider categories.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 10. Expulsion Rates in Last 12 Months, by Provider Type**

Provider Type	Expulsion rate per 1,000 children
Family child care home	15.1
Faith-based child care center/preschool	0.0
For-profit child care center/preschool	3.7
Non-profit child care center/preschool	8.8
Head Start	0.0
Public-school affiliated center/preschool	0.0
Total child care centers/preschools	3.0
Total	4.5

### Expulsion Rates by Child Characteristics

Expulsion rates differed among children with different demographic characteristics. Children of Other Races/Multiple Races had the highest expulsion rate of any demographic group, 13.2 per 1,000, and White Non-Hispanic children also had a relatively high rate, 6.4 per 1,000 (Table 11). The rate for Hispanic children was much lower, 3.1, and the other race/ethnic groups had no expulsions. Males had an expulsion rate of 7.3 per 1,000 and females, 1.0 per 1,000. There was less variation among age groups. The differences among gender and race/ethnic groups were consistent with the national study, except in the latter, African-American children had the highest expulsion rate of all race/ethnic groups.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Davidon Hoover, *Children with Challenging Behavior: A Survey of Licensed Early Care and Education Settings in Colorado*, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Walter S. Gilliam, *Prekindergartners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems*, Foundation for Child Development, FCD Policy Brief Series No. 3, May 2005.

**Table 11. Expulsion Rates in Last 12 Months, by Child Characteristics**

Child Characteristics	Expulsion rate per 1,000 children
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	7.3
Female	1.0
<b>Age of Children</b>	
0 – 17 months	4.2
18 – 35 months	4.1
3 years old	5.1
4 years old	3.1
5 years old	5.1
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
White Non-Hispanic	6.4
African American	0.0
Asian	0.0
Native American	0.0
Other races, 2+ races	13.2
Hispanic (any race)	3.1
Total	4.5

**Prevalence of Expulsion by Lead Teacher Characteristics**

Two teacher characteristics were measured – years of experience in early care/education and highest educational level. Length of experience was not correlated with expulsions – expelling teachers had similar years of experience as all teachers (Table 12). Teachers with other associates degrees or masters/higher degrees were overrepresented among expelling teachers, while teachers with high school or bachelors degrees were underrepresented. A study of expulsions in centers and preschools in Massachusetts found a similar pattern of differences in educational levels of lead teachers who had expelled one or more preschool students, but these differences were not statistically significant.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 12. Characteristics of Lead Teachers Expelling One or More Children in Last 12 Months Compared to Characteristics of All Teachers**

Teacher Characteristics	Teachers expelling children 1 or more children	All teachers
<b>Years of experience in early care/education</b>		
1 – 5	33.3%	32.4%
6 – 10	26.7%	25.7%
10 or more	40.0%	41.9%
<b>Highest educational level</b>		
< High school	0.0%	0.3%
High school/GED	0.0%	15.3%
CDA	7.1%	8.8%
Other Associates	35.7%	14.8%
Bachelors	35.7%	46.6%
Masters or higher	21.4%	14.2%

<sup>15</sup> Walter S. Gilliam, “Preschool and Child Care Expulsion and Suspension Rates and Predictors in One State,” *Infants & Young Children*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 228-245, July-September 2006.

**Expulsions and Access to Mental Health Consultation**

Access to mental health consultation varied considerably among providers. Fifty-five percent of children were enrolled at providers with access to mental health consultation at least once a month, although this arrangement was found among only 12.3% of providers. Although 69.3% of providers did not have any type of regular access to mental health consultation, the percentage of children under age six enrolled at these providers was much smaller, 32.6% (Table 13). These findings suggest, as would be expected, that regular and frequent access to mental health consultation is more common among larger centers and preschools, and lack of regular access is more likely to be found among smaller providers, such as homes. It should be noted, however, that respondents were not asked to define access and nor were they provided a definition of mental health consultation but rather that was left to their own understanding of that resource.

**Table 13. Access to Mental Health Consultation**

Access Type	% of Providers	% of Children
Consultant is on-site	4.4%	20.8%
Consultant makes visits at least weekly	3.5%	4.3%
Consultant makes visits less than weekly but at least once a month	4.4%	29.5%
Consultant makes visits less than once a month	2.6%	2.3%
Consultant is available on-call only	12.3%	10.2%
None of the above	69.3%	32.6%
Unspecified	3.5%	0.4%
Total	114	4,457

Expulsion rates varied according to differences in access to mental health consultation. The rate for providers with no regular access to mental health consultation was 11.0 per 1,000 children under age 6, compared to 1.3 for providers with some type of regular access, and 1.1 or less for providers with monthly or more frequent visits or an on-site consultant (Table 14). The relationship between access to mental health consultation and expulsion was also found in the Colorado statewide and national studies, and less directly, in the Massachusetts study, which found that higher teacher job stress was related to increased likelihood of expulsion.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 14. Expulsion Rates in Last 12 Months, by Access to Mental Health Consultation**

Access Type	Expulsion rate per 1,000 children
Consultant is on-site	1.1
Consultant makes visits at least weekly	0.0
Consultant makes visits less than weekly but at least once a month	0.8
Consultant makes visits less than once a month	0.0
Consultant is available on-call only	4.4
Any of the above	1.3

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Davidon Hoover, *Children with Challenging Behavior: A Survey of Licensed Early Care and Education Settings in Colorado*, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, 2006; Walter S. Gilliam, *Prekindergarteners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems*, Foundation for Child Development, FCD Policy Brief Series No. 3, May 2005; Walter S. Gilliam, "Preschool and Child Care Expulsion and Suspension Rates and Predictors in One State," *Infants & Young Children*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 228-245, July-September 2006.

None of the above	11.0
Total	4.5

Differences in access to mental health consultation may explain at least part of the fivefold difference in expulsion rates between homes and centers/preschools – 15.1 versus 3.0. In fact, only 12.5% of homes had some type of regular access compared to 47.7% of centers/preschools (Table 15). These findings suggest that the vast majority of home providers work in relative isolation from this type of professional support.

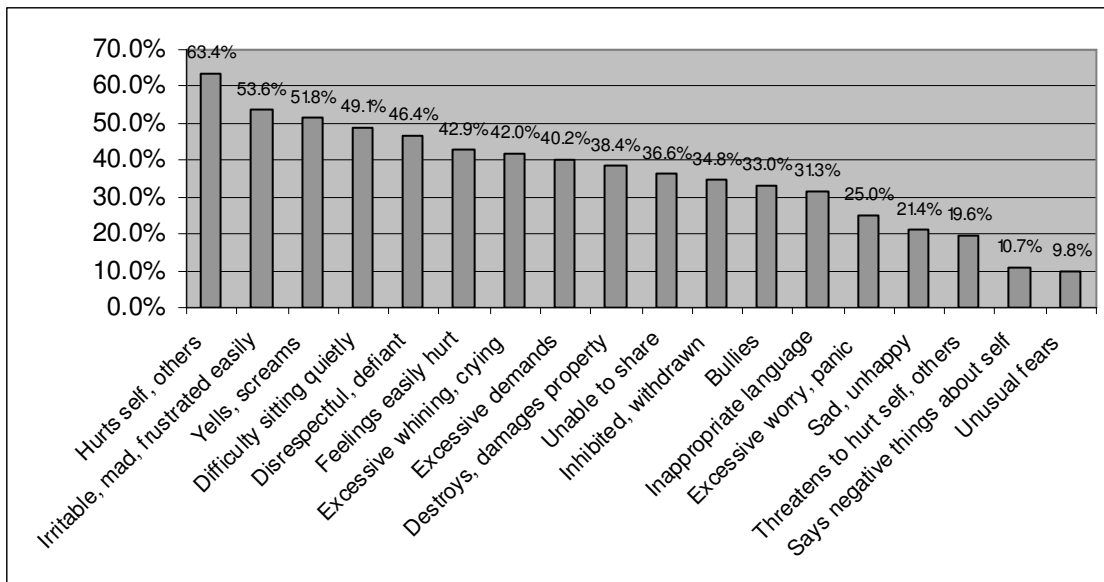
**Table 15. Access to Mental Health Consultation, by Provider Type**

Access Type	Family child care homes	Centers/preschools
Some type of regular access (on-site, regular visits, on-call only)	12.5%	47.7%
None of the above	87.5%	52.3%
Total	100%	100%

### Most Common Challenging Behaviors

The most common challenging behaviors that providers experienced in the last 12 months were: hurts self or others (63.4% of providers); irritable, mad, or easily frustrated (53.6%); yells or screams (51.8%); difficulty sitting quietly (49.1%); and disrespectful, defiant (46.4%) (Figure 1).

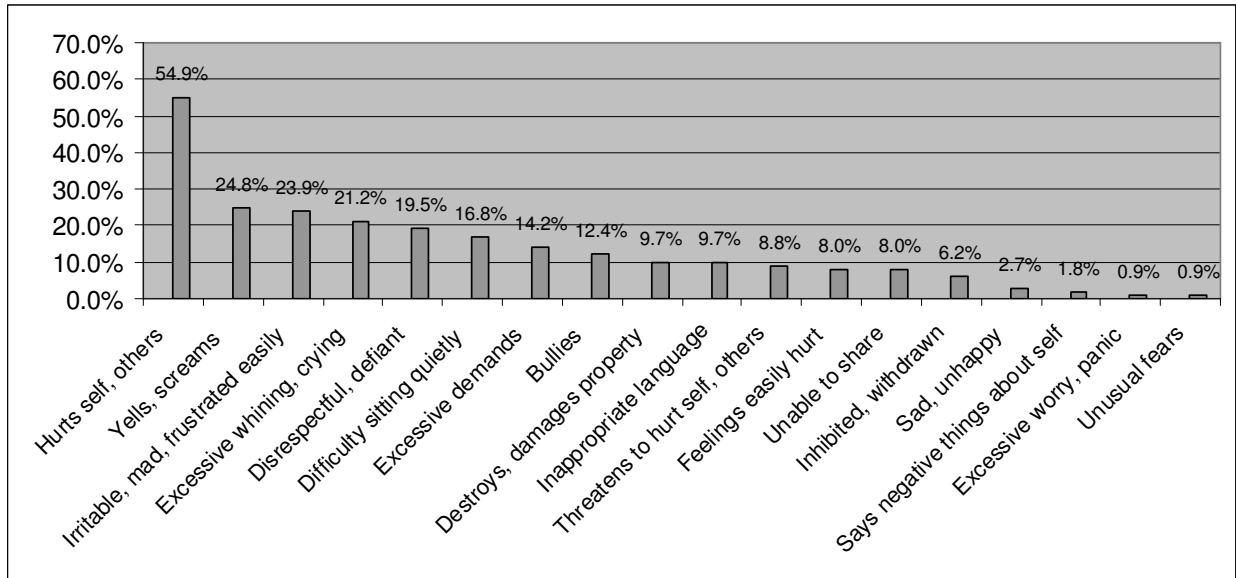
**Figure 1. Most Common Challenging Behaviors in Last 12 Months**



Providers were asked to rank the top three challenging behaviors of all the challenging behaviors they had seen in the last 12 months in terms of the negative impact on their program. By far, the most frequent top-rated behavior was “hurts self or others”, by 54.9% of providers, followed by “yells or screams” (24.8% of providers), “irritable, mad, or easily frustrated” (23.9%), excessive whining or crying (21.2%), and disrespectful, defiant (19.5%) (Figure 2). The Colorado statewide study found that “hurts self/others”, “irritable/mad”, and

“disrespectful/defiant” were the top three behaviors that providers were most likely to indicate had a negative impact on their program.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 2. Behaviors Ranked as Top 3 in Negative Impact on Program, Among Most Common Challenging Behaviors in Last 12 Months**



### Challenging Behaviors Providers Were Most Concerned About in Expelled Children

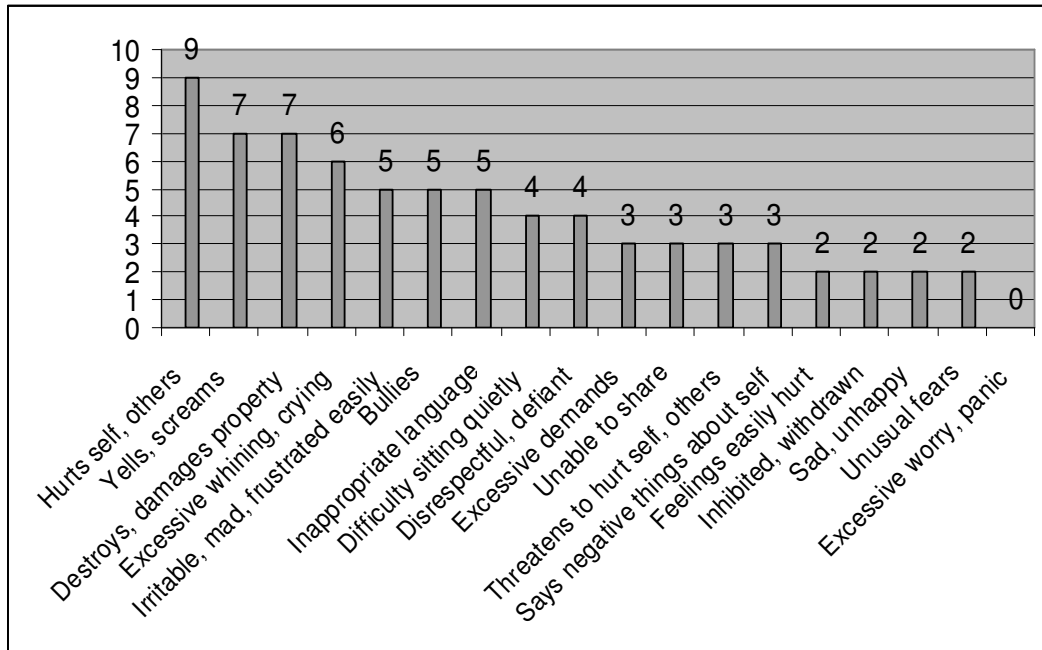
The 17 providers that reported expelling one or more children in the last 12 months most frequently mentioned the following challenging behaviors as being of most concern (Figure 3):

- Hurts self or others (9)
- Yells or screams (7)
- Destroys or damages property (7)

Two of these behaviors -- hurts self/ others and yells/screams -- were also among the behaviors that providers most often ranked as having the greatest negative impact on their program.

<sup>17</sup> Sarah Davidon Hoover, *Children with Challenging Behavior: A Survey of Licensed Early Care and Education Settings in Colorado*, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, 2006.

**Figure 3. Challenging Behaviors Providers Were Most Concerned About in Expelled Children (Providers that Expelled One or More Children in Last 12 Months)**



**Strategies Providers Used Most Often to Address Challenging Behaviors**

Respondents were asked to indicate how their staff (or they, if they were a home provider) most often addressed each of the three behaviors that they ranked as having the most negative impact on their program. The most common strategies were: talking to the child (72.8% of providers), redirection (70.2%), removing the child from the group or situation (65.8%), talking to parents (61.4%), and positive reinforcement (59.6%) (Figure 4). Comforting the child, time out, and ignoring the behavior were used much less frequently to address challenging behaviors.

**Figure 4. Strategies Used Most Often to Address Challenging Behaviors**

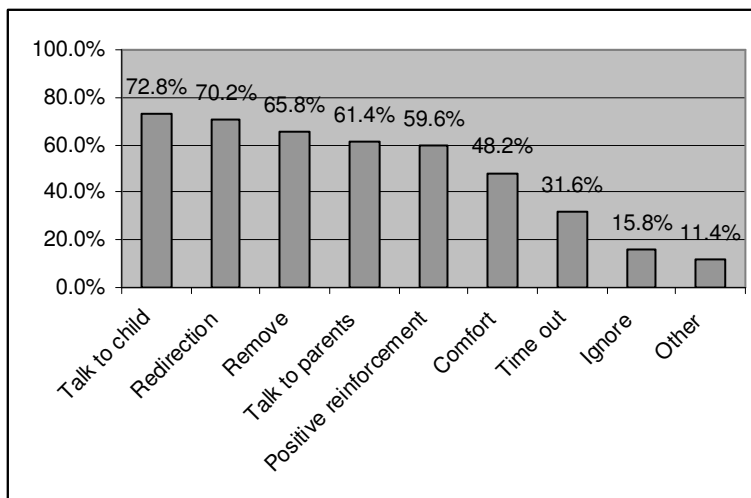


Table 16 shows the strategies used to address each of the three behaviors that providers most commonly ranked as having a negative effect on their program. Regardless of the behavior, the most common strategies were: talking to the child, redirection, removing the child from the group or situation, talking to parents, and positive reinforcement.

**Table 16. Strategies Used to Address Behaviors Providers Most Frequently Ranked as Having a Negative Impact on Their Program**

Strategies most often used to address behaviors	Hurts self, others	Yells, screams	Irritable, mad, easily frustrated
Talk to child	29.0%	32.1%	51.9%
Redirection	32.3%	32.1%	51.9%
Time out	14.5%	17.9%	22.2%
Comfort child	19.4%	21.4%	33.3%
Remove from group or situation	29.0%	28.6%	44.4%
Talk to parents	25.8%	35.7%	40.7%
Positive reinforcement	29.0%	32.1%	40.7%
Ignore	6.5%	7.1%	3.7%
Other	0.0%	3.6%	18.5%
Total	62	28	27

### Providers' Beliefs about Challenging Behavior

More than half (56.3%) of providers believed that the *percentage* of children under age 6 with challenging behaviors had stayed about the same in their program in the last 12 months, 29.2% believed that it had decreased, and 14.6%, that it had increased (Table 17). Similarly, 51.9% believed that the *severity* of challenging behaviors in children under age 6 had stayed about the same in their program in the last 12 months, 29.8% believed that it had decreased, and 18.3%, that it had increased.

**Table 17. Providers' Beliefs about Trends in the Last 12 Months in Children in Their Program with Challenging Behaviors**

	Percentage of children < age 6 with challenging has ...	Severity of children < age 6 with challenging has ...
Stayed about the same	56.3%	51.9%
Decreased	29.2%	29.8%
Increased	14.6%	18.3%

About 60% (60.5%) of providers believed that challenging behaviors were having a negative impact on the well-being of their staff (or on them, if they were a home provider), either to some extent or quite a bit (Table 18). Four in 10 believed that challenging behaviors had very little or no impact.

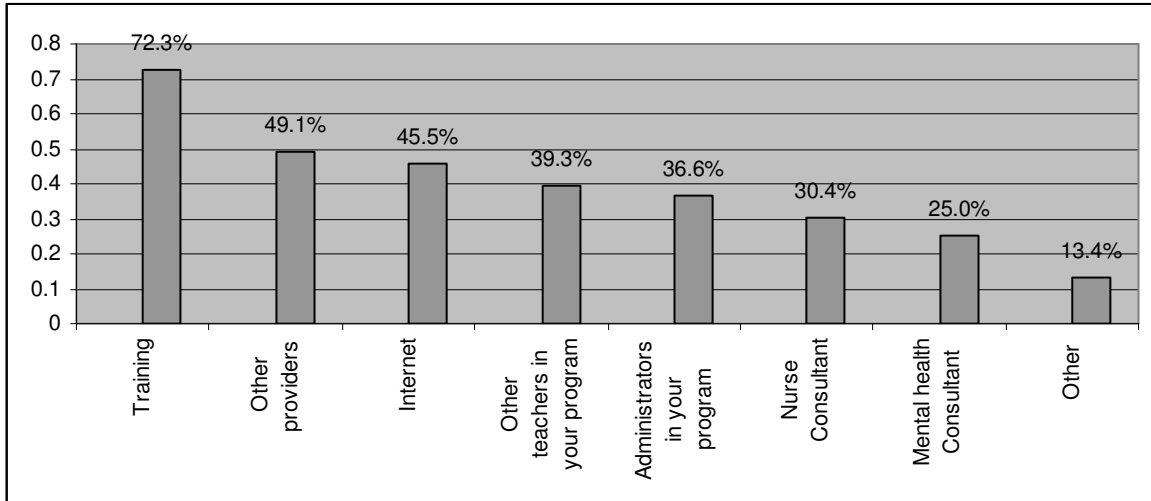
**Table 18. Providers' Beliefs about Negative Impact of Challenging Behaviors on Staff Well-Being**

Extent of negative impact of challenging behaviors on staff well-being	%
Very little/none	39.5%
Some	44.0%
Quite a bit	16.5%

## Resources to Address Challenging Behaviors

Training was by far the most common resource that staff (or respondents, if they were a home provider) used for information or help with challenging behaviors, by 72.3%, followed by other providers (49.1%), and the Internet (45.5%) (Figure 5). Nurse Consultants and Mental Health Consultants were used the least frequently, by 30.4% and 25.0%, respectively.

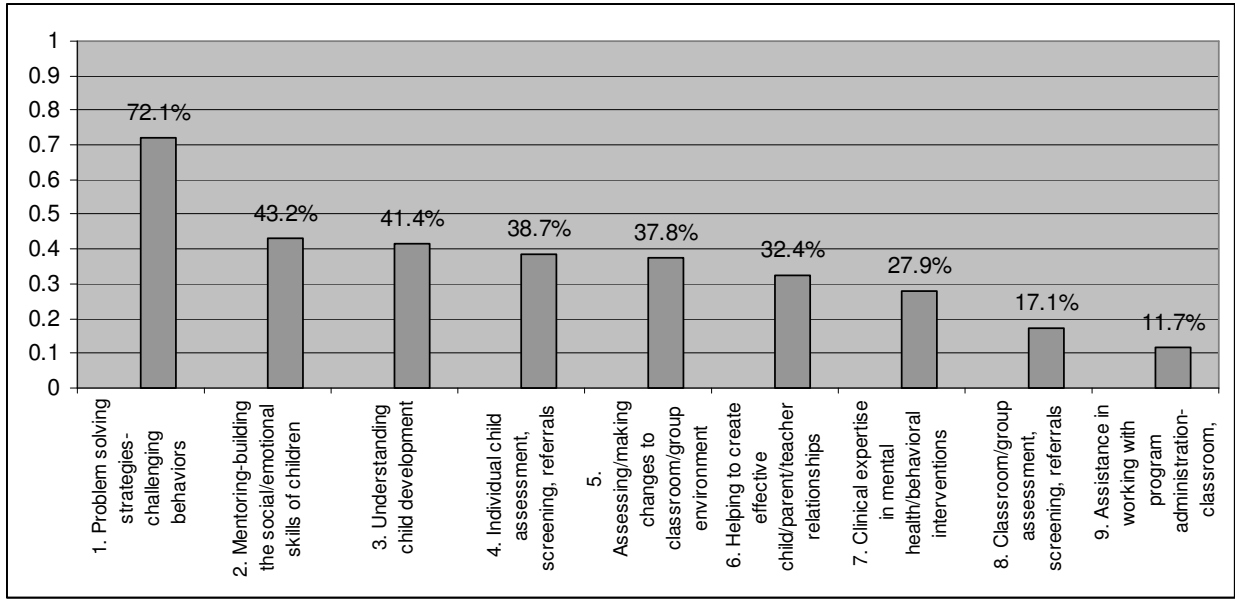
Figure 5. Sources of Information or Help with Challenging Behaviors



In a list of nine topics relating to children with challenging behaviors, providers most frequently wanted their staff (or themselves, if they were a home provider) to learn more about (Figure 6):

- Problem solving strategies for children with challenging behaviors (72.1%),
- Mentoring on building the social/emotional skills of children (43.2%),
- Understanding child development and appropriate behavior and expectations for children under age 6 (41.4%),
- Individual child assessment, screening and referrals (38.7%), and
- Assessing and making changes to the classroom/group environment to promote positive interactions and experiences (37.8%).

Figure 6. Topics Providers Would Like Staff to Learn More About



## **Appendix: Survey Questionnaire**

## Boulder County Child Care and Early Education Provider Survey

### About Your Program

1. Which of the following describes your program? (Please check one.)
  - Family child care home
  - Faith-based child care center/preschool (either for-profit or non-profit)
  - For-profit child care center/preschool
  - Non-profit child care center/preschool
  - Head Start
  - Public school-affiliated child care center/preschool
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. **How many** children **under age 6** are currently enrolled in your program in each of the following gender, age, and race/ethnic groups:

<b>Gender:</b> _____ Males _____ Females	<b>Age:</b> _____ 0 - 17 months _____ 18 months - 35 months _____ 3 years old _____ 4 years old _____ 5 years old	<b>Race/ethnicity:</b> _____ White (Non-Hispanic) _____ African-American _____ Asian _____ Native American _____ Other races or Multi-Racial _____ Hispanic (any race)
--	--	--
  
3. How many children in your program have an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan for children age 0-3) or an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan for children age 3-6)? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Please indicate the **number** of lead teachers (the teachers most responsible for the day-to-day operation of your classrooms) with the following years of experience in child care and early education. (If you are a family child care home provider, please answer for yourself.)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1 – 5 years
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 6 – 10 years
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 10 or more years
  
5. Please indicate the **number** of lead teachers whose highest education level is in each of the following categories: (If you are a family child care home provider, please answer for yourself.)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Less than high school
  - \_\_\_\_\_ High school/GED
  - \_\_\_\_\_ CDA
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other Associates
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Bachelors
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Masters or higher

### Children with Challenging Behaviors

**For the following questions, challenging behavior is defined as a repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with optimal learning and positive relationships. Please answer the following questions based on children under age 6 in your program.**

6. Over the last 12 months, which specific types of challenging behaviors have you seen in children under age 6? (Please check all that apply.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Hurts self or others (hits, bites, kicks, pushes, etc.)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Bullies</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Threatens to hurt self or others</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Excessive worry or panic, anxious</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Destroys or damages property</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Irritable, mad or frustrated easily</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Inhibited, withdrawn, uneasy in a group</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Excessive demands and attention-seeking; clingy</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Excessive whining or crying; difficult to console</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate language</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Yells or screams</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Unusual fears</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Feelings easily hurt</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Unable to share</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Says negative things about self</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty sitting quietly</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Sad, unhappy or depressed</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Disrespectful, defiant</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)</li></ul>
--	--

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Considering all the behaviors marked above, rank the top three in terms of their negative impact on your program. (Enter a rank of 1, 2, or 3 next to the top 3 behaviors.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hurts self or others (hits, bites, kicks, pushes, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yells or screams                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bullies   | <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual fears                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threatens to hurt self or others                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings easily hurt                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive worry or panic, anxious                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to share                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Destroys or damages property                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Says negative things about self           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irritable, mad or frustrated easily                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty sitting quietly                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inhibited, withdrawn, uneasy in a group                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sad, unhappy or depressed                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive demands and attention-seeking; clingy         | <input type="checkbox"/> Disrespectful, defiant                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive whining or crying; difficult to console       | <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify and indicate rank) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate language                                  | _____  |
|  | _____  |
|  | _____  |

8. For each of the top three behaviors listed above, please indicate how your staff (or you, if you are a family child care home provider) **most often** address these concerns. (Please check all that apply.)

- | <b>Behavior 1</b>                                       | <b>Behavior 2:</b>                                      | <b>Behavior 3:</b>                                      |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to child                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to child                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to child                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Redirection                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Redirection                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Redirection                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time out                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Time out                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Time out                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comfort child                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Comfort child                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Comfort child                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remove from group or situation | <input type="checkbox"/> Remove from group or situation | <input type="checkbox"/> Remove from group or situation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to parents                | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to parents                | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to parents                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Positive reinforcement         | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive reinforcement         | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive reinforcement         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ignore                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignore                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignore                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)         |
| _____   | _____   | _____   |

9. During the last 12 months, **how many** children under age 6 with challenging behaviors have you experienced in your program? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Of those children, **how many** did you consider asking to leave your program because of their behavior? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Over the last 12 months, would you say that the **percentage** of children under age 6 with challenging behavior in your program has:

- Decreased  
 Stayed about the same  
 Increased

12. Over the last 12 months, would you say that the **severity** of the challenging behaviors you see in children under age 6 has:

- Decreased  
 Stayed the Same  
 Increased

13. To what extent are challenging behaviors having a negative impact on your staff's well-being? (If you are a family child care home provider, please answer for yourself.) (Please check one.)

- Very little/none     Some     Quite a bit

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**Children Removed from Your Program Due to Challenging Behaviors**

14. During the last 12 months, **how many** children under age 6 did you ask to leave your program because of challenging behaviors?

- None → → **PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION #20**  
 One or more - Please specify number \_\_\_\_\_

15. Of the children under age 6 that you asked to leave your program because of their challenging behaviors during the last 12 months, **how many** were in each of the following gender, age, and race/ethnic groups:

- | <b>Gender:</b>                   | <b>Age:</b>                                    | <b>Race/ethnicity:</b>                               |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Males   | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 17 months         | <input type="checkbox"/> White (Non-Hispanic)        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Females | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 months - 35 months | <input type="checkbox"/> African-American            |
|                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 years old           | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian                       |
|                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 years old           | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American             |
|                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 years old           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other races or Multi-Racial |
|                                  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic (any race)         |

16. During the last 12 months, how many lead teachers (the teachers most responsible for the day-to-day operation of your classrooms) asked one or more children under age 6 to leave your program because of their challenging behaviors? (If you are a family child care home provider **and** you asked one or more children under age 6 to leave your program because of their challenging behaviors, the answer would be 1.) \_\_\_\_\_

17. Of the lead teachers who asked one or more children under age 6 to leave your program because of their challenging behaviors during the last 12 months, please indicate the **number** with the following years of experience in early care and education. (If you are a family child care home provider, please answer for yourself.)

- 1 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 10 or more years

18. Of the lead teachers who asked one or more children under age 6 to leave your program because of their challenging behaviors during the last 12 months, please indicate the **number** whose highest education level is in each of the following categories: (If you are a family child care home provider, please answer for yourself.)

- Less than high school
- High school/GED
- CDA
- Other Associates
- Bachelors
- Masters or higher

19. Of the children under age 6 who you asked to leave your program because of challenging behaviors during the last 12 months, what were the challenging behaviors of **most** concern? (Please check all that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hurts self or others (hits, bites, kicks, pushes, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yells or screams                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bullies   | <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual fears                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threatens to hurt self or others                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings easily hurt            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive worry or panic, anxious                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to share                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Destroys or damages property                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Says negative things about self |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irritable, mad or frustrated easily                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty sitting quietly      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inhibited, withdrawn, uneasy in a group                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sad, unhappy or depressed       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive demands and attention-seeking; clingy         | <input type="checkbox"/> Disrespectful, defiant          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive whining or crying; difficult to console       | <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate language                                  |  |

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

### Program Resources

20. Where do staff (or you, if you are a family child care home provider) go to access information/help with challenging behaviors? (Please check all that apply.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other teachers in your program | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrators in your program | <input type="checkbox"/> Training               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other providers                | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nurse Consultant(s)            |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Consultant(s)    | _____   |

21. Please indicate the access that your program has to mental health consultation. (Please check one.)

- Consultant is on-site
- Consultant makes visits at least weekly
- Consultant makes visits less than weekly but at least once a month
- Consultant makes visits less than once a month
- Consultant is available on-call only
- None of the above

22. Of the following, what would you like to see your staff (or you, if you are a family child care home provider) learn more about? (Please check all that apply.)

- Understanding child development and appropriate behavior and expectations for children under age 6
- Helping to create effective child/parent/teacher relationships
- Assessing and making changes to the classroom/group environment to promote positive interactions and experiences
- Mentoring on building the social/emotional skills of children
- Classroom/group assessment, screening and referrals
- Individual child assessment, screening and referrals
- Problem solving strategies for children with challenging behaviors
- Assistance in working with program administration around classroom and child/family needs
- Clinical expertise in mental health and/or behavioral interventions

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

**Please return your completed questionnaire in the self-addressed, stamped envelope addressed to:**

**Kid Connects  
Jordana Ash  
1333 Iris Ave  
Boulder, CO 80304**