




**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

August 31, 2020

**TO:** Complex Area Superintendents, District Educational Specialists, Principals (All), Vice Principals, Public Charter School Executive Director, Public Charter School Directors

**FROM:** Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto  
Superintendent 

**SUBJECT: School Discipline During COVID-19 Pandemic**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) is committed to creating positive, safe, and inclusive learning environments where our haumana can learn and thrive.

Regardless of whether the instruction is primarily online, in person, or both, the Department still has the responsibility to comply with the Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR), Chapter 19 “no tolerance for firearms, drugs, alcohol, harassment (sexual harassment), and bullying.”

Disciplinary decisions that are made during the COVID-19 pandemic will require flexibility and a shift in thinking as the traditional disciplinary actions, such as suspension, may not be viable. Suspending a student from instruction in a distance learning environment would be challenging, as schools are responsible for providing alternative instructional activities during the student’s suspension. Schools should consider alternatives to suspension; some examples of alternatives to suspension are:

- Counseling;
- Mediation;
- Restorative Practices;
- Loss of Privilege; and
- Detention (online).

To support the students, school administrators are encouraged to foster learning environments that teach, model, and practice distance learning classroom behavior expectations by acknowledging positive student behaviors, provide continuous student behavior monitoring,

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and use a trauma-informed approach. To further support your Positive Behavior Digital System, refer to the following resource <https://vimeo.com/444388755/3f9020c7e4>.

Thank you for supporting and guiding our teachers, students, and school community. Should you have any questions regarding school discipline, please contact Ms. Sheli Suzuki, Educational Specialist, Student Support Section, at (808) 305-9794 or via email at [sheli.suzuki@k12.hi.us](mailto:sheli.suzuki@k12.hi.us).

CMK:ss

c: Deputy Superintendent  
Assistant Superintendents  
State Public Charter School Commission  
Office of Student Support Services