**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**CALCULATING DISPARITY OR SIGNIFICANT DISPROPORTIONALITY**   
**IN DISCIPLINARY SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION**

**Winter 2022 – 2023 Preliminary Identifications**

This document explains the methodology used for school and district identifications based on state law M.G.L. c. 71 § 38R and Chapter 77 of the­ Acts of 2013 and the associated regulations [CMR 53.14](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr53.html?section=53.14) (Student Suspension and Expulsion Data Collection and Reporting).

The Rethinking Discipline Initiative began in 2016 and is now launching into a phase two, with a reset of data used in the methodology calculations, and a transition into a two-year cohort model. In 2023, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department/DESE) is using School Safety and Discipline Report (SSDR) student removal data, and a methodology similar to that used in prior years of the initiative (except with one year worth of data) to issue preliminary identifications for schools and districts mid-February 2023. The analysis takes into account all suspensions and expulsions from school year 2021-2022 (SY2022), from all offenses associated with G.L. 71, s. 37H, H½, and H ¾.

The first 2-year cohort of phase two will begin with school/district identifications in Winter 2023-2024, based on SY2022 and SY2023 SSDR data. More information about [phase two](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/pln-update-sy2023.docx) can be found on the Department’s [Rethinking Discipline](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/) page. Note that DESE also works with districts on additional discipline related initiatives associated with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Questions may be emailed to [achievement@doe.mass.edu](mailto:achievement@doe.mass.edu).

1. ***State Law - Expulsion/Long-Term Suspension Data****:*  
   *Percentage of Students Expelled or Placed on Long-Term Suspension*

In 2023, schools received a preliminary identification from the Department for over-reliance on long-term suspension if the school had greater than 100 students enrolled and at least 5 percent of students suspended for more than 10 cumulative days in SY2022.

1. ***State Law – Disproportionate Use of Suspension/Expulsion Data:***  
   *Data Reflecting Disparities in Rates of Suspension and Expulsion by Race and Ethnicity, or Disability*

The Department is utilizing a two-step system to issue preliminary identifications to schools and districts with disproportionality in suspension and/or expulsion rates by student race/ethnicity or disability status. This methodology focuses in on schools and districts with large disparities as well as high rates of removal overall.

1. The first step (criteria 1) in the preliminary identification process focuses on student group removal rates. Two rate differences are calculated for each eligible race/ethnicity and students with disabilities (SWD) student group at both the school and district level. *Note that there needs to be a minimum of 20 students in the student group, and a minimum of six students disciplined for the following steps to occur*.
   * The first difference is calculated by subtracting the school or district aggregate removal rate from the student group removal rate.
   * The second difference is calculated by subtracting the state aggregate removal rate from the student group removal rate.
   * Then, school and district-level averages for both of these rate differences (within school/district, school/district to state) are calculated. A single average is used for all race/ethnicity student groups, and another for SWD student groups. If any race/ethnicity and/or SWD student group has a rate difference outside two standard deviations from the school or district average and the state average, the school or district will meet this criteria (step 1) for a preliminary identification for disparity.
2. This leads to the second step (criteria 2) in the preliminary identification process, where the aggregate removal rates of schools/districts identified in step one are compared to a statewide school or district average. If its aggregate removal rate is larger than the statewide average, the school or district received a preliminary identification for exhibiting significant discipline disparities. Schools and districts that met the criteria in step one but have aggregate removal rates below state averages (step 2) did not receive a preliminary identification for disparities.