

**REPORT TO THE TWENTY-EIGHTH HAWAII STATE LEGISLATURE
2016**

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF
SECTION 346-407, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES,
ON THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER CARE PROGRAM**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
Social Services Division
Child Welfare Services Branch
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ANNUAL REPORT SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 346-407, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES ON THE YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTARY FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

I. Report Background

In 2013, Act 252 of the Twenty-Seventh Legislature of the State of Hawaii established the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Program in the Department of Human Services (DHS), codified at section 346-391, et seq., Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). The purpose of the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Program is to care for and assist eligible foster youth until their twenty-first birthday, so they may successfully transition to adulthood and become independent and self-sufficient adults.

Section §346-407, HRS, requires DHS to submit an annual report on the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Program, also known as Imua Kākou, to the legislature on the status and efficacy of the program.

II. Overview of the Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Program (Imua Kākou)

A. Vision, Goal, Outcomes, & Purpose

The vision of the program is that young adults, who exit foster care at age 18, will successfully transition to adulthood and become independent, self-sufficient, and rich with social capital. The overarching goal of the Imua Kākou program is to support and assist young adults as they transition to adulthood and independent living. Specific outcomes regarding this goal include:

- Young adults have adults to rely on and supportive friends and family;
- Young adults acquire education and training to enable them to obtain and retain steady employment;
- Young adults manage their budgets and achieve their financial goals;
- Young adults have safe, stable, and affordable housing;
- Young adults have access to transportation for work and school; and
- Young adults have access to health insurance and to the appropriate services and supports that meet their physical and mental health needs.

DHS developed the program because national and Hawaii outcomes related to education, housing, incarceration, pregnancy, and future child welfare involvement are significantly worse for former foster youth than for young adults who have not experienced foster care. Many youth who have experienced foster care require additional support to become independent, self-sufficient adults.

B. Target Population

Young adults who are eligible for the program are former foster youth who were under the foster or permanent custody of the DHS at age 18 and are younger than 21. The young adult must: 1) be enrolled in high school or program leading to high school equivalent (like GED) or a vocational or post

high school educational program, 2) be participating in a program to promote or remove barriers to employment, 3) be employed at least 80 hours/month, or 4) have a medical condition that makes the young adult incapable of doing the above activities.

C. Program Specifics

The program:

- Is voluntary: the young adult applies for program;
- Provides support for employment, housing, education, finances, public benefits, health insurance, and social network development as the young adult moves toward independent living;
- Provides financial support for living expenses;
- Is collaborative in nature: the young adult's input and voice are vital parts of their individualized case plan;
- Ensures a case plan is developed with a case manager, which includes monthly, face-to-face contact with the case manager;
- Includes a review by the Family Court every six months; the young adult may participate in the court hearing by phone, skype, or choose not to attend; and
- Is young adult-driven: there is easy entry and reentry and the focus is on the young adult's unique needs.

III. Program Development

The Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care Program was officially named Imua Kākou by current and former foster youth in Hawaii. Imua Kākou means *Moving Forward Together* in Hawaiian. Imua Kākou was developed through the voices and guidance of foster youth. The program development collaboration was led by DHS' Child Welfare Services (CWS) Branch in partnership with Hawaii's Judiciary and the young adults.

Other collaborators included: Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), National Resource Center for Youth Development and Peer States, Independent Living (IL) providers, resource caregivers, Native Hawaiian agencies, University of Hawaii, William S. Richardson School of Law, University of Hawaii, College of Social Sciences Public Policy Center, Office of the Attorney General, Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education (DOE), Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR), and DHS' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).

The collaborators' program development efforts included:

- Extensive national research;

- Focus groups with the young adults, the Judiciary, service providers, and community partners on each island;
- Development of administrative/fiscal procedures;
- Modification and development of information technology (IT) systems;
- Formulation of communication and recruitment strategies, directed to the young adult and service providers;
- Revisions to the State’s Title IV-E State Plan;
- Procurement of services for transitioning youth; and
- Establishment of committees and workgroups (Steering, Advisory, Court, Procedure, Case Management, IT/Fiscal/Title IV-E, Employment/vocational rehabilitation, Housing, Education, Health, Mental Health, and Communication/Outreach/Marketing/Support Services).

IV. Program Implementation

Act 242 (2013) took effect on July 1, 2014, DHS implementation included efforts to:

- Communicate, inform and recruit former and current foster youth of benefits of participating and the application process;
- Continue workgroup development and coordination of services;
- Develop and integrate the Imua Kākou application and data to a web-based IT system;
- Train CWS staff, community stakeholders, members of the Judiciary, agency partners and providers, etc.;
- Procure and execute contracts for Imua Kākou services statewide;
- Hire a Statewide Independent Living Collaborator;
- Process applications;
- Refer eligible cases to case management and service providers; and
- Coordinate and conduct Court hearings statewide.

A. Launch of Imua Kākou

The initial celebration and launch of the program was held at the 'Ohana Is Forever Conference on July 18, 2014. There were approximately 400 participants from all islands, which included young adults, service providers, CWS staff, the Judiciary, and other community partners.

B. Imua Kākou Team Teleconferences

CWS facilitated weekly Imua Kākou Team teleconferences with Independent Living contracted service providers, the Judiciary, University of Hawaii School of Law, PIC Youth Circles staff, SHAKA IT experts; and representatives from the DHS Fiscal Office. These teams reviewed applications/cases, clarified issues and procedures, and solved problems. Also, monthly teleconferences with CWS geographic section teams are conducted and focus on Island or CWS Section specific cases and questions.

C. Family Court

Court hearings are young people-friendly and provide young adults an opportunity to address or “talk story” with the judges. EPIC 'Ohana, Inc., provides support through advocates from the

foster youth board and staff from Youth Circles. The Imua Kākou providers, University of Hawaii School of Law, and CWS also attend hearings to provide support and information.

D. Active Workgroups

Employment, Physical Health, Mental Health, Housing, Social Capital, Finances, Communication/Public Awareness, and Court Workgroups were created in 2013 to design the Imua Kākou program and many of the groups are still active. The Housing and Communication Workgroups are continuing their efforts to find housing for young adults and to coordinate the dissemination of information on Imua Kākou to present and former foster youth. Each Family Court circuit also has a Community Partnership Hui which works on different initiatives such as employment, housing, etc.

E. Imua Kākou Service Providers

Contracts were procured and awarded to six service providers statewide to:

- Develop the young person's personal skill set and competencies that will lead to self-sufficiency and successful transition to adulthood; and
- Provide a continuum of services to assist and support the young person in his/her social, medical, emotional and behavioral development; attainment of educational and employment goals; knowledge and use of community resources; and securing and maintaining safe and stable housing.

V. Program Budget

The additional time required to ramp up Imua Kākou resulted in a lower expense (67% of budgeted amount) for benefits to the young adult – Foster Care Maintenance (i.e. room and board, clothing, transportation, etc.) for this first year. However, operating expenses were 77% of the budgeted amount due to start-up costs such as development of IT web-based applications, marketing and outreach, training and staffing. The exact dollar amounts of the projected budget compared to the actual program expenditures can be seen in the budget table below. Now that the Imua Kākou program is fully operational it is expected that the budgeted funding will be expended in future years.

SFY 2015 IMUA KĀKOU BUDGET

Type of Expense	SFY 2015	General Funds	Federal Funds	Total
Room & Board, Clothing, Transportation, etc.	Budgeted Amount	\$ 519,205	\$ 562,100	\$1,081,305
	Expended Amount	\$ 498,071	\$ 224,505	\$ 722,576
Imua Kākou Direct Services (e.g., Case Management)	Budgeted Amount	\$ 569,585	\$ 409,320	\$ 978,905
	Expended Amount	\$ 536,147	\$ 217,821	\$ 753,968

The table below shows all the applications for the program that were received, as compared to those that were deemed eligible and actually received the services.

IMUA KĀKOU STATISTICS

Region	Applications Received	Court Jurisdiction Established & Program Services Initiated
Oahu	183	78
East Hawaii	46	16
West Hawaii	17	9
Kauai	9	4
Maui	29	11
Statewide TOTAL	284	118

Although a high percentage that applied did not receive the planned program services, many were referred to other community services that were more appropriate for their needs. Most that were turned away were not eligible because they were 21 years old or older, or they did not emancipate (i.e., age out) from foster care. Only two out of the 97 applicants that were determined to be ineligible for Imua Kākou were found to be ineligible because they were not involved in an appropriately qualifying activity. Twenty of the young adults who were ineligible for Imua Kākou were determined to be eligible for extended adoption assistance or extended permanency assistance payments. Some applicants that started applications, did not complete them, some changed their minds when they found out more information about the program.

In the table below, one can see how well the goals are being achieved by the young adults in the program. The goal for each item is 90 – 95%.

The outcome table is helpful to see where the program is succeeding and where more energy is required. Although performance is excellent in the areas of health and engagement, additional effort is needed to support the young adults in the areas of education, employment, and permanent relationships.

OUTCOMES	# of Imua Kākou Young Adults who have achieved this goal	% of Imua Kākou Young Adults who have achieved this goal
PERMANENCE Young adults have adults to rely on for a lifetime and supportive family networks.	93	69%
SOCIAL CAPITAL Young adults have, sustain and capitalize on a diverse network of connections to achieve their life goals.	99	73%
EDUCATION Young adults acquire education and training to enable them to obtain and retain steady employment.	89	66%
EMPLOYMENT Young adults support themselves by obtaining and retaining steady employment.	91	67%
FINANCIAL CAPABILITY Young adults manage their budgets and achieve their financial goals.	112	83%
HOUSING Young adults have safe, stable and affordable housing and have access to transportation for work and school.	111	82%
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH Young adults have access to insurance to the appropriate services and supports that meet their physical and mental health needs.	129	96%
YOUNG ADULT ENGAGEMENT Young adults are actively engaged in case planning and decision making their lives.	130	96%
CULTURAL CONNECTIONS Young adults have knowledge and connection to culture(s) of origins or to their chosen cultural affiliations.	108	80%

VI. Program Feedback

Overall feedback for Imua Kākou has been extremely positive from all parties involved, especially from the young adults.

Quotation an Imua Kākou Case Manager:

I recently received a thank you letter from one of the young adults that I work with as a case manager for Imua Kākou. During the first month of working together, she left her home that she shared with her former resource caregiver. She left the home with nowhere to go and chose homelessness versus having to live in this home. She shared that she didn't feel safe there and felt she had to leave. The day she left, she immediately contacted me for help.

Over the next week, I helped her find stable housing, as housing options are very limited. She stayed in a temporary homeless shelter for the first few nights while I searched for long term

options. I learned of a room for rent in a great neighborhood and explained her situation. She was offered the room and we were able to find free furniture to furnish it as well. In addition, we obtained financial assistance for rent for over the next four months. She also applied and was granted SNAP benefits.

With program assistance, she accomplished so much. She earned her high school diploma from McKinley School for Adults, obtained her driver's permit, opened a bank account, and completed the financial literacy course offered through EPIC 'Ohana. We resolved issues she was having with her medical insurance and obtained all her legal documents. She is now attending UH full time. She also gained temporary employment to earn extra income.

In addition, I urged her to join social clubs/organizations since she did not have many friends, as she has only lived in the community for a little over a year. I arranged group activities with her and other Imua Kākou young adults and she now has several friends within that group.

Within three months, she accomplished all of the above. She is now thriving and doing well in all areas of her life. She has many goals, one of which is to transfer to a prominent university on the mainland after she earns her associate's degree.

Her story is one of the success stories I have had the opportunity to be part of, which may never have happened if she did not have the support offered through Imua Kākou. These former foster youth now have this opportunity to reach their goals and with our encouragement and support.

Quotations from Imua Kākou Young Adults

- F. Imua Kākou is an amazing program! Without the financial help and the help from my case manager, I don't know if I could have gotten this far with my life goals. It's a great opportunity and I encourage all youth who are eligible to sign up!*
- G. The Imua Kākou program has given me an opportunity to better my future. The staff at Hale Opio has gone beyond their job requirement to support me in all aspects of my life. I could not be more grateful.*
- I am so thankful for Imua Kākou because they have helped me stay intact and to become more prioritized.*
- It's very awesome, a lot of support.*
- Imua Kākou is helping prepare me for life.*