

**REPORT TO THE TWENTY-EIGHTH HAWAII STATE
LEGISLATURE 2015**

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF
ACT 169, SECTION 3
SESSION LAWS OF HAWAII (SLH) 2013**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
Benefit, Employment, and Support Services Division
November 2014**

**REPORT ON ACT 169, SECTION 3, RELATING TO SCHOOL READINESS,
SESSION LAWS OF HAWAII (SLH) 2013**

ACT 169, SLH 2013, established a school readiness program to be known as the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program within the Department of Human Services' (DHS) child care assistance program. SECTION 3 of this Act requires the Department to report to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the 2014 and 2015 Regular Sessions on the following:

- (1) The number of applicants to the Preschool Open Doors program established pursuant to this Act;
- (2) The number of applicants that were placed on a waitlist for the Preschool Open Doors program;
- (3) The geographic distribution of services to participants in the Preschool Open Doors program;
- (4) The number of participating providers; and
- (5) A summary of any capacity and funding issues the Department has experienced in carrying out the purposes of this Act.

The Department is to adopt interim rules to carry out the purposes of this section, to be in effect for no more than one year after their adoption, without regard to chapter 91 or 201M, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Preschool Open Doors program

The Department completed the procurement of the contract to deliver the Preschool Open Doors (POD) child care services and executed the contract in October 2013. The necessary DHS data system application modifications were identified, developed, and implemented in March 2014.

Although not required by Act 169, SLH 2013, pursuant to chapter 91, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Department adopted the administrative rules for the POD program in February 2014. The Department published public notice of the application period for the POD program to be March 1 - April 30 of 2014.

The following are the responses to the above requested report items:

1. The Department received 1,796 applications for the POD program for the 2014-2015 year.
2. There is no waitlist currently for the POD program. The Department was able to serve all eligible families who applied for POD, were selected for enrollment, and enrolled their child in an eligible preschool.

3. The number of children enrolled in the POD program for each geographic area is as follows:

East Hawaii	140
West Hawaii	74
Maui County	137
Honolulu Oahu	320
Leeward Oahu	352
Kauai	64
Total	1,087

4. The 1,087 children enrolled in the POD program attend 248 preschools throughout the state.
5. The projected expenditures of eligible families who applied and were enrolled into the POD program for 2014-2015 POD year during the March 1 through April 30, 2014 application period did not exceed the \$7.6 million allocated for the program for SFY 2015. Therefore, the Department conducted another application period during the month of October 2014 to ensure that all of the allocated funds would be expended in SFY 2015. The Department projects that possibly 200 more children might be served with the budgeted funds for services from January 2015 – June 2015.

The Department notes that the 2014-2015 POD year had a 54% increase in applications received from the prior POD year. However, the number of slots available in the POD program increased by nearly 300%. With the increase in available funding and with the projected 5,000 children ineligible for public school kindergarten for the 2014-2015 school year as a result of the Department of Education's change in age at entry to kindergarten (age 5 by July 31), the Department expected more applications for the POD program than it received.

For continued funding of the POD program at the \$7.6 million allocation, the Department would explore using more administrative funds for public awareness about the POD program and the revised income eligibility limits to ensure that more potentially eligible families will submit an application for the POD program.