School Discipline Laws
Prepared by the Policy Surveillance Program Staff

SUMMARY
This map identifies variation in laws across all 50 states and the District of Columbia that govern school discipline policies and practices regulating the use of exclusionary discipline for students, such as expulsion and suspension from school.

ABOUT SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICIES & THE DATA
School discipline laws regulate the use of exclusionary discipline for students, such as expulsion and suspension from school. These laws typically determine the types of conduct that either require or allow expulsion or suspension, minimum and maximum lengths of exclusion from school, alternatives to exclusionary discipline, and reporting requirements.

There has been a recent trend in the United States toward reevaluating school discipline policies that depend on expulsion or suspension. A number of states have revised their laws since 2008 with the intention of reducing expulsions and suspensions, and 13 states have banned the use of exclusionary discipline for certain grade levels.

Studies show that students of color are disciplined and taken out of class at higher rates than their white peers, and black students are more likely to be punished for subjective offenses like "willful defiance." These disparities persist through 12th grade, with black or African American students representing 15% of students yet 33% of expulsions, and put them at higher risk for future involvement with the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. Currently, 41 states require school districts to report information related to school discipline to the state and 42 states require schools to report certain student conduct to law enforcement.

All 51 jurisdictions in the United States have state-level school discipline policies in various forms. This is a longitudinal dataset and captures variations in those laws over time from January 1, 2008 to December 1, 2018.

NAVIGATING THE DATA
There are two ways to navigate the data by clicking the Filter tab or the Explore tab — for each option, the data can be visualized in a map and table format or in jurisdiction profiles.

Filter
The dataset homepage will default to the Filter tab. Here, users may answer a series of questions to learn more about the characteristics of the laws. Answering more than one question will show all the jurisdictions that meet the combined criteria. Criteria selected will be
listed above the questions, and can be removed by clicking the white X or by clicking “Reset” above the questions.

**Explore**

Users can access Explore by clicking the Explore tab in the bar above the questions. Using Explore, users will see the answers to one question across all jurisdictions.

The primary questions in this dataset are:

1. Does the state have a law regulating school discipline?
2. Does the law regulate school expulsion?
   - What conduct requires expulsion?
   - What is the minimum length of a required expulsion?
   - What conduct may, but is not required to, be punished by expulsion?
   - What is the maximum length of an expulsion?
3. Does the law regulate school suspension policies?
   - What is the minimum length of a required out-of-school suspension?
   - What conduct may, but is not required to, be punished by out-of-school suspension?
   - What is the maximum length of an out-of-school suspension?
4. Must the individual circumstances of each violation be considered prior to expulsion or suspension?
5. Are certain students exempt from school discipline requirements?
6. What support must schools provide to suspended or expelled students?
7. Does the law require the use of alternatives to suspension or expulsion?
8. Is the school district required to report information related to school discipline to the state?
9. Must certain student conduct be reported to law enforcement by schools?

**DISPLAYING THE RESULTS**

There are two display modes once criteria have been selected by using either the Filter or Explore tab — Map display mode and Profiles display mode.

**Map Display**

LawAtlas.org dataset homepages default to the map display mode. When querying the data using the Filter tab, all jurisdictions that meet the criteria selected will display in one tone of yellow. Those jurisdictions that do not meet the criteria selected will be colored gray. When querying the data using the Explore tab, the map will illuminate with colors from yellow to red that are associated with the various answer choices (the color-coding is defined by the key to the left of the map).

Below the map, a table will appear. Using the Filter or Explore tab to navigate the questions will change the display:

- Using the Filter tab, you can select an unlimited number of criteria and the applicable jurisdictions that meet the combined criteria will be displayed in the table below.
- Using the Explore tab, you can isolate a single criterion and the applicable jurisdictions will appear in the table below.
Profiles Display
The Profiles display presents the results of the criteria selected in a text-based format for each applicable jurisdiction. Using the Filter tab, jurisdictions that meet the criteria selected will display. Using the Explore tab, jurisdictions that meet the criterion selected will display. If no criteria are selected, the full profiles for each state will appear under both Filter and Explore.

Profile Legend
Within each Profile box, above the questions and answers, there are additional options and information useful in exploring the law:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$$$</td>
<td>Toggle Legal Text – Selecting this option will show all the legal text used to answer questions for this jurisdiction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toggle Full Place Profile – Selecting this option will show all questions and answers for this jurisdiction, regardless of what was selected using the Filter or Explore tabs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toggle Size – Selecting this option will make the profile larger, but will not change the information displayed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legal Text History – This interactive timeline displays when changes in the law have occurred within a jurisdiction. Using the arrows to the left or right, users may explore how the law has changed over time as new amendments to the law have been enacted. The timeline will change from gray to a shade of yellow when the jurisdiction passed its first relevant law. Each change in the law after that is marked by a break in the timeline.

Map and Profile Legend
There are a few symbols to be aware of in both Map and Profiles display modes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
<td>Section Symbol – Clicking this symbol will open a window that displays excerpts from the law that correspond to the question and answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>Caution Note – Clicking on this symbol will open a small window that displays text that describes important caveats about the question and answer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATASET RESOURCES
Each dataset homepage includes the following resources available for download:

- Data: The Data file exports in CSV format and may contain two tabs. The “Statistical Data” tab contains the legal variables coded in the dataset, displayed as values defined...
in the accompanying Codebook. The “Summary Data” tab contains the legal variables coded in the dataset in text form, as well as the accompanying citations and any caution notes that may be included. Note: if there is only one tab available for download it will be the “Statistical Data” as described above.

- Codebook: The Codebook defines all of the coded variables in the dataset. The Codebook lists the question, question type, variable name, variable value and variable label. The Codebook should be used in conjunction with the Statistical Data extract.

- Research Protocol: The Research Protocol is a comprehensive document that outlines the entire methodology of the project, including the scope, inclusion and exclusion criteria, data collection methods, definitions, coding scheme decisions, as well as the quality control process.

- Summary Report: The Summary Report provides a snapshot of important findings from the dataset.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION


- This dataset does not cover every aspect of state school discipline policy. For additional information on school discipline reform, you can visit the Education Commission of the States’ resource at https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Alternative_School_Discipline_Strategies.pdf.

- The 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) asks states to address exclusionary school discipline practices. For more information about ESSA requirements and possible approaches to improve key equity indicators, see the Learning Policy Institute’s 2018 report at https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/ESSA_Equity_Promise_REPORT.pdf and ESSA information provided by the United States Department of Education at https://www.ed.gov/essa.

- Communities looking for information about racial inequity in local suspension rates may find the mapping tool based on data from the U.S. Department of Education helpful. To access this mapping tool, see https://projects.propublica.org/miseducation/.

- The Education Commission of the States also has a resource highlighting attempts and successes in passing school discipline reforms across the country. For more information about this Education Commission resource, see https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Alternative_School_Discipline_Strategies.pdf.

- Alexis Etow, Senior Staff Attorney at ChangeLab Solutions, and Harold Jordan, Senior Policy Advocate at the ACLU of Pennsylvania, served as subject matter experts for this project.
This collection of laws does not provide legal advice nor does it address enforcement of laws, administrative policies, case law, or any other sources of law. Should you have a specific question about these laws in your state, please contact an attorney in your jurisdiction.

This publication was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number NU38OT000141 awarded to ChangeLab Solutions and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.