

While reviewing the Expulsion Policy, there were a couple of statements that caught my attention. The policy states “School officials reserve the right to punish as appropriate any other behavior which is subversive to good order and discipline in the schools or at school functions, even though such behavior may not be specified in the following written guidelines.” This means that school officials may decide what is appropriate and what is not appropriate at the time of action. The expulsion policy also states, “Suspension out of school is an unexcused absence” and “Students suspended out of school (OSS) are not allowed on any campus of Dalton Public Schools at any time during suspension.”

This was concerning to me because according to Georgia Law (Ga. Code § 20-2-690.1(c).) “Any student with 10 or more unexcused absences in the school year could ultimately come under the juvenile court’s supervision.” This is where school social workers enter an ethical dilemma. They must determine whether to refer a student with 10 absences or more to juvenile court. The benefit is that the state law says “ultimately”, which indicates that the school social worker is responsible for making that determination. However, how does this work with fifteen-year old students? The school policy states that a suspension is not an excused absence, and state law mandates students under 16 years of age to attend school.

As school social workers, one should have a practice framework to make these decisions. My framework is as follows: I review both school and state policy. Then I speak to the student about their reason for missing school. At this point, based on my knowledge of the student’s home and life situation, I assess whether this is a logical reason for missing school. I tell the student about the consequences of missing school and my obligation as a school social worker. Then, I set a plan with the student and I continue monitoring that progress. If there is no evident effort from the student, I will refer him or her. However, if the student is trying, I will work with

him or her for as long as I can without breaking the law. This is the framework from which I would approach an expulsion situation with a fifteen-year-old.

References

Justicia us law. (n.d.). *2010 Georgia code :: Title 20 - Education :: Chapter 2 - Elementary and secondary education :: Article 16 - Students :: Part 1 - School attendance :: SubPart 2 - Compulsory attendance :: § 20-2-690.1 - Mandatory education for children between ages six and 16*. Justia Law. <https://law.justia.com/codes/georgia/2010/title-20/chapter-2/article-16/part-1/subpart-2/20-2-690-1>