



# The Children's Policy and Law Initiative of Indiana

Ending Punitive School Discipline

The Positive School Discipline Institute:  
*Envisioning a Different Way Forward*

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# What is CPLI?

- The Children's Policy and Law Initiative of Indiana (CPLI) was established in 2012 to reform laws, policies and practices that contribute to the criminalization of children in Indiana.
- We are one of 60 organizations in 43 states that affiliates with the National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN).



The Children's Policy and Law Initiative of Indiana advocates for systemic changes for children so that programs, policies and practices are developmentally-appropriate, equitably-administered and fair, and provide the necessary support for a child's successful transition to adulthood.



# Our Collaborations

**Indiana Youth Justice Coalition**  
[www.inyouthjustice.org](http://www.inyouthjustice.org)

**Comprehensive Student Support  
Coalition**

**Work Group on Child Psychological  
Maltreatment and Developmentally-  
Appropriate Justice Responses**





# The Positive School Discipline Institute

- The Positive School Discipline Institute is a 9-month training initiative for school personnel to reform disciplinary practices and promote student academic success.
- The program provides educators with the tools to help teachers, administrators, student resource officers and support staff improve school learning environments and reduce exclusionary discipline





# What is PSDI?

The Positive School Discipline Institute jumpstarts school-wide teams to develop a plan to reduce disproportionality and suspensions by implementing culturally-responsive, trauma-informed strategies.



# PSDI Involves the Trauma-Informed School Model

“In a trauma-informed school, the adults in the school community are prepared to recognize and respond to those who have been impacted by traumatic stress. Those adults include administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and law enforcement”. - Treatment and Adaptation Services Center



# Trauma-Informed School Impact

In 2010-2011, the implementation of the Trauma-Informed School model in a school in Washington State:

- Reduced school suspensions by 90%
- 5 fold increase in graduation rates
- Increased academic achievement
- Demonstrated student preparedness to successfully enter college and the workforce



# PAPER TIGERS

One high school's unlikely success story.





## Three Years of School Teams Trained Through PSDI



- The Positive School Discipline Institute has trained 54 school teams.
- Several of the schools have reported up to 50% or more reduction of out-of-class referrals or suspensions subsequent to the trainings.



# Why is PSDI important?

\* Data from IndyStar 2020 School Corporation Annual Performance Report (APR) & DOE website

- Marion County Schools consistently overuse out-of-school suspension, often for minor behavioral infractions
- Recent reports indicate that over 1/3 of public schools in Marion County suspend 10 % or more of their student enrollment each year, with multiple schools exceeding 50%
- Even one suspension in the 9th grade increases the risk of juvenile justice involvement according to researchers at John Hopkins University

**These policies are feeding the school-to-prison pipeline at an alarming rate.**



# More Indiana Data

- 10.4% of Indiana children have a parent who has served time in jail.
- 1 in 10 children live with an adult who has been diagnosed with a mental illness.
- In 2016 more than half of children removed from their home in DCS was due to drug and alcohol abuse.
- Nearly 1 of 5 Hoosier children are food insecure
- 1 in 5 Hoosier children live in poverty
- 2016 - 16,143 Indiana public school students were identified as homeless or housing unstable.





# A Few More Facts About Indiana and the School to Prison Pipeline

- ~Status and Misdemeanor cases consistently account for nearly 80% of cases referred to juvenile court
- ~Nearly 1,000 referrals from 12 counties in 2019 were for youth ages 12 and under, and primarily for low level offenses—the driver, school-based referrals—truancy, leaving home without permission
- ~Research consistently shows that low risk youth who are diverted from system involvement are less likely to offend and more likely to complete high school
- ~Black youth represent 22% of juvenile population in the 12 counties but make up 38% of youth referred to juvenile court.
- ~Black youth are 2x as likely as their white peers to be referred and 3x as likely to be adjudicated.



- In the 2012-2013 school year, 1 in 10 white students faced disciplinary actions of suspension or expulsion. 1 in 5 African American students were suspended or expelled without evidence that students of color are more likely to be disruptive or violent than white counterparts.
- Consistent evidence has shown discipline disparities for students with disabilities, Native American students, and Hispanic/Latino students, with most extreme differences when these groups are intersectional.

## **Race and Disabilities Play a Role in School Discipline**

Skiba, Chung, & Arredondo, 2015.



# PSDI is helping to close the school to prison pipeline

A time of opportunity and great risk. If we don't reject counterproductive zero tolerance and over-policing in schools, we risk making the school to prison pipeline much worse.

**Back to School Action Guide, The Sentencing Project**



**According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, “One out of every 4 children attending school has been exposed to a traumatic event that can affect learning and/or behavior.”**

#### **TRAUMA CAN IMPACT SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

- Lower GPA
- Higher rate of school absences
- Increased drop-out rate
- More suspensions and expulsions
- Decreased reading ability

#### **TRAUMA CAN IMPAIR LEARNING**

- Adverse effects to attention, memory, and cognition
- Reduction in the child’s ability to focus, organize, and process information
- Poor problem solving skills

#### **TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN MAY EXPERIENCE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL DISTRESS**

- Physical symptoms like headaches and stomach aches
- Poor control of emotions
- Inconsistent academic performance
- Unpredictable and/or impulsive behavior
- Intense reactions to reminders of their traumatic event

#### **YOU CAN HELP A CHILD WHO HAS BEEN TRAUMATIZED**

- Follow your school’s reporting procedures if you suspect abuse
- Work with the child’s caregiver to share and address school problems
- Refer to community resources
- Share Trauma Facts for educators with teachers and school personnel

## IMPACT OF TRAUMA

The impact of child traumatic stress can last well beyond childhood. In fact, research has shown that child trauma survivors may experience:

- Learning problems, including lower grades and more suspensions and expulsions
- Increased use of health and mental health services
- Increased involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems
- Long-term health problems (e.g., diabetes and heart disease)

**TRAUMA** is a risk factor for nearly all behavioral health and substance use disorders.

# Impact of Youth Trauma





# Training Topics

The PSDI training program consists of multiple trainings on topics such as:

- Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experience (ACES)
- Adolescent Development and Neurosciences
- Restorative Practices
- Culturally-Responsive Strategies
- De-escalation
- Mental Health
- Implicit Bias
- Positive Classroom Management Strategies



# School Discipline

Proactive conflict management, restorative practices, and prevention; training and accountability on adolescent development, culturally-responsive practices, de-escalation and trauma; building relationships with students, families; align discipline policies with positive approaches and ensure that the use of suspension is not punitive or harsh and does not undermine the academic success of a student.

Adequately resourcing schools with professionals offering student support services, as well as community providers and community-based organizations for mentoring, emergency services and other supports.

Valuing youth voice and experience; using discipline committees including students and parents before students are expelled; ensuring that discipline is applied appropriately and fairly and meets the needs of the student.



# School Policing

Role of law enforcement centered in positive relationships and building trust with students; police powers reserved for serious school safety issues; respecting young people and valuing youth voice and experience; investing in personnel that address the needs of young people

Clear policies addressing role of police officers in school and critical training on adolescent development, culturally-responsive practices, trauma informed practices, mental health and developmental disabilities. Transparency, Accountability

No involvement in school discipline and schools should have crisis response team that does not involve law enforcement; emphasize skills to de-escalate; training on alternatives to connect young people with community based resources. Refrain from use of force and restraints





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Questions?

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Please visit us: [www.cpliofindiana.org](http://www.cpliofindiana.org)