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CDF-NY Urges the City to Address Increased Reliance on Suspensions and Support Schools to Utilize Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline

NEW YORK, NY – A [new report](#) released by the Department of Education as part of the Student Safety Act shows that, after years of movement, progress to end [school pushout](#) in New York City has stalled. Data from July to December 2017, when compared to the same time period in 2016, indicates an increase of 20.9% in total suspensions – rising from 12,000 to 14,502. Principal (short-term) suspensions increased by 19.5% while superintendent (long-term) suspensions increased by 24.7%. CDF-NY calls on the City to invest in schools most often relying on suspensions and provide a continuum of support to help build the necessary framework for the implementation of sustainable, positive alternatives.

Total Suspensions

	2015	2016	2017	% Change 2015 to 2016	% Change 2016 to 2017	% Change 2015 to 2017
September	753	1,517	1,317	+101.5%	-13.2%	+74.9%
October	3,809	2,886	4,396	-24.2%	+52.3%	+15.4%
November	3,975	3,663	4,548	-7.8%	+24.2%	+14.4%
December	4,180	3,934	4,241	-5.9%	+7.8%	+1.5%
Total	12,717	12,000	14,502	-5.6%	+20.9%	+14.0%

Although research has clearly demonstrated the harms of exclusionary discipline practices,¹ both to students receiving the suspension and to the broader community, this data reveals a growing citywide dependence on the practice. In early 2014, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education issued valuable policy guidance to assist public schools in meeting their obligations to administer student discipline without discriminating on the basis of race, outlining the reality that:

- Suspension impacts everyone;
- Suspensions don't work—for schools, teachers, or students;
- Suspensions have negative consequences; and
- There are effective alternatives to suspension.²

To reduce and ultimately end the reliance on exclusionary discipline, educators and students must be equipped with a range of strategies that can prevent, diminish, or deescalate conflicts in school. Interventions that use proactive, preventative approaches, and address the underlying cause or purpose of the behavior, have been associated with increases in academic engagement, academic achievement, and reductions in suspensions and school pushout.³ In the federal guidance, the departments referenced that successful programs incorporate a wide range of strategies including conflict resolution, restorative practices, counseling, and structured systems of positive interventions.⁴

Educators, students and communities are already working to implement alternatives, like restorative practices, that reduce the demand for exclusionary discipline. Through increased transparency, solution-oriented collaboration and the targeted provision of services and supports, the city can move toward transformative solutions to conflict and disruption that happens in schools. CDF-NY believes that the ultimate goal of achieving educational equity for youth cannot be realized without addressing schools' reliance on suspensions and eliminating disparities in discipline practices.

Suspension Reports are posted publicly by the Department of Education here:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/community/city/publicaffairs/Reports.htm>

Short-term Suspensions

	2015	2016	2017	% Change 2015 to 2016	% Change 2016 to 2017	% Change 2015 to 2017
September	499	1,047	905	+109.8%	-13.6%	+81.4%
October	2,737	2,045	3,149	-25.3%	+54.0%	+15.1%
November	2,881	2,782	3,363	-3.4%	+20.9%	+16.7%
December	3,052	2,918	3,087	-4.4%	+5.8%	+1.1%
Total	9,169	8,792	10,504	-4.1%	+19.5%	+14.6%

Long-term Suspensions

	2015	2016	2017	% Change 2015 to 2016	% Change 2016 to 2017	% Change 2015 to 2017
September	254	470	412	+85.0%	-12.3%	+62.2%
October	1,072	841	1,247	-21.5%	+48.3%	+16.3%
November	1,094	881	1,185	-19.5%	+34.5%	+8.3%
December	1,128	1,016	1,154	-9.9%	+13.6%	+2.3%
Total	3,548	3,208	3,998	-9.6%	+24.6%	+12.7%

Total EMS Transports Performed Because of a Student's "Emotional/Psychological Condition"

	2015	2016	2017	% Change 2015 to 2016	% Change 2016 to 2017	% Change 2015 to 2017
September	70	67	66	-4.3%	-1.5%	-5.7%
October	184	114	172	-38.0%	+50.9%	-6.5%
November	153	141	168	-7.8%	+19.1%	+9.8%
December	160	136	121	-15.0%	-11.0%	-24.4%
Total	567	458	527	-19.2%	+15.1%	-7.1%

Endnotes

¹ Skiba, Ritter & Simmons. The Safe and Responsive Schools Project: A School Reform Model for Implementing Best Practices in Violence Prevention. Retrieved from http://www.indiana.edu/~equity/docs/A_School_Reform_Model.pdf.

² See <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/index.html>.

³ Owen, Wettach & Hoffman. Instead of Suspension: Alternative Strategies for Effective School Discipline. Retrieved from https://law.duke.edu/childedlaw/schooldiscipline/downloads/instead_of_suspension.pdf.

⁴ See <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.html>.