

# Suspensions

## DEFINITION

*Suspensions* is the number of disciplinary actions per 100 students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in Rhode Island public schools. Students can receive more than one disciplinary action during the school year. Disciplinary actions include in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and removal to an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) by school personnel.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Effective school disciplinary practices promote a safe and respectful school climate, support learning and address the causes of student misbehavior. Punitive disciplinary practices, including “zero tolerance” policies, are largely ineffective and even counterproductive.<sup>1,2</sup> Despite this evidence, out-of-school suspension is a widely used disciplinary technique, both nationally and in Rhode Island. Suspensions are used for minor offenses, such as attendance infractions, and for more serious offenses, such as weapon possession.<sup>3,4</sup>

Suspension usually does not deter students from misbehaving and may actually reinforce negative behavior patterns. Suspended students are more likely than their peers to experience academic failure, juvenile justice system involvement, disengagement from school, isolation from teachers and peers, and

dropping out of school. In fact, being suspended even once in ninth grade is associated with a twofold increase in the likelihood of dropping out.<sup>5,6</sup>

Schools and districts can improve school climate and discipline by developing and enforcing disciplinary policies that set high expectations for student behavior, providing clear, appropriate, and consistent consequences for misbehavior, encouraging the use of alternative disciplinary approaches, such as restorative justice, and ensuring the equitable, appropriate, and limited use of suspensions.<sup>7</sup>

During the 2014-2015 school year in Rhode Island, 26,677 disciplinary actions were attributed to 10,449 students. In Rhode Island during the 2014-2015 school year, 7% of the student population was suspended at least once. The total number of disciplinary actions is about two and a half times the number of students disciplined because some students were disciplined multiple times.<sup>8</sup>

Of all disciplinary actions during the 2014-2015 school year, 9% (2,515) involved elementary school students (pre-kindergarten through 5th grade), 39% (10,506) involved middle school students (6th-8th grades), and 51% (13,656) involved high school students (9th-12th grades). Kindergartners received 203 disciplinary actions, including 187 out-of-school suspensions.<sup>9</sup>

## Out-of-School Suspensions by Infraction, Rhode Island, 2014-2015

TYPE OF INFRACTION*	#	%	TYPE OF INFRACTION	#	%
Insubordination/Disrespect	3,758	29%	Alcohol/Drug/Tobacco Offenses	581	4%
Disorderly Conduct	3,038	23%	Arson/Larceny/Robbery/Vandalism	332	3%
Fighting	1,685	13%	Electronic Devices/Technology	297	2%
Assault of Student or Teacher	1,029	8%	Weapon Possession	156	1%
Obscene/Abusive Language	988	8%	Attendance Offenses	0	0%
Harassment/Intimidation/Threat	985	8%	Other Offenses	125	1%
<i>Total</i>			<i>12,974</i>		

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2014-2015 school year. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.  
\*Harassment offenses include hazing and hate crimes. Assault offenses include sexual assault.

◆ Since the 2009-2010 school year, the number of out-of-school suspensions in Rhode Island has decreased by 47%. During the 2014-2015 school year, out-of-school suspensions accounted for just under one half (49%) of disciplinary actions. More than one-half of out-of-school suspensions were for non-violent offenses, such as insubordination or disrespect (29%) and disorderly conduct (23%).<sup>10,11</sup>

## Disparities in School Discipline by Special Education Status and Race/Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2014-2015

	% OF STUDENTS ENROLLED	% OF SUSPENSIONS
Students With Disabilities	15%	30%
White Students	61%	44%
Asian Students	3%	1%
Black Students	8%	14%
Hispanic Students	24%	35%
Native American Students	1%	2%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2014-2015 school year. Detailed data by district is available at [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)

◆ In Rhode Island and nationally, Black and Hispanic students are more likely to be suspended than their White peers despite the fact that there is no evidence that these students have more serious patterns of rule breaking.<sup>12,13,14</sup>

◆ Schools must comply with special requirements about the discipline of students with disabilities that are included in state and federal laws, including the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*.<sup>15</sup>

Table 51.

## Disciplinary Actions, Rhode Island School Districts, 2014-2015

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS ENROLLED	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS SUSPENDED IN-SCHOOL	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS SUSPENDED OUT-OF-SCHOOL	OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS PER 100 STUDENTS	TOTAL DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS	ACTIONS PER 100 STUDENTS
Barrington	3,271	14	49	1	63	2
Bristol Warren	3,322	578	475	14	1,053	32
Burrillville	2,350	29	155	7	184	8
Central Falls	2,720	384	89	3	473	17
Chariho	3,283	458	211	6	669	20
Coventry	4,649	651	150	3	801	17
Cranston	10,067	1,402	1,209	12	2,611	26
Cumberland	4,503	72	278	6	350	8
East Greenwich	2,355	21	21	1	42	2
East Providence	5,217	0	508	10	508	10
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,619	*	99	6	103	6
Foster	282	*	*	1	*	1
Foster-Glocester	1,110	256	112	10	368	33
Glocester	524	0	0	0	0	0
Jamestown	488	*	*	1	11	2
Johnston	3,030	84	70	2	154	5
Lincoln	3,019	*	209	7	210	7
Little Compton	250	*	0	0	*	1
Middletown	2,279	408	109	5	517	23
Narragansett	1,316	71	93	7	164	12
New Shoreham	116	*	*	1	*	3
Newport	2,052	23	342	17	365	18
North Kingstown	3,957	278	76	2	354	9
North Providence	3,516	872	730	21	1,602	46
North Smithfield	1,750	0	57	3	57	3
Pawtucket	9,011	131	905	10	1,036	11
Portsmouth	2,549	228	124	5	352	14
Providence	24,040	1,410	4,520	19	5,930	25
Scituate	1,373	35	*	0	36	3
Smithfield	2,368	89	94	4	183	8
South Kingstown	3,275	505	124	4	629	19
Tiverton	1,765	0	105	6	105	6
Warwick	8,953	600	534	6	1,134	13
West Warwick	3,395	189	241	7	431	13
Westerly	3,018	47	239	8	286	9
Woonsocket	5,996	4,396	764	13	5,160	86
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>5,397</i>	<i>166</i>	<i>248</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>414</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,764</i>	<i>287</i>	<i>*</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>292</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	<i>41,767</i>	<i>6,321</i>	<i>6,278</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>12,599</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>91,019</i>	<i>6,928</i>	<i>6,423</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>13,352</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>140,084</i>	<i>13,702</i>	<i>12,974</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>26,677</i>	<i>19</i>

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, 2014-2015 school year.

The out-of-school suspensions rate per 100 students is the total number of out-of-school suspensions for the school district at all grade levels (Pre-K through 12th grade), multiplied by 100, and divided by the student enrollment ("average daily membership").

The disciplinary actions rate per 100 students is the total disciplinary actions for the school district at all grade levels (Pre-K through 12th grade), multiplied by 100, and divided by the student enrollment ("average daily membership").

Schools and districts only report suspensions of one day or longer. If an incident involves more than one infraction, schools and districts are asked to code the incident as the most serious type of infraction (e.g., violent offenses involving weapons and offenses involving drugs and alcohol are considered more serious than other offenses). The type of infraction resulting in disciplinary action varies according to school district policy. The type of disciplinary action used for each type of infraction also varies according to school district policy.

\*Only one removal to an Interim Alternative Education Setting (IAES) by school personnel was reported because new guidance from the Rhode Island Department of Education defined in-school suspensions more broadly than in the past. Removals are counted in district, four core city, remainder of state, and Rhode Island totals.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

Charter schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, SouthSide Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and The Village Green Virtual Public Charter School. State-operated schools include: William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School, DCYF Schools, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, and Rhode Island School for the Deaf. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

References are on page 185.