



**Children with Challenging Behaviors:  
Survey of Boulder County Early Care and Education Providers  
October 2009**

## **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.