



TIP SHEET FOR PARENTS

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

This tip sheet is designed to give parents information and tools to resist the exclusion of their children from the learning environment due to stern discipline policies. Students of color, especially, are pushed out of class under the guise of controlling student behavior—too often falsely viewed as violent or aggressive. Research shows that being in school is the biggest deterrent of delinquency. Excluding students from school places them on a one-way path towards prison.

Tip 1: Become familiar with the school's Student Handbook. These handbooks are usually found on your school's or district's website. The behaviors that result in disciplinary actions and the consequences are outlined in the handbook. Students are disciplined for a variety of reasons. The majority of disciplinary actions are for minor offenses, such as talking back, dress code violation. More serious offenses, such as weapons on campus, occur far less frequently. (Weapons and assaults on teachers and administration almost always result in expulsion.)

Tip 2: DO NOT PANIC! If your child gets in trouble in school, it is important that you control your emotions so that you can assess situation and seek the appropriate help.

Tip 3: Once you are notified that your child is in trouble, gather the facts. Talk to your child and any witnesses who saw what happened. Write down what you learn and ask the witnesses to write down what they saw. Collect any physical evidence e.g., videos, notes, letters, etc.

Tip 4: Schedule a meeting to discuss what the school intends to do. Find out what disciplinary action the school intends to take and whether the school intends to file a complaint with the juvenile court. If your child receives special education services, the school must use your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to address behavioral problems and administer discipline that will not harm your child.

Tip 5: Georgia state law requires that school discipline be imposed in proportion to a student's misbehavior, discipline history and other important relevant facts, e.g., acting in self-defense.

Tip 6: If expulsion is being considered take the following actions: 1) **Ask** if the school has any discretion in whether to expel your child; 2) **If expulsion is mandated**, consult an attorney, if possible. Expulsion is a serious consequence. If the school has discretion, you may be able to influence the outcome. Long-term suspension and expulsion require a formal disciplinary hearing. The hearing must be held no later than 10 school days after the start of the school suspension. **That is the law.**

Tip 7: Know this terminology: ISS – In School Suspension, OSS – Out of School Suspension, Expulsion, Alternative Education or Program Placement, Court Charges. These are the disciplinary procedures that lead to push out. If you hear these words, **get help** as soon as possible.

Tip 8: Determine whether a juvenile complaint was filed with the courts. If so, obtain a copy of the complaint and consult a lawyer. Juveniles are entitled to a free attorney, usually a Public Defender.

Tip 9: Classroom discipline is largely a **teacher's responsibility** and should, in most instances, be handled by the teacher. Get to know your child's teacher early on. **Develop a relationship.**

Tip 10: For assistance with school suspensions and expulsion matters contact: Georgia Legal Services (404) 206-5175; Parent to Parent of Georgia (770) 458-4091; NAACP (404) 577-8977; AVLf (404) 521-521-0790; Gwinnett SToPP <https://www.gwinnettstopp.org/about-us/contact-us/>; Georgia Coalition for Equity in Education leslie@lipsonadvocacy.com; or the GA Appleseed toolkit. <https://gaappleseed.org/initiatives/toolkit>