



State of Hawai'i
Department of Human Services

Annual Report 2023



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Hawai'i Law of The Aloha Spirit

§ 5-7.5 “Aloha Spirit”. (a) “Aloha Spirit” is the coordination of mind and heart within each person. It brings each person to the self. Each person must think and emote good feelings to others. In the contemplation and presence of the life force, “Aloha”, the following unuhi laulā loa may be used:

- “Akahai”, meaning kindness to be expressed with tenderness;
- “Lōkahi”, meaning unity, to be expressed with harmony;
- “Olu’olu” meaning agreeable, to be expressed with pleasantness;
- “Ha’aha’a”, meaning humility, to be expressed with modesty;
- “Ahonui”, meaning patience, to be expressed with perseverance.

These are traits of character that express the charm, warmth and sincerity of Hawai'i's people. It was the working philosophy of native Hawaiians and was presented as a gift to the people of Hawai'i. “Aloha” is more than a word of greeting or farewell or a salutation. “Aloha” means mutual regard and affection and extends warmth in caring with no obligation in return. “Aloha” is the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence. “Aloha” means to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen and to know the unknowable.

(b) In exercising their power on behalf of the people and in fulfillment of their responsibilities, obligations and service to the people, the legislature, governor, lieutenant governor, executive officers of each department, the chief justice, associate justices, and judges of the appellate, circuit, and district courts may contemplate and reside with the life force and give consideration to the “Aloha Spirit”. [L 1986, c 202, § 1]



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ON THE COVER: Colleen Cidade signing “Mahalo” and “Aloha”, vertically by column. Cover photo by Kristin Lipman

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THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES provides important benefits and services that serve as building blocks for individuals and families in need to achieve self-sufficiency and success on their own terms. Our team is made up of nearly 2,400 positions across the islands. We provide these benefits and services with one of the largest state department budgets of \$3.6 billion, which includes the majority of the state government's federal monies. More than 80% of these funds are distributed as benefits or services.



► **The DHS 'Ohana**

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is comprised of the Director's Office, six Staff Offices, four Divisions, and seven Administratively Attached Agencies.

The Staff Offices serve the entire organization and include the Fiscal Management Office (FMO), the Office of Information Technology (OIT), the Human Resources (HR) Office, the Budget, Planning and Management Office (BPMP), the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO), and the Audit, Quality Control and Research Office (AQCRO).

The four Divisions of DHS

are the Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division (BESSD), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Med-QUEST Division (MQD), and the Social Services Division (SSD).

Administratively Attached Agencies are the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority (HPHA), the Office of Youth Services (OYS), the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women (HSCSW), the Commission on Fatherhood (COF), the Hawaii State Youth Commission (HiYC) and the Hawai'i Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH).

The 2022 Legislature added the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus Commission and the State Office on Homelessness & Housing Solutions.

Message from the Director

IN THE FACE OF unprecedented challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Human Services stood as a beacon of support for our entire state. With unwavering determination and resilience, we continued our mission to ensure that vital benefits and services remained accessible to every corner of our community, fostering hope and stability during uncertain times.

As we now transition from a period of global crisis to one of restoration and renewal, the guiding principles of aloha and humanity remain our compass. Our commitment to fostering self-sufficiency and well-being among individuals, families, and communities in Hawai'i remains steadfast, as we believe that when families thrive, so does our entire society.

Throughout this fiscal year, we pledged to further our mission through the following objectives:

Empowering Economic Independence

We forged partnerships with educational institutions, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and private sectors to enhance efficiency and resources, offering comprehensive training and services to pave the way for gainful employment and economic self-sufficiency. Our goal is to nurture career pathways that not only bolster individual capacity but also break down barriers to sustainable employment, fostering a multi-generational approach to success.

Nurturing Early Childhood Development

We recognize the critical importance of early childhood development in shaping the future of our keiki. By encouraging parents and caregivers to engage in regulated childcare settings, we aim to promote school readiness and build social capital within families. Moreover, we are committed to enhancing the quality and accessibility of early childhood education providers, working collaboratively with state agencies and community-based orga-

nizations to ensure comprehensive systems of care that prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of our children and families.

Fostering Health and Safety

Our efforts to promote holistic well-being extend beyond physical health to encompass emotional and social support. Through coordinated care systems and community networks, we seek to connect individuals and families with the resources they need to thrive, both during and beyond their interactions with DHS services. Access to quality healthcare and insurance remains a fundamental right for all residents, and we are dedicated to ensuring equitable access for every member of our community.

Ensuring Housing Stability

Every individual deserves the stability of a safe and secure home. We are committed to assisting chronically homeless individuals and families in finding and maintaining housing, leveraging partnerships and resources to maximize support. By fostering integration and collaboration among governmental agencies and community-based organizations, we strive to create a network of support that endures long after DHS services are no longer needed.

Enhancing Food Accessibility

Access to nutritious food is a fundamental human right. We are dedicated to maximizing participation in government-sponsored food programs, while also providing education and resources to empower individuals and families to make healthy choices. Through culturally appropriate services and community initiatives, we aim to combat food insecurity and promote overall well-being for all residents.

As we embark on this journey of renewal and transformation, let us remember that our greatest strength lies in our collective humanity. Together, with compassion and empathy, we will continue to build a brighter future for Hawai'i, where every individual and family can thrive.

“Our commitment to fostering self-sufficiency and well-being among individuals, families, and communities in Hawai'i remains steadfast...”



Cathy Betts
DIRECTOR,
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
SERVICES



TEAM-ORIENTED

We acknowledge that internal and external partnerships are critical to the success of DHS.

HUMAN-CENTERED

We develop strategies and make improvements as necessary from the client's perspective.

RESPECTFUL

We recognize the inherent value of each person as well as the diverse cultures of Hawai'i.

INTENTIONAL

We are mindful of our decisions and actions in our collective work.

VISIONARY

We strive to support our clients by co-creating innovative and forward-looking strategies.

EVIDENCE-BASED

We make decisions that are based on data and take actions that aim for sustainable outcomes.



DHS Organization Chart

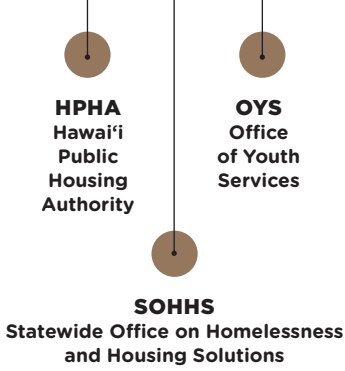
DHS DIRECTOR

STAFF OFFICES

These Staff Offices provide essential administrative services so the department can run smoothly and our infrastructure is maintained and secured.

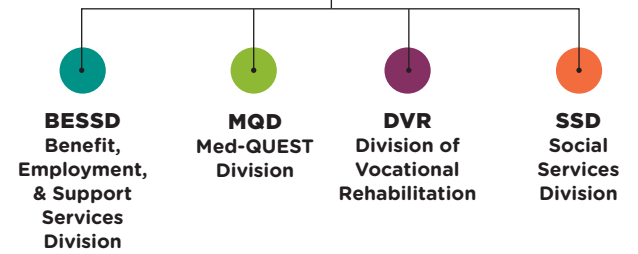


ATTACHED AGENCIES

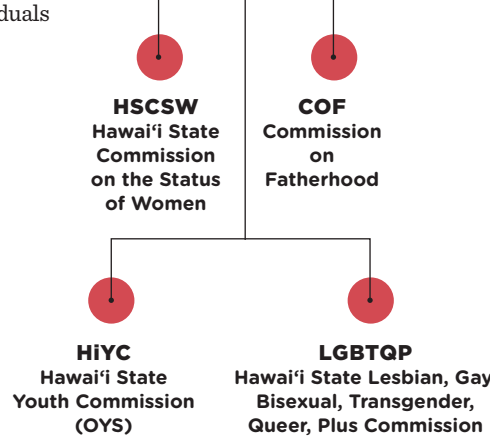


DHS DIVISIONS

These Divisions deliver the core benefits and services to residents in need. Their work includes connecting individuals with nutrition and financial support, providing employment and job readiness supports, improving access to quality healthcare, protecting vulnerable adults and Hawai'i's keiki, and providing services and supports to individuals with disabilities to succeed as members of the workforce.



COMMISSIONS



OUR MISSION

We believe that all Hawai'i residents can and will thrive. We strive to reach this vision by fulfilling our mission to encourage self-sufficiency and support the well-being of individuals, families, and communities in Hawai'i.

BESSD



Every month, the Benefit, Employment, and Support Services Division (BESSD) provides public assistance benefits to nearly 1 in 8 individuals statewide. These benefits provide for basic daily necessities for individuals—keiki to kūpuna—and families.

Economic Stability & Self-Sufficiency

Food, financial, and child care assistance programs help eligible low-income individuals meet their basic needs and make progress toward economic independence through cash and food assistance, employment-focused services, and subsidized child care. Major programs include:



CASH ASSISTANCE

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF / TAONF)
- General Assistance (GA)
- Aid to Aged, Blind, and Disabled (AABD)



FOOD ASSISTANCE

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)



EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- First-to-Work (FTW) (TANF work program)
- SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)



CHILD CARE TUITION ASSISTANCE:

- Child Care Connection Hawai'i (CCCH)
- Preschool Open Doors (POD)



ENERGY AND UTILITY ASSISTANCE

- Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)

Accountability & Integrity

Investigations Office (INVO)

The objectives of the fraud investigations offices (INVO) are to ensure the following:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>(1)
Public assistance benefits are provided only to those that are eligible.</p> | <p>(2)
Benefits are used only in the manner that is allowable under all applicable federal and state laws.</p> | <p>(3)
Recovery and prosecution of fraudulent use is pursued.</p> |
|--|---|--|

INVO has offices located on four islands to achieve these goals: O'ahu, Hawai'i, Maui, and Kaua'i.

Child Care Licensing (CCLU)

Child Care Licensing Units license and oversee specified regulated child care providers (e.g. infant and toddler centers, family child care homes). Their work aims to ensure that licensed and registered child care providers meet basic health and safety standards. This regulatory work aims to reassure families of the safety and well-being of their children while they are with regulated child care providers. Licensing units are located on four islands: O'ahu, Hawai'i, Maui, and Kaua'i.

Homelessness Intervention & Prevention

The BESSD Homeless Programs Office (HPO) provides programs and services for those that are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. These supports aim to provide short- and long-term housing placements to stabilize each individual or family's housing situation while coordinating support services needed to address the root causes of homelessness that impacts a person's ability to maintain stable housing placement.

MAJOR PROGRAM AND SERVICES INCLUDE

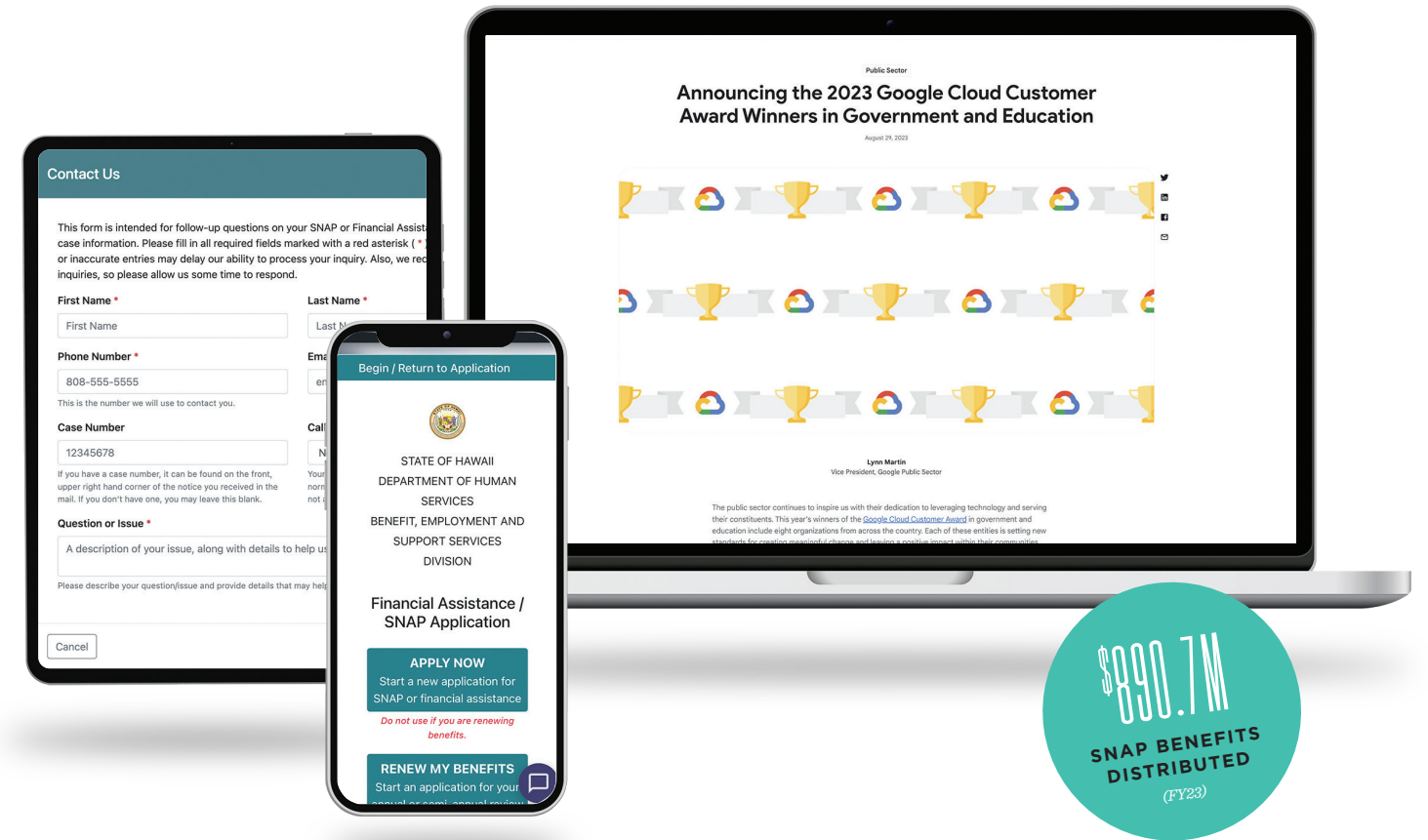
- Homeless Outreach
- Housing Placement
- State Housing Emergency Grants
- Emergency and Transitional Shelter Services
- Rapid Re-Housing
- Housing First

The more than 700 BESSD staff members, which includes a presence on every island, including Lānaʻi and Molokaʻi, provide this basic support to families in need through financial (cash) assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). In support of these benefits, BESSD also provides an array of job-readiness trainings, educational and vocational trainings, job placement and retention services, child care subsidies, services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness and work-related supports. These combined benefits and supports aim to help clients achieve self-sufficiency. The mission of BESSD is to provide timely, efficient, and effective programs, services, and benefits to empower those who are the most vulnerable in our state and expand their capacity for self-determination, independence, healthy choices, quality of life, and personal dignity.

Innovative efforts to leverage technology to meet community need

BESSD is customizing its initiatives to benefit the community members it serves by harnessing technology.

Technology continues to shape our lives, and BESSD is looking at ways to incorporate the tools and resources to effectively serve our community better. The Division continued moving forward with the development of its Benefits Eligibility Solution (BES) eligibility system scheduled to go live in August 2024 and replace the legacy HAWI system. The new system will be on an online platform and is designed to increase efficiency in the processing of financial and SNAP benefits. This move is vital for improvements in innovation and responsiveness, ultimately creating meaningful change for the communities



they serve.

In 2022, DHS joined forces with Google Cloud to introduce the Statewide Branch Support Desk (SBSD). Operating 24/7, the shift to a Google Call Center AI Platform (CCAIP) enabled the Division to create a dedicated queue for financial and SNAP interview calls where clients could be connected live to an Eligibility Worker, and

interview calls could be prioritized based on the date of the client's interview (with interview calls as the highest priority). Through the Virtual Agent Chatbot feature on the Public Assistance Information System (PAIS) application page, simple responses to client questions are swift, and clients are also able to check their case status and benefit history. These virtual agents manage around 1,200 calls daily, and have led to reduced costs, with quicker service and response times. They supply essential information about programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). A newly added 'Contact Us' form allows for additional points of access for clients who are unable to reach a DHS office by phone or in-person. By addressing queries and providing accurate responses, SBSBD frees

up call center agents to focus on areas where they are most needed. Additionally, DHS was recognized as a 2023 Google Cloud Customer Award Winner in Government and Education.

In the Child Programs Office, BESSD utilized a Child Care Application Portal at <https://childcare-subsidyapplication.dhs.hawaii.gov>. This online portal streamlined the application process for the Child Care Connection Hawaii program and is part of a broader effort by BESSD to simplify the child care subsidy application process and to take the program in house by December 2023.

Scott Morishige, BESSD Administrator, added, "The use of technology has assisted our Division to better meet the need in the community. The new online application for Child Care Subsidy has assisted in increasing access to services and resulted in more families getting connected to child care subsidies."

"The use of technology has assisted our Division to better meet the need in the community."

— Scott Morishige
BESSD Administrator, Department of Human Services

TANF & TAONF

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program Office, awarded 26 new contracts to 20 community-based organizations throughout the state, allowing them to expand their programs and services to assist more families with dependent children. Using federal TANF funding, awards ranged between \$125,000 to \$450,000 per contract period and can be extended up to December 2026. The programs and services include non-recurring, short-term benefits such as food distribution, diaper supplies and replacement of appliances; job preparation and job training; youth-related services such as mentorship, afterschool, and pregnancy prevention programs; and family-centered services such as home visiting, advocacy, parenting skills, and counseling.

The TANF Program Office also continues its collaboration with other Departments to pilot services that are targeted for families. In partnership with the Department of Health (DOH), public health nursing services were integrated into the First-To-Work (FTW) program. Two O’ahu FTW units are participating in the pilot. During FY23, a total of 27 FTW participants were referred to the program, with 16 participants and their families receiving nursing services. The DOH nurses conducted various health assessments and screening for eligible participants and immediate family members, and provided patient advocacy services. They also helped to develop health care plans, supplied medical referrals, and aided with other health-related services based on the FTW participant’s and family’s needs. Catherine Scardino, program administrator for TANF, stated, “We are very grateful for the partnership with the DOH Public Health Nursing Division to provide nursing services to TANF recipient families through the FTW Program. This program has been valuable for FTW participants who have health-related concerns to become employable and succeed in engaging in work activities that lead to employment.”

TANF also continues to work with the Department of the Attorney General and Child Support Enforcement Agency to provide employment services to non-custodial parents, who are in arrears with their child support obligations and are seeking employment or advancement opportunities.

UPLINK PROGRAM

The TANF Program Office continued to utilize federal TANF funds for the “Uniting Peer Learning, Integrating New Knowledge” (UPLINK) program, administered by the Department of Education (DOE), Community Engagement Branch, through a contract agreement between both departments. UPLINK is an afterschool program for students attending DOE middle and intermediate schools, providing homework assistance and extra-curricular activities that promote positive character traits (5Cs—character, confidence, competence, connection, and contribution) and pregnancy prevention. In FY23, the UPLINK program expanded to 32 middle and intermediate schools statewide where the program was provided for students on their campuses.

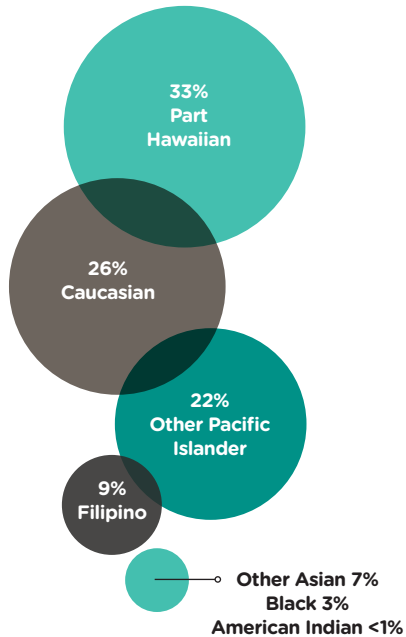
The TANF Program Office increased the budget for the UPLINK program by about 35%. Participating middle and intermediate schools receive federal TANF funds ranging between \$50,000 to \$316,000 to support their UPLINK program on their campus. The award amounts are based on the ratio of student participation with UPLINK and their overall student enrollment, and their UPLINK program needs.

BY THE NUMBERS:

9,594

Average Monthly Clients

ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION



General Assistance/ Aid to Aged, Blind, and Disabled

The General Assistance (GA) program is a block grant program, providing cash benefits for food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials to adults ages 18 through 64, without minor dependents, who are temporarily disabled and do not qualify for Social Security. The Financial Assistance Program (FAP) staff worked closely with the Statewide Branch (SB) staff and Cyrca, the contracted Medical/Psychological Assessment provider, to monitor the eligibility of GA to ensure benefits were provided timely and accurately and allowed the maximum monthly payments to be made. The following procedures were monitored and streamlined as needed so that the monthly benefits do not exceed the appropriated funding amount:

- (1) Ensuring that Cyrca provided timely results of initial evaluations so GA applications could be processed within the 45 days.
- (2) Coordination of timely scheduling of re-evaluation appointments by reviewing and correcting HAWI reports, ensuring appointment letters were provided to correct addresses and re-evaluation would be processed timely.
- (3) Monitored the action to sanction clients who failed to meet the GA requirements and ensured that they received treatment for the incapacities that prevented them from full-time employment.
- (4) Ensured that the IAR DHS 1289 State Loan agreements were properly executed to ensure that DHS would be reimbursed when a GA recipient qualified for SSI.

The coordinated management of the GA caseload resulted in the increase of the GA payment amount in November 2022, from \$388 for a single and \$535 for a couple to \$417 and \$562. In June 2023, the GA payments were increased to \$469 and \$632 respectively.



SNAP Program Outreach

DHS launched awareness for SNAP benefits with their “Food. Love. Ohana.” messaging. The outreach utilized television, radio, printed flyers, and social media channels. Twenty thousand multi-language flyers were distributed across six partners including the Hawai’i Foodbank, Lanakila Meals on Wheels, Hawai’i Meals on Wheels, Hawai’i County Food Basket, Maui Food Bank and Kaua’i Food Bank.



BESSD staff meet with members of the House Finance Committee during a site visit to a Processing Center in urban Honolulu.



LIHEAP

2023 was a record-setting year for LIHEAP funding in Hawai'i.

The **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** is designed to help families keep their electricity on, especially those households that are most vulnerable, such as the elderly, the disabled, and households with young children. LIHEAP received unprecedented funding in fiscal year 2022 due to additional pandemic related funds. Hawai'i received more than double its regular funding, allowing applicants to receive higher than normal benefits for Energy Credit and Energy Credit Intervention. Fiscal year 2023 was a record-setting year for LIHEAP funding in Hawai'i. "The unprecedented level of pandemic funding to support the LIHEAP program has been a tremendous help to the community and supported 8,293 households with energy credits or assistance in paying off arrearages in full," says BESSD Administrator Scott Morishige. In December 2022, 6,629 households received their Energy Credit benefit, which averaged \$956.95. Households still in crisis at the end of the program year also received a supplemental payment to eliminate their outstanding utility balance. In total, BESSD received \$11,434,856.00 in 2023, compared to \$5,012,869.00 in 2019.

"I want to thank you so much for helping me with my LIHEAP benefits. I just called the Hawaiian Electric Company and it's already kicked in. Thank you so much and I appreciate all your time and trouble and all your help..."

— S.S., Kaneohe, HI.

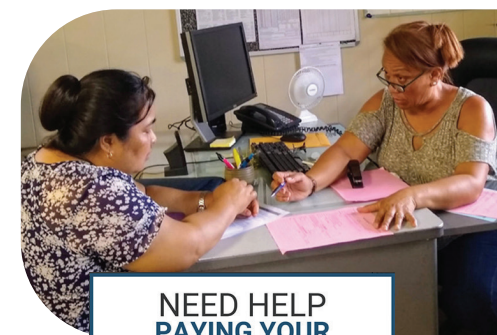
Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)

➔ **The Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)** is a temporary, federally funded program created during the pandemic to help households in crisis with their residential water and wastewater service. The initial program consisted of Water Crisis Intervention (WCI) with a maximum benefit of \$1,000. As a result of the gradual utilization of funds, a supplemental payment was made to all approved WCI households in FFY 2022 and 2023, eliminating the arrearage balance the household had when they applied. This

is the first federal water assistance program which required local water and wastewater utility companies to enter into vendor agreements to receive payments for their customers approved for LIHWAP.

Program participation was limited to restoring services in households whose water or wastewater services had already been disconnected; and households with past due balances on their water and wastewater bills to avoid disconnection of services. Applications for LIHWAP were accepted starting June 2022. The

interest in the program was high, with the department receiving over 1,800 applications since June 2022. However, only 660 households could be served, with the priority given to those in crisis. LIHWAP entered into multiple vendor agreements with 3 of the 4 county water/wastewater companies and with smaller, local companies. The LIHWAP program is being extended to March 31, 2024, from its original end date of September 30, 2023. Funds will also be used for disaster relief on Maui for those whose drinking water has been compromised as a



NEED HELP PAYING YOUR WATER BILL?

The Hawaii Household Water Assistance Program (formerly known as LIHWAP) may be able to help!

- Reconnect disconnected water services.
- Pay past-due water bills to avoid disconnection.
- Assist with current bills, even if there is no past-due balance.

For more information and to see if you are eligible, contact the Honolulu Community Action Program office near you or visit www.waterhelp.info

Division of Water Supply

result of the Maui wildfires. Eligibility for the program may be expanded to include water/wastewater credit to utilize remaining funding.

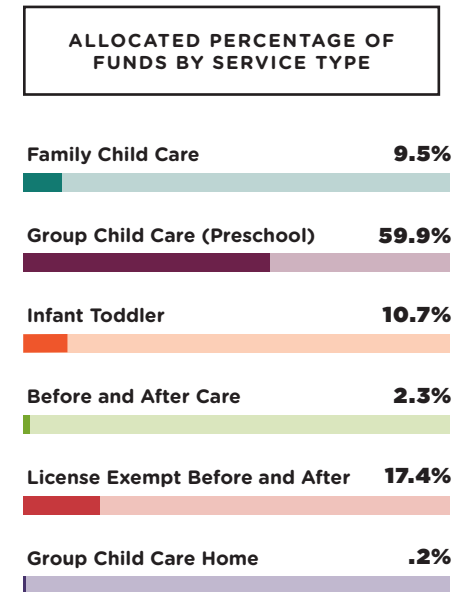
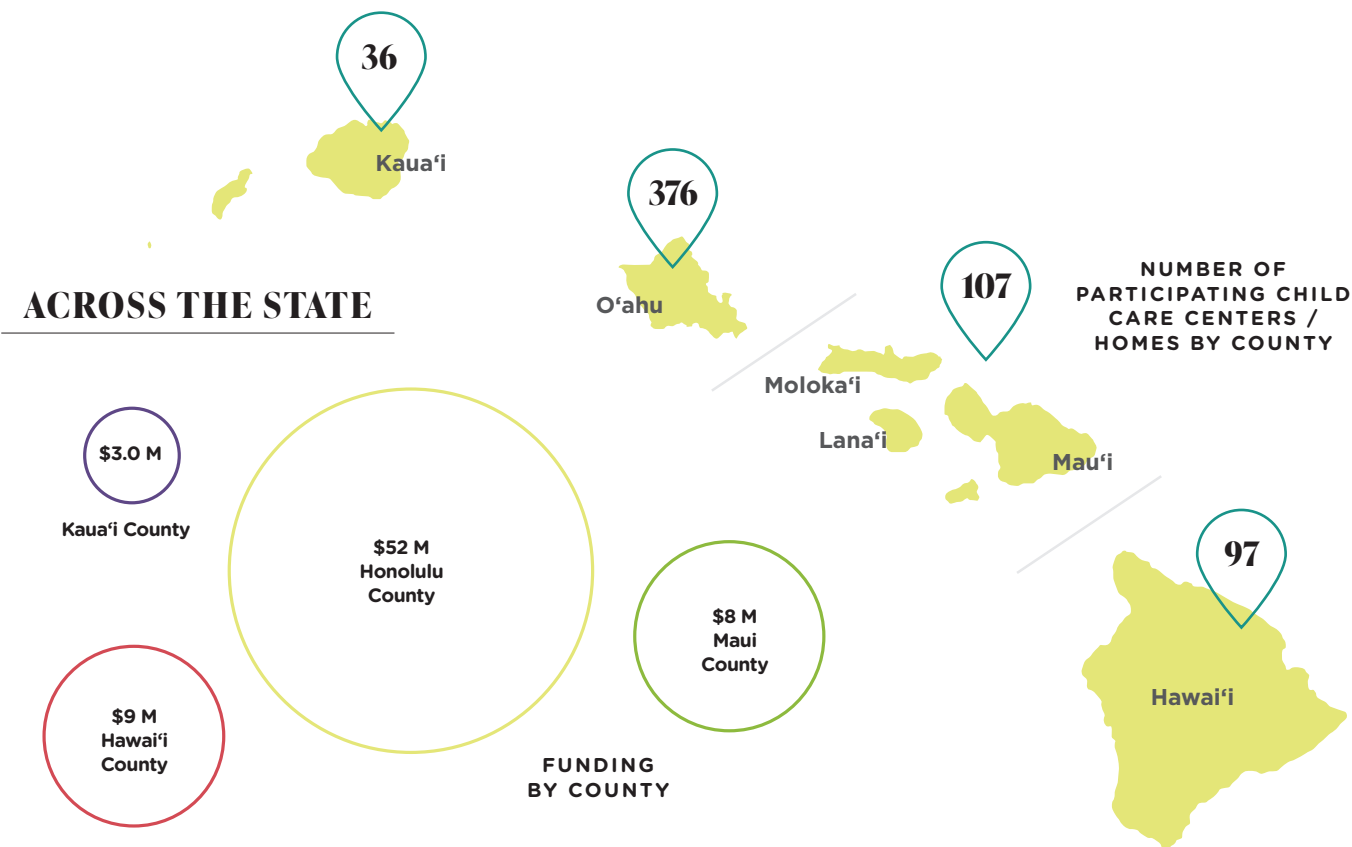
Wrapping Up the ARPA Child Care Stabilization Grant

The grant that provided an unprecedented lifeline for Hawai'i's child care sector is finishing with \$72 million distributed to providers.

Hawai'i's ARPA Stabilization Grant program provided \$72 million directly to licensed and registered family child care home and center-based providers and exempt centers to cover their operating costs, preventing permanent closures, and enabling programs to reopen safely while spurring economic recovery. This historic investment was critical to helping child care centers and family child care providers remain open, keeping child care workers on payroll and ensuring families have reliable options for high-quality care while they work. This program has been an unprecedented lifeline for the child care sector, due to the sustained financial hardship and other difficulties from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many providers experienced low enrollment, increased expenses, and lack of workforce since many had left the field or were leaving the field for higher paying jobs. The Grant saved providers from passing the burden on to parents through increased tuition costs or closing their doors. Providers were able to continue to offer families spaces where their children could be cared for in healthy and safe environments. "The word 'grateful' was echoed over and over by providers who received the grant awards. 'Grateful' was also a feeling that we, who distributed almost \$72,000,000 directly to providers, shared and felt honored to be a part of this awesome opportunity for our child care providers," says Child Care Programs Office (CCPO) Administrator Dayna Luka.

"The word 'grateful' was echoed over and over by providers who received grant awards."

— Dayna Luka
Program Administrator, DHS Child Care Program Office (CCPO)



Preschool Open Doors

Preschool Open Doors (POD) provides monthly preschool tuition subsidies to qualified families, up to TWO years prior to Kindergarten. The goal of POD is to promote school readiness for children and to focus on meeting the needs of the child on meeting the needs of the child. Parents are not required to have an eligible activity, unlike the Child Care Connection Hawaii (CCCH) subsidy program, but they must meet income and other eligibility requirements. There is a time-limited application period which is generally in the spring.

"Preschool Open Doors program has REALLY helped my child. He's become familiarized with social skills, routines, and learning that not everyone has the same interests or ways they do things. He's even more brilliant and expressive in what he does! He shares what he's learned or done in school every day that he comes home. My son is not perfect, but the program is really helping him make alternate decisions and better choices—in school and at home. He's thrown fits... just

to STAY in school! To me that shows a lot. He loves being in school. All of that is possible because of you. Thank you for your help, you have no idea how much it means. I will be sure to reach out to all of my parent-friends and will be recommending you. I would like to also mention that the resources and help throughout the program are also a huge benefit! I've worked with some of the nicest people in the network of POD. Honestly, I truly appreciate it. GOD BLESS YOU."

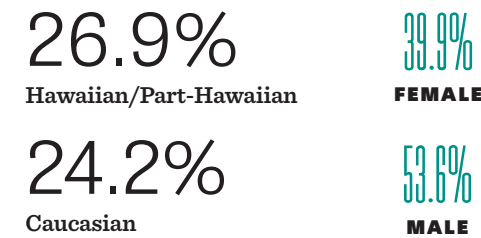
— Tia G., O'ahu parent

HOMELESS PROGRAMS

➔ The mission of the Homeless Programs Office (HPO) is to provide quality, efficient, and effective services designed to help homeless individuals and families access permanent housing. They administer multiple programs, including Outreach/Legal Services, Emergency and Transitional Shelters, Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Re-housing, Homelessness Prevention, and Federal programs. HPO continued to work with providers on implementing Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) for contracted homeless services statewide. In addition, HPO worked to facilitate agreements with the two Continua of Care (CoC) to collect homeless services data from each CoC and enter it into a new Homeless Data Integration System.

FY 2023 - STATEWIDE

PROGRAM TYPE	INDIVIDUALS	HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN
Rapid Rehousing	2,022	1,281
Outreach	8,892	1,826
Emergency Shelter	5,249	1,952
Transitional Shelter	4,187	2,850



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Maile Burke, Eligibility Worker

B ESSD provides eligible clients with monthly benefits that supplement essentials such as food, clothing, and shelter. BESSD Eligibility Workers conduct interviews and determine the initial and continuing eligibility of recipients for financial assistance and SNAP benefits.

One eligibility worker in particular, Maile Burke, has been supporting the outreach efforts for the Division out of the Pohulani Processing Center. But she's not your typical eligibility worker. Maile has had a whole other professional life before this one. With a psychology degree, she started out in mental health, also receiving her master's in government budgeting and finance. When she became a mom, she pivoted careers and started her own

grant and technical writing business that ultimately allowed her to make her own hours so she could be home to care for her children. She also worked in policy for many years, working with low-income seniors as a social services administrator.

Maile brings a wealth of experience, and with that, comes a lot of perspective. She always aims to do her best and asks what we can do for this population. Since June 2023, Maile has conducted outreach at least once a week at the Pūlama Ola Kauhale near the Department of Health, as well as supported pop-up outreach events at Kaka'ako Gateway Park and Mother Waldron Park.

Between June and December 2023, Maile was successful in providing on-site support for 62 unduplicated houseless individuals receiving

medical respite at the kauhale, including conducting interviews and follow-up for General Assistance, TANF/TAONF, and SNAP benefits. It was a position Maile volunteered for, assisting with support at the kauhale pilot project. Every week for four hours, Maile would set up to help both residents and non-residents at the medical respite apply and receive financial and food assistance.

At the Pūlama Ola Kauhale pilot project, Maile notes the kauhale was a success, and the case management process was more efficient. She says, "It's really about triage. Dr. Green's whole thing about trauma-informed care. You have to coordinate services and you've got to triage people out." Maile provided kokua, guiding and coaching them on the appropriate steps necessary to

be compliant, such as showing up for appointments and providing resources for other eligible programs. She even reminded the recipients about their appointments needed for eligibility. The most vulnerable are the homeless and mentally compromised individuals. For example, helping an individual with a mailbox where he's able to receive his Social Security benefits after being homeless and not having an address.

Maile adds, "The kauhale was a great project to try and let us participate. We should do more of it. I'm thankful for the opportunity. And I'm inspired to do some policy change. So if I leave DHS, it won't be because I don't want to work with clients. It's because I'm hoping I can do policy and make a bigger difference."

"Being part of a team that brought assistance to the most vulnerable and allowed relationships that formed community for them was deeply gratifying."

— Maile Burke
BESSD Eligibility Worker



MQD



MQD

ed-QUEST (MQD) served over 400,000 people including over half of the state's children in Hawai'i. The program continues to focus on ensuring essential services to those in our community who depend on them for their health insurance coverage while supporting the invaluable health plans and providers who are at the front lines of service to Hawai'i's people. Children, pregnant women, parent and caretaker relatives, adults, including the elderly (age 65 and older), blind, and disabled individuals are covered by Medicaid. The division worked strategically within communities to ensure those who were uninsured received assistance in applying for Medicaid benefits. Eligibility determinations and enrollments were supported by seasoned staff and systems to maintain enrollments. MQD also worked with the health plans to realize MQD Hawaii 'Ohana Nui Project Expansion (HOPE) vision to achieve the Triple Aim of better health, better care, and sustainable costs for their community. MQD also executed the Kokua Services contracts (e.g., onboarded new community organizations and their sub-contractors, trained new Kokua, and conducted refresher trainings for those who requested and needed additional support). The priority was to grow and maintain community partners statewide and increase grassroots outreach efforts to the underserved, uninsured, justice involved, public institutionalized, vulnerable populations.

OUR MISSION

The people of Hawai'i embrace health and wellness.

OUR VISION

To encourage self-sufficiency and support the well-being of individuals, families, and communities in Hawai'i

CORE VALUES

Hi'iola – Embracing wellness

H

HEALTHY OUTCOMES

We develop strategies and improvements necessary to promote overall well-being.

I

INTEGRITY

We are accountable to the work we do, the resources we manage, and the people we serve.

'

'OHANA NUI

We focus on the whole family's needs, with priority on children ages 0 – 5 years old.

I

INNOVATION

We cultivate an atmosphere of continuous learning and improvement.

O

OPTIMISM

We each make a difference for the people of Hawai'i.

L

LEADERSHIP

We are all leaders in the work we do.

A

ALOHA

We extend warmth and caring to all.

Postpartum Medicaid Coverage Extension

In 2022, Hawai'i enhanced postpartum Medicaid coverage, extending it to 12 months from the previous 60 days for mothers.



Medicaid coverage for pregnant women typically lasts only through 60 days postpartum. However, a provision in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) provided states with a new option to extend the postpartum coverage period to 12 months. This new provision allowed states to file a SPA to their Medicaid program and request a coverage extension, effective April 1, 2022, and available for five years before the option sunsets.

Hawai'i was one of several states early on that enacted the change of postpartum Medicaid coverage due to this provision in the American Rescue Plan Act. The extension comes from a \$2.4 million appropriation to DHS in the FY2023 Executive Supplemental budget, passed earlier in 2022. The appropriation was matched by \$34 million in federal funds.

Rep. Sylvia Luke (D-Makiki), Chair of the House Finance Committee and a strong advocate for the expansion, stated that expanding safety net services was a top priority for lawmakers last session. "Cutting off health benefits and postpartum care after 2 months significantly impacts not only the mothers but also the child," she said. "Mothers have to stay healthy, and expanding the coverage from 2 months to 12 months will significantly decrease mortality rates, address health needs, and provide support for new mothers who gave birth."

Approximately 2,000 mothers were eligible for the 12 months of postpartum coverage. The postpartum period is critical for recovering from childbirth, addressing complications of deliv-

SOURCE: STATE OF REFORM, JULY 20, 2022

460,742
NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS SERVED STATEWIDE (FY22)



ery, ensuring mental health, managing infant care, and transitioning from obstetric to primary care. The extension comes at a time when Med-QUEST enrollment rose significantly due to job loss during the pandemic, resulting in the loss of their employer-sponsored health coverage.

WHO WE SERVE

Med-QUEST provides health insurance to roughly one quarter of all of Hawai'i's people and over 40% of Hawai'i's keiki through six health plans listed here:

PLAN	O'AHU	KAUA'I	HAWAI'I	MAUI	MOLOKA'I	LĀNA'I	TOTAL
AlohaCare	47,635	6,909	16,115	10,116	2,465	535	83,775
HMSA	139,353	15,068	58,381	17,340	1,070	249	231,461
Kaiser	36,130	N/R	N/R	18,323	N/R	N/R	54,453
Ohana	23,590	2,426	8,861	3,982	382	112	39,353
United	38,458	3,253	12,617	5,022	301	117	59,768
FFS	67	13	19	N/R	N/R	N/R	105
TOTAL	285,233	27,669	95,993	54,789	4,218	1,013	468,915

Hawai'i Medicaid Managed Care Enrollment - by Plan and Island for the month of 11/2023
Note: The above is a snapshot and subject to change based on retroactive enrollment information



SUCCESS STORY

Eric Espinueva

This Maui man's journey inspires the hope of optimism, community, and the help of financial assistance in overcoming medical challenges.

In May 2021, Eric Espinueva from Maui, found himself in the emergency room after enduring severe back pain for several weeks. Little did he know, his injury would reveal a life-changing diagnosis. An MRI unveiled that he had multiple myeloma, a form of cancer affecting plasma cells. Within 24 hours of his diagnosis, Eric was whisked away to O'ahu via air ambulance for chemotherapy treatments for the next 27 months.

With no medical facilities in Hawai'i equipped to perform Bone Marrow Transplants, Eric's Kaiser Oncologist, Dr. Tami Kerns, referred him to Stanford University Medical Center for a Stem Cell transplant. Eric recalls, "My doctor said I had three things going for me. I was still young,

I was healthy, and I had one good attitude. And they said that's the three most important things to get a better outcome." Eric added, "They also said with the bone marrow transplant and diet and exercise, I can add six, eight, ten years to my life. So I said, 'Well, I'm all for it.'" Buoyed by this assurance, Eric remembered how he had beat diabetes in the past, which instilled in him the confidence that he could overcome this too.

The only worry now was how much was this all going to cost and what was his out-of-pocket expense.

Thankfully, Eric had a robust support network—his dedicated doctors, caring family, awesome neighbors, and his attentive case manager, Reck Navarro from Koan Risk Solutions Inc., who was there to guide him along

the way. Eric first met Reck when he was referred to the State of Hawai'i Organ Tissue Transplant (SHOTT) program with Koan, which specializes in case management services and assists in authorizing and financing healthcare services for Hawai'i Medicaid transplant candidates. When Eric was approved, Reck was there to guide him. Eric said, "Reck is one good guy. He answered all my questions. He was straight up with me. He knew what I had to expect and all that. Thanks to the SHOTT program and Medicaid, I didn't have to worry about any financial burdens."

Reck assisted Eric and his caretaker with their travel and lodging needs near Stanford Medical Center. Reck added, "We want to make sure they are taken care of, so he's able to concentrate on his recovery and



Eric Espinueva with Dr. Tami Kerns (left) and Dr. April Joy (above).

"Thanks to the SHOTT program and Medicaid, I didn't have to worry about any financial burdens."

— Eric Espinueva, Keokea, Maui

his procedure." Following Eric's transplant, he was required to remain near Stanford for at least 90 days for clinic follow-ups and weekly laboratory draws. Amazingly, Eric received his medical clearance after 60 days. Koan, through Medicaid, was able to pay for everything, and Eric was extremely grateful.

Since his return home, Eric's recovery continues to progress positively. He remains active by walking and exercising daily. His blood count remains within normal range, and he regularly visits his physician for post-transplant care. Eric's granddaughter even playfully suggested that he could become a TikTok sensation, showcasing his recovery journey as a remarkable 64-year-old.

A grateful Kalina shares a special moment with her partner of 3 years.



SUCCESS STORY

Kalina McKellar

Through the unwavering support of her Medicaid provider and loved ones, Kalina’s transformative journey is a beacon of hope to others.

“

It wasn’t for the DHS department and my other half, I wouldn’t be here as of this day. If I didn’t have the support system and the people around me supporting me, I wouldn’t be this far,” reflects Kalina McKellar.

Diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder and borderline personality disorder, Kalina’s journey has been marked by the compassionate care and dedication of her support team. ‘Ohana Health Plan began working with Kalina four years ago, when she was grappling with frequent emergency room visits and hospitalizations due to suicidal ideation and attempts, making her one of the highest utilizers of emergency services in the state at one point.

Recognizing the urgency of her situation, ‘Ohana Health Plan developed a specialized crisis communication plan, ensuring that Kalina received immediate support whenever she reached out. Through a combination of day treatment programs, therapy, and consistent support from her Level 5 case manager, Rodney Aquino, Kalina gradually began to embrace coping skills and stabilize her condition. Collaborating

closely with Dr. Alan A. Buffenstein, MD, ‘Ohana Health Plan’s Level 5 psychiatrist, her appointments were gradually spaced out, leading to a significant reduction in hospital visits.

It’s been two years since her last hospitalization, and Kalina has experienced a remarkable transformation in her life. Embracing a healthy relationship with her boyfriend of three years, and surrounding herself with a supportive community, Kalina is thriving. She holds a part-time job, maintains consistent medication adherence, and continues her journey of self-improvement through therapy. With newfound independence and happiness, Kalina has transitioned to a more autonomous lifestyle. Additionally, she has become an integral part of ‘Ohana Health Plan’s holiday celebrations, extending her support to fellow members experiencing anxiety. Looking ahead, Kalina is exploring opportunities to become a peer counselor, further cementing her role as a beacon of hope and resilience in her community.

“If it wasn’t for the DHS department and my other half, I wouldn’t be here as of this day. If I didn’t have the support system... I wouldn’t be this far.”

— Kalina McKellar
Medicaid recipient, Honolulu

Stay Well, Stay Covered

➔ Throughout the pandemic, all Medicaid members received continuous uninterrupted coverage amid the public health emergency. In March, the Med-QUEST Division (MQD) proactively initiated outreach to inform members about their upcoming eligibility redetermination, with the renewal process spanning across 12 months starting in April. Utilizing the STAY WELL STAY COVERED communications campaign toolkit available on the Med-QUEST website, MQD employed various channels, including newspapers and banners, to disseminate messages and ensure a smooth member renewal experience. The campaign aimed to reassure individuals that their Medicaid coverage would remain active until their case was up for renewal.



DVR



Ho'opono Services for the Blind program participant, Ezra, learns how to use the Chameleon Braille notetaker in Technology Class which is part of the New Visions Adjustment to Blindness Training Program.

3,525
INDIVIDUALS WITH
DISABILITIES
SERVED
(FY21)

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) provides services to Hawai'i community members who experience barriers to employment due to a physical or cognitive disability. Vocational rehabilitation services are designed to assist job seekers with disabilities prepare, secure, and retain competitive employment in an integrated work setting.

MAIN PROGRAMS



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Provides a high level of professional vocational counseling and guidance to assist individuals with disabilities in securing and maintaining integrated employment. Additionally, VR connects with employers, providing them with job-ready, qualified applicants while offering training and information on disability issues and accommodations in the workplace.

Transition Services

Provides services to students and youth with disabilities who are transitioning from high school to employment. Ongoing collaboration with the Department of Education is essential to the success of various transition programs and helping participants in developing self-advocacy skills.

Ho'opono Services for the Blind

Provides support and resources through various services which increases participants' functional independence, productivity, and integration. Ho'opono teaches important skills such as cane travel, braille literacy, home management, and utilizing adaptive equipment. Services offered under Ho'opono include:

- Older Individuals who are Blind
- Low Vision Clinic
- Summer Employment Program
- New Visions Program
- Hawai'i Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

Disabilities Determination Services

Makes medical determinations on disability claims and communicates with applicants on whether they meet requirements for Social Security benefits.

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Services

Provides advanced communication technology and career counseling for participants who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. DVR has a designated section to meet the needs of persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Counselors in this section are fluent in American Sign Language which is a critical component in providing culturally sensitive communication and collaborating services.

➔ **DVR solicited the** Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center – Quality Management (VR TAC-QM) to assist with streamlining processes, revising Policies & Procedures, creating mechanisms for internal controls, analyzing data, and conceiving new, innovative strategies for rapid engagement and improving quality and timeliness provision of VR services with successful results. DVR's Eligibility Determination compliance rates were 90% or above. They developed instrumentation for conducting both State and field-level service record reviews that included updates to the overall system of internal controls and case review of policies and procedures. DVR also updated written policies governing the provision of services for individuals with disabilities, ensuring that they are relevant, current, and accurate for compliance with federal regulations.

In SFY 23, Ho'opono had 47 blind or visually impaired participants employed in a wide variety of roles. Furthermore, three new blind vendors were placed in their own businesses.

Through the efforts of DVR staff at Ho'opono and all other branches, Hawai'i has three braille teachers not counting DVR and DOE, and seven Orientation & Mobility (O&M) instructors including one on Maui, one on Big Island, and one trained specifically to work with the Deaf Blind through the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). Two DVR participants have credentials and certifications to allow them to teach braille as part of their career goals.

SUCCESS STORY

Overcoming Adversity

A resilient single mother from Kona overcame employment challenges with the support of counseling, training, and benefits planning with DVR.

In 2012, Lisa, a single mother in her 50s with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sought help from DVR services at the Kona Branch to maintain employment. Due to her challenging circumstances, Lisa relied on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for her livelihood. DVR counselors, recognizing Lisa's determination, became her pillars of support. Through counseling and guidance, post-secondary training, transportation services, and an array of other support services, they became instrumental in shaping her path. Lisa, inspired to aid others, initially pursued a career as a yoga instructor. However, employment struggles post-training led her to shift her focus to obtaining a Certified Substance Abuse Counselor Certificate (CSAC) at Hawaii Community College.

Facing housing challenges affecting her mental health, Lisa briefly paused her education but her determination did not waver. Seeking self-sufficiency and mobility, she explored the submission of a Plan to Achieve

Self-Support (PASS) with social security. DVR played a pivotal role, providing benefits planning and working closely with Lisa to navigate the course.

Despite life's obstacles, Lisa triumphed. She re-enrolled with a different college, resolute in completing her CSAC and earning her Bachelor's Degree. The arduous journey was marked by DVR's unwavering support, providing vocational counseling, benefits counseling, transportation, and supported vocational training. Lisa not only achieved her educational goals but also recorded Measurable Skills Gain (MSG).

The culmination of Lisa's resilience and DVR's support manifested in her securing a position with BAYADA as a Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselor, earning \$17.50/hr. Her story is a testament to overcoming adversity, and the transformative power of determination, support, and the pursuit of one's aspirations.

State Rehabilitation Council

➔ The SRC connects with its purpose by taking on these relatable tasks: examining and offering insights on how the VR agency's actions impact consumers' employment prospects, collaborating on State goals and priorities for the VR program, aiding in the preparation of the VR State Plan and amendments, evaluating the effectiveness of the VR Program and consumer satisfaction, presenting an annual report to the Governor and Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and aligning its efforts with other disability-related councils in the State.

30 YEARS OF SERVICE

These two employees exemplify three decades of dedication to DHS, showcasing enduring commitment and loyalty in serving Hawai'i's community.

"I enjoy helping people who truly need our help. And it helps that I enjoy working with my coworkers."

— Jodi Okinishi
Disability Claims Specialist

"I never dreamed when I started as a counselor so long ago, that I would fall in love with the work I do. It's more than a job—it's a calling and an honor. What keeps me at DVR is knowing that the work of our dedicated staff truly changes the lives of people with disabilities in very meaningful ways."

— Lea Dias
Ho'opono Services for the Blind Branch Administrator



"I'm grateful for DHS' help with the hearing aids. It's not for me, it's for the children."

— Colleen Cidade
DVR participant and teacher's assistant at the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and Blind

SUCCESS STORY

Colleen Cidade

With support from DVR and her acquisition of hearing aids, this teacher overcame her communication barriers and inspires her students to embrace their full potential.

With over 29 years of experience as a teacher's assistant at the Hawai'i

School for the Deaf and Blind, Colleen Cidade shares her journey of improved communication with students, particularly those unfamiliar with American Sign Language (ASL), thanks to the support from DVR.

Growing up as the only girl among five siblings, Colleen was born deaf but remained unaware of her condition until the age of sixteen, as her family feared it might limit her potential. Despite initial challenges and moments of miscommunication upon learning about her deafness, Colleen has embraced her abilities and serves

as an inspiration to children with disabilities, emphasizing their limitless potential.

Recently, Colleen encountered a new student in her class who was an oral Hard of Hearing (HH) learner, relying solely on oral communication without knowledge of sign language. Despite possessing good speech, Colleen struggled to understand the student. Determined to bridge the communication gap, she applied for VR services to acquire hearing aids. With the aid of a counselor, a plan was devised to equip her with the necessary tools to overcome the barriers she faced at work. Upon receiving the hearing aids, Colleen vividly recalls the joyous moment when she

shared them with her student, who ecstatically exclaimed, "Same!!!" This newfound ability enabled Colleen to effectively communicate with her student, greatly enhancing their interaction.

Today, Colleen confidently fulfills her duties, providing exceptional support to her students, with the hearing aids proving invaluable in her efforts. She adds, "I'm grateful for DHS' help with the hearing aids. It's not for me, it's for the children." With a vision to empower the Deaf community, Colleen aspires to write books on communication strategies, aiming to alleviate fears and promote confidence among those with hearing impairments.

SSD



MAIN PROGRAMS

Child Welfare Services

CWS programs include family strengthening and support, child protection, foster care, adoption, independent living and licensing of resource family homes, group homes, and child-placing organizations. Services are available on O’ahu, Hawai’i, Kaua’i, Maui, Moloka’i, and Lāna’i.

Adult Protective Services (APS)

APS is a mandated service that provides crisis intervention, without regard to income, including investigation and emergency services for vulnerable adults who are reported to be abused, neglected, financially exploited by others or seriously endangered due to self-neglect. A vulnerable adult is a person eighteen years of age or older, who because of mental, developmental, or physical impairment, is unable to: communicate or make responsible decisions to manage their own care or resources; carry out or arrange for essential activities of daily living; or protect oneself from abuse.



43.7%
OF ADULTS ABUSED
ARE 80 YEARS
AND OVER
(FY23)

Fiscally Aligned

Carolina Anagaran, the Administrator for the Division’s Support Services Office, provides financial expertise, ultimately spearheading efforts to get the budget to align with the Division’s goal of providing the best services for their clients and the community they serve. With her guidance, the Division’s budget has significantly improved, resulting in a better plan for future projects that will benefit the workforce and the families served by the Division. Anagaran expressed how blessed she is to have great staff under her. She adds, “We’re lucky the legislature supported us. If we don’t have the correct budget, then the providers can’t do their jobs. We are stewards of taxpayer’s money, putting it towards making a difference in the lives we serve so that we can get the best services for our clients. That’s our main goal.”

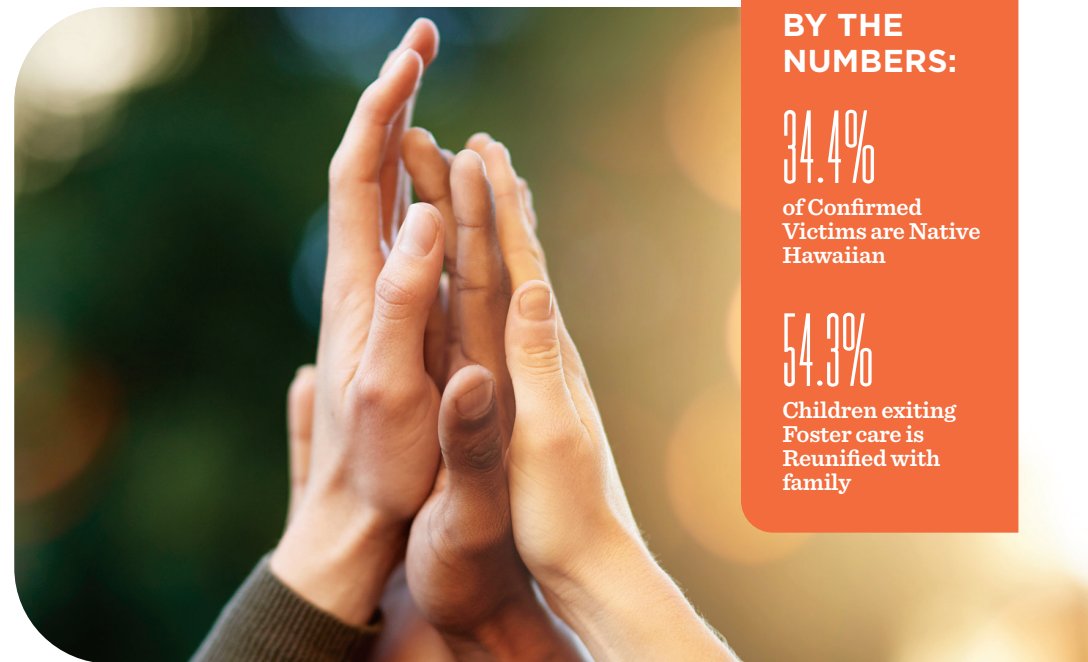
Addressing Cultural Values

Native Hawaiian children face disproportionate representation in Hawai'i's Child Welfare System, enduring extended stays in foster care compared to other racial groups. To address this issue, here are three programs working together—dedicated to minimizing the entry of keiki into foster care and nurturing a swifter transition to permanency with their 'ohana or other permanent caregivers.

Ka Pili 'Ohana

➔ In January 2019, a collective effort involving Child Welfare Services (CWS), Liliuokalani Trust (LT), Family Programs Hawaii, Child and Family Services, and other providers led to the creation of the Ka Pili 'Ohana (KPO) pilot program. This community-based initiative, deeply rooted in cultural values, aimed to elevate outcomes for Native Hawaiian children in foster care by fostering harmonious relationships between biological and foster parents, facilitating increased visitations with biological family members, siblings, and extended family, thus ensuring comprehensive community support. By 2020, Ka Pili 'Ohana transitioned from a pilot to a full-fledged collaboration. Noe Reelin, leading the initiative, emphasizes, "Everyone thinks it's a program. But it's not. It's a collaboration, a total kakou thing. All of us working together to support our families."

EPIC 'Ohana provides parent partners to birth parents engaged in KPO, while LT supports their resource caregivers (RCGs) and the children, ensuring a cohesive support system throughout their child welfare journey. Cultural immersion facilitated by the Kipuka unit fosters a strong sense of identity and connects children with positive role models and practices. CWS social workers play a pivotal role in facilitating consistent and enhanced support for foster children, ensuring



BY THE NUMBERS:

34.4%
of Confirmed
Victims are Native
Hawaiian

54.3%
Children exiting
Foster care is
Reunified with
family

families have access to essential resources for healing and bonding.

The establishment of trust, transparency, and crucial conversations within Ka Pili 'Ohana and its partner organizations enables adaptive programming and approaches. Through the KPO HUI, partners convene quarterly to promote collaboration and open dialogue, not only supporting KPO families but all families involved in child welfare. These adjustments, informed by valuable lessons, are pivotal in advancing pathways for keiki to flourish, fostering positive healing experiences, and restoring 'ohana relationships.

Two Mākua

➔ Through the Ka Pili 'Ohana pilot, the biggest lesson learned was the Two Mākua—the importance of a relationship between the birth parent and the resource care giver (RCG). In response, the Two Mākua meetings were initiated in June 2021, a collaborative effort between CWS, EPIC, and LT aimed at fostering and strengthening these connections within a supportive environment. Serving as a vital bridge, these gatherings unite the Two Mākua into a cohesive team, fostering trust and solidarity for the well-being of the child. Functioning as an extension of the 'Ohana Conference program, Two Mākua serves as a platform for introductions, mutual understanding, and resource sharing among participants. Emma Kurishige from EPIC attests, "Through Two Mākua, and involving the RCG early on, it lessens the worry and trauma for the children. They feel safer in their placement knowing that their parents and the RCG are working

side by side. It brings family together, whomever the family members are within the 'ohana."

Meetings are promptly convened within three business days of the child's placement into care, coordinated by the CWS social worker, who also facilitates access to support services. EPIC 'Ohana staff assists in meeting facilitation and compiles comprehensive summaries for all attendees. Meanwhile, Liliuokalani Trust encourages cooperation and cultural engagement, offering pride-building activities and ongoing support services to assist children, parents, and RCGs in navigating the foster care system and accessing necessary resources. Through collective efforts, it has been evident that active and supportive relationships significantly enhance the child's progress along the reunification pathway. With nurturing support from CWS staff and other service agencies, these relationships are built upon foundations of clarity, trust, empathy, and understanding.

Nā Kama A Hāloa

➔ Nā Kama a Hāloa is a community-based network that first came together as a critical shift in September 2018, dedicated to addressing pressing questions and collaborating to enhance outcomes for Native Hawaiian children and families within the child welfare system. Rooted in the inquiry of "Where are we now, and where could we be?" and a commitment to introspection on how to better serve families, the network comprises representatives from Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, CWS, contracted service providers, birth parents, and youth with firsthand experiences in child welfare. Together, they have set a collective goal to reduce the disproportionate number of Native Hawaiians in the child welfare system by 2030. As Kailene Nihipali, the lead for Nā Kama a Hāloa, articulates, "It's about collective action and community engagement. It's not about individuals dictating directives, but rather a collaborative effort—

like one big 'ohana conference. It's about everyone coming together, partnering, and charting a path forward. If we're all in the same wa'a, how much more will our communities and families thrive." Noe Reelin further emphasizes, "It all weaves and connects and it's all because of relationships. As a former CWS employee, it is so uplifting to know that the community is there to support these families."

Participants in Nā Kama a Hāloa bring diverse perspectives, fostering positive change and identifying additional community resources. Operating statewide, their collective efforts aim to influence policy and practice across multiple agencies involved in child welfare services for Native Hawaiians.

SUCCESS STORY

A SINGLE DAD OF SIX

Following a period of adversity, single father "Joseph" and his six children receive timely support from CWS, exemplifying the transformative impact of community intervention during times of crisis.

In July 2023, a single father of six children, referred to as "Joseph," initially connected with CWS through a Department of Education truancy report. Locally born and raised, Joseph confronted significant hurdles after a car accident left him unable to perform his physically demanding job. Compounding his challenges, his wife passed away in 2019, leaving him and his children, ages 5 to 16, homeless, living out of their truck at Ke'ehi Lagoon. Aware of his need for support, Joseph sought assistance to navigate his way forward.

Following a brief period during which Joseph's children were temporarily separated from him, they were swiftly reunited with support from CWS's proactive services. Tiffany Campos, his social worker, identified the family as being in crisis mode, qualifying for specialized support under the Family First Hawaii program. Observing the deep bond within the family despite their hardships, it was clear that wraparound support was essential. Touched by Joseph's determination despite the challenges he faced, the CWS staff at West Oahu, Unit 2, organized an in-house fundraiser to help him and his family. Recognizing that Joseph was doing everything in his power to provide for his children, they sold baked goods to raise funds for essential items. Campos says, "Dad was expecting his kids, but he didn't expect all the extra things for his kids." Joseph broke down admitting that seeking help, even when it's hard to ask, was a crucial step in his journey toward stability.

"CWS continues to do God's work, and I am forever grateful for all that they do."

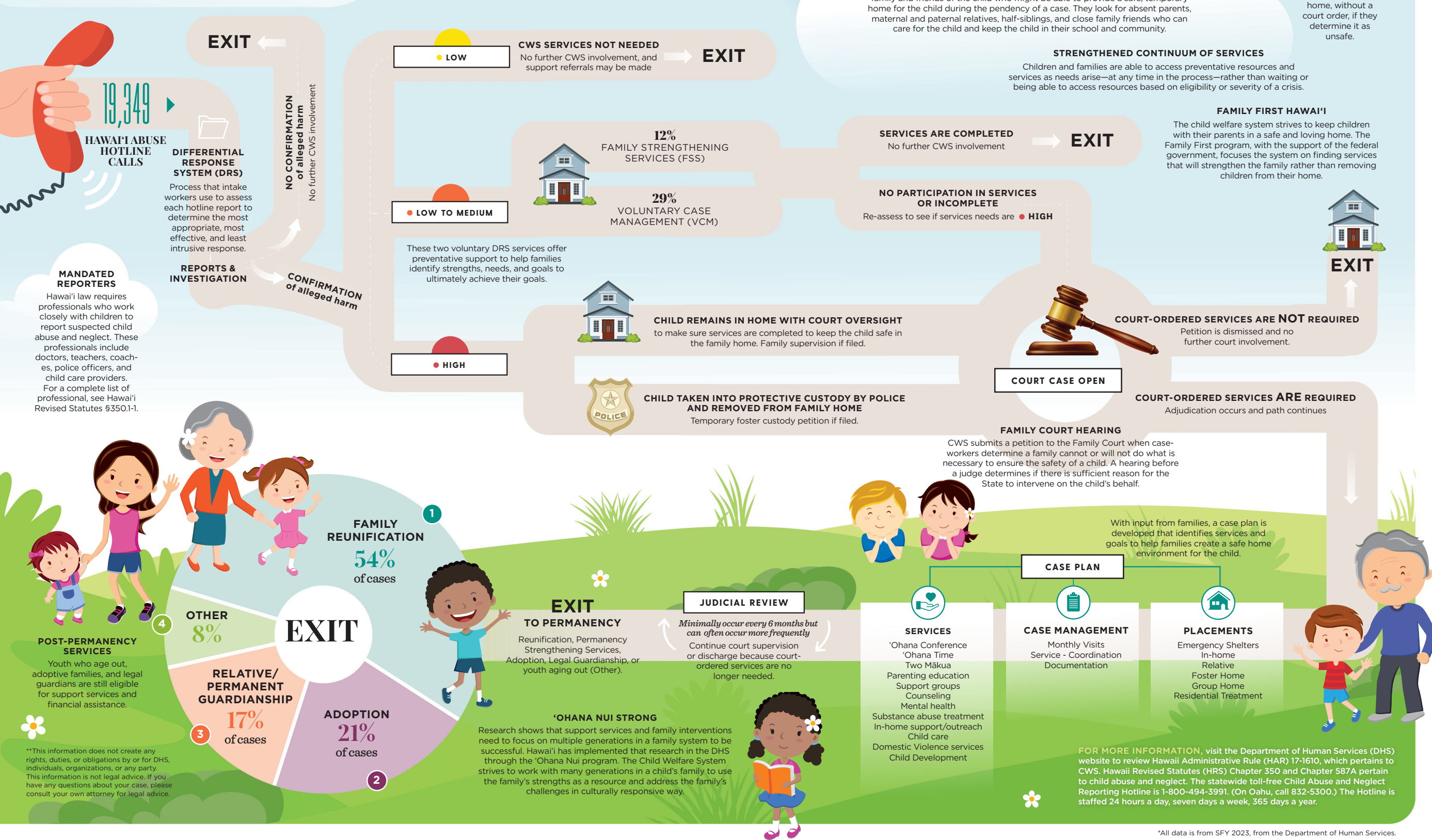
— "Joseph", West O'ahu

With CWS's assistance, the children received counseling and the family secured housing within a week, providing the stability they desperately needed. Despite encountering obstacles, such as his truck needing repairs, Joseph declined financial help from CWS, opting to use his tax returns to cover the costs, saying it was his kuleana, or responsibility, to take care of him and his kids. He expressed how grateful he was just knowing that support was there for them. Joseph said, "CWS continues to do God's work, and I am forever grateful for all that they do."



Hawai'i's Child Welfare System

A ROADMAP TO PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE**



ROADMAP

HAWAII'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

➔ The Hawai'i Child Welfare System is built on strong family and community resources and the effective involvement of stakeholders. Collaboration is key to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. The mission for Child Welfare Service (CWS) is steadfast: to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families impacted by or vulnerable to child abuse and neglect. This roadmap offers a glimpse into the child welfare system, accentuating our core values and delineating the collaborative approach we embrace with family and community partners.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit the Department of Human Services (DHS) website to review Hawaii Administrative Rule (HAR) 17-1610, which pertains to CWS. Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 350 and Chapter 587A pertain to child abuse and neglect. The statewide toll-free Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Hotline is 1-800-494-3991. (On Oahu, call 832-5300.) The Hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

*All data is from SFY 2023, from the Department of Human Services.



National Reunification Celebration

The Kaleleiki-Francisco family's journey of resilience and reunification, celebrated during National Reunification Month, underscores the life-changing power of support and personal growth within Hawai'i Child Welfare System.

Celebrated annually in June, National Reunification Month honors the significance of family reunification and its profound impact on the lives of children and families involved in the foster care system. In June 2023, Child Welfare Service (CWS), alongside partners from the child welfare community, paid tribute to the Kaleleiki-Francisco family, highlighting the remarkable resilience and progress achieved by parents Janaire and William Kaleleiki-Francisco. Despite the arduous and lengthy journey of reunification, this family's experience has forged stronger bonds within their support

couldn't do for myself. I can honestly say that CWS, Ka Pili Ohana, Lili'uokalani Trust, EPIC—all of these programs are some of the best I have ever experienced and they built me up to be the person that I really am."

Janaire and William encourage families that are navigating similar paths to maintain an open mind and embrace the help that's there. William says, "They're not there to take your kids away. They're offering you help to get them out." Janaire added, "I want the families to know that CWS is not against them. They are for them. Allow yourself to be honest and surrender, so they can offer you the programs that best suit you."

Social worker Aisha-Bianco Caouette expresses profound admiration for this family, stating, "Seeing their love for their children and their willingness to do anything they had to do to get them back really inspired

network. Their unwavering circle of care, including siblings, minor and adult children, pastor, neighbors, service providers, judges, CWS social workers, and staff, rallied together to show their support.

Janaire and William's journey has been marked by past struggles with addiction and drugs. Their kids were in the foster system and participated in a number of programs. Through the process, they learned a lot about themselves. While acknowledging the challenging paths they've traveled, they also expressed gratitude for the transformative experiences they've gained along the way. They expressed how it has taken them to places they weren't proud of, but they're grateful today to have experienced it.

For them, reunification with their children stood as the paramount goal, motivating them to seek the necessary assistance for their family's well-being. Reflecting on their journey, William remarks, "This journey has been a journey of pretty much finding self. Learning the meaning of empathy towards one another. Learning how to love ourselves despite whatever our past is." Janaire echoes this sentiment, describing the reunification process as life-changing and crediting the support she received. She says, "This is the best thing that ever happened to me. I have nothing bad to say about Child Welfare Services. They did something for me that I



me. This is a case that has shaped me into the type of social worker that I want to be. It's families like theirs that fuel my passion for this work. I firmly believe in the resilience of our parents; they just need someone to believe in them and offer reassurance, especially when it feels impossible."

For more information and a link to their video, please visit epicohana.org/news/nationalreunification2023.

"I want the families to know that CWS is not against them. They are for them. Allow yourself to be honest and surrender, so they can offer you the programs that best suit you."

— Janaire Kaleleiki-Francisco
O'ahu



PROTECTING VULNERABLE ADULTS

Adult Protective Services (APS) safeguards vulnerable adults against abuse, neglect, and exploitation, respecting their right to self-determination, while empowering older individuals to foster mutual enrichment and well-being in communities through volunteerism.

A **Adult Protective Services (APS)** social workers, nurses, and staff diligently safeguard vulnerable adults in our state, intervening against abuse, neglect, and exploitation by accepting and addressing reports related to these concerns. The primary focus of APS' protective efforts are vulnerable adults, defined by HRS §346-222 as individuals aged 18 or older with mental, developmental, or physical impairments hindering their ability to communicate, make responsible decisions, or protect themselves.

Adults have a right to self-determination, and this right is respected by APS. APS does not provide services, including arranging for placements, without the consent of the adult, as long as the adult has the capacity to make decisions for his/herself. APS partners with families to provide holistic interventions to ensure that family members can share in the honor of caring and providing for their kūpuna.

Additionally, the Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) and Senior Companion Program (SCP) empower individuals aged 55 and older to remain active through volunteerism, offering benefits such as a stipend. These volunteers play crucial roles in their communities, assisting school-aged children in classrooms and providing support to frail older adults at home, benefiting not only the recipients but also enhancing their own mental and physical well-



being. By fostering regular social interactions and forming meaningful relations, both FGP and SCP contribute to the volunteers' sense of belonging, self-esteem, and self-worth, establishing a mutually enriching dynamic between volunteers and clients.

Serving West Hawai'i

The addition of an RN in West Hawai'i addresses critical gaps in care for vulnerable adults, ultimately improving the overall quality of care in that region.

The challenges APS faces are alleged victims who are increasingly medically complex with both physical and mental health impairments, no health care providers, and very limited or no support from family or friends. APS nurses, working in conjunction with the social workers, are a critical communication lifeline between APS and the hospitals, particularly in the care of medically compromised kūpuna. They conduct immediate medical assessments and discern when to engage emergency medical services for life-threatening situations. Previously, West Hawai'i APS lacked a resident RN, posing significant obstacles to conducting protective nursing assessments, accessing and interpreting health records, and tapping into local healthcare resources. They were the only unit in the state to not have an RN. Supervisor Shanie Jefferies underscores the significant importance of addressing this gap: "For too long the social workers have noted a need when meeting with our vulnerable adults that they were missing vital health screenings. Having

a nurse on hand will help bridge this gap for our clients."

Nurses at APS must have not only the medical acumen, but also the compassion and resilience necessary for effectively addressing the needs of abused and neglected adults. They collaborate closely with assigned social workers, employing a holistic, person-centered, and strengths-based approach to client care. The addition of an RN in West Hawai'i ultimately enhances the overall quality of care provided in the area.

IN MY WORDS

RUBIE MAE GALIZA-BALDOVI

An introspective, grateful testimonial shared from an Adult Protective Services Registered Nurse.

➔ **I am so fortunate** and blessed working with Adult Protective Services. My story here did not just revolve around performing nursing assessments during home or field visits, medication reviews, consulting, and teaching. I also was given the wonderful privilege to work in collaboration with the very dedicated, hardworking, and amazing APS social workers to meet the needs of clients in our community.

I have many inspiring and successful stories with the cases I had been assigned with my lead investigators, but there is only one thing that I'd like to emphasize that made those stories so meaningful. The manner of communication is the first and foremost step—opening

one's heart to understand each other, showing fundamental respect for human dignity, and using intuition that each one of us has to keep connected. I learned that choosing therapeutic communication is a very simple and powerful skill that creates comfort, security, and reduces grief and suffering.

Moreover, I learned that when I stay focused on what's being said, rather than thinking ahead, it becomes a successful visit or investigation. Also, acknowledging adult victims and even adult perpetrators as valuable individuals regardless of their allegations is another way that makes it inspiring.

There are days when it's tough, but I must breathe, stay calm, and

neutralize my emotions (that's the only thing I can control). I realized that I have developed a skill to listen carefully, stay curious, and ask questions to gain a better understanding. When I'm connected and they are connected on a deeper level—it's as simple as a pat on a shoulder and a softer and gentler voice—that is what truly makes it so genuine and meaningful. What a beautiful story that I will carry in my heart the rest of my professional career.

"When I'm connected and they are connected on a deeper level... that is what truly makes it so genuine and meaningful."

— **Rubie Mae Galiza-Baldovi**
Registered Nurse, Adult Protective Services

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Lori Tsuruda

Learn more about this DHS employee's dedication to safeguarding Hawai'i's most vulnerable adults.

For the past 15 years, Lori Tsuruda has been an integral part of Adult Protective Services (APS), contributing to program development by drafting testimony and conducting investigations in her roles as Registered Nurse and Assistant Program Development Administrator. Her responsibilities are more administrative and include planning, monitoring, and evaluating protective and community services statewide, including the certification of nurse aide and feeding aide training programs.

As a vital member of the leadership team, Lori never hesitates to help when and where she is needed. In 2021 and 2022, she aided the O'ahu section with investigations, while managing her workload at Program Development. Lori also plays a crucial role in mentoring new nurses, passing on her knowledge and enthusiasm for

the essential work they undertake as part of the investigative team. Recognizing the nurses' past expertise and mastery of specific skills to tailor the assessment of alleged victims is important to mentoring new nurses. Building upon this foundation with Hawai'i's adult protective laws and program procedures is also important to broaden the nurses' professional practice from the singular alleged victim to alleged perpetrator and and to consider other factors which contributed to abuse and neglect.

Lori is currently working with supervisors on understanding the role of the nurse in APS investigations and on how non-medical supervisors can successfully supervise nurses. APS Administrator Lisa Amador highlights the critical nature of this role, noting that it requires sharp assessment skills and a strong commitment to advocating for individuals. Balancing alleged victims' rights to self-advocacy with concerns for their safety presents a constant challenge for APS nurses during home visits.

"We have a dedicated team. APS has become the 'safety net' for many Hawai'i residents who have very few resources."

— **Lori Tsuruda**
Assistant Program Development Administrator and Registered Nurse, Adult Protective Services

Recognizing the evolving needs of APS, Lori has spearheaded initiatives to support staff in their work. She facilitated a work group that developed new procedures for investigations in Nursing Facilities and Assisted Living Facilities, aiming to streamline processes for both nurses and social workers. Lori's dedication to improving services extends to her current efforts in developing procedures at Community Care Family Foster Home (CCFFH) and Case Management Agencies (CMA) for her staff. She says, "We have a dedicated team. APS has become a 'safety net' for many Hawai'i residents who have very few resources."

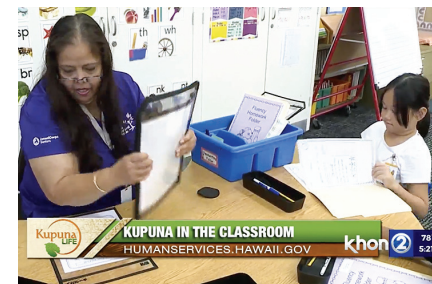
Lori's contributions are invaluable to DHS, demonstrating her exemplary leadership skills and unwavering commitment to serving Hawai'i's most vulnerable adults.

KŪPUNA IN THE CLASSROOM

The Foster Grandparent Program, locally known as the Kūpuna in the Classroom program, was featured on KHON's Kūpuna Life show. The program aims to raise awareness among Hawai'i's kūpuna, their families and caregivers about the issues impacting their daily lives.

After the segment aired, the Kūpuna in the Classroom program received more inquiries from seniors who wanted to learn more about how they can get involved.

With a legacy spanning nearly 58 years, Kūpuna in the Classroom has positively impacted the lives of both kūpuna and keiki throughout Hawai'i. Open to all eligible individuals aged 55 and older, volunteers in the program embody qualities such as compassion, motivation, and eagerness to share their knowledge and experience with students. For more information, please visit: khon2.com/kupuna-life/kupuna-in-the-classroom-program-needs-volunteers/.



Years in Service

A few grateful teachers congratulate kūpuna in the classroom for their years of service.

Erlita Corpus,
8 years of service

"I have had the pleasure of working with Grandma E for the past two years now. It was a very big blessing and a tremendous asset to have in our class. She takes on the initiative to help keep our classroom and students safe at all times. From cleaning to working with students, and even being there for students when they may need extra support, Grandma E is always there!! Our students look forward to seeing Grandma E, often greeting her with many hugs. On behalf of myself, Ms. Liz, and everyone in our class, we would like to congratulate Grandma E on her 8 years of service!"

— **Corey Jo Takata,** August Ahrens Elementary School, O'ahu

Mercy Oliveira,
24 years of service

"Grandma Mercy has been an integral asset in my Kindergarten class, and I would like her to stay in my class forever. With her comes genuine love from the heart and the children welcome her presence. Grandma Mercy helps to instill in the children step by step procedures in beginning their work from start to finish. Her help to me is outstanding! From the bottom of my heart MAHALO NU NUI LOA! All of my children have learned tremendously because of the awesome presence Grandma Mercy has brought to my class! My class has become proficient in reading because of her, by reading one-on-one with them."

— **Brenda Chapman,** Haili Christian School, Hawai'i Island

Jesusa Santiago,
10 years of service

"I am so glad to have Mrs. Jesusa Santiago in my class. We call her "Grandma Susie". Having her in my class is such a big help. At her age, I salute her for her dedication, patience, and for being such a loving and caring person. She always makes sure she attends to whoever needs her help during class activities. With her caring nature, I am so confident to say that all the kids in our class love her. It is such an honor to have someone like Grandma Susie in my class. Congratulations to Grandma Susie for her 10 years of exemplary service!"

— **Jesusa Pagdilao,** August Ahrens Elementary School, Oahu

Rosalinda White,
10 years of service

"Ms. Rosalinda White (Ms. Linda) has been helping me since 2019. I am very grateful to have Ms. Linda in my classroom. She has been so helpful, assisting with taking students to lunch, checking homework, etc. She gives academic and emotional support whenever it is needed. She is always eager to help and interacts with the students in a positive manner. She goes to the cafeteria to greet them in the morning. In addition, she is very helpful with my SPED students, as sometimes I don't have any helper to assist. She is a hard worker and very dedicated to helping students succeed in a school environment. I am lucky to have her!"

— **Cindy Han,** Pu'uhale Elementary School, O'ahu

A Lifeline for John's Recovery

➔ APS encountered a challenging case involving a vulnerable adult in his 60s, referred to as "John," who was a great contributor in his specialized community. John's health rapidly deteriorated, leading to his absence from work and subsequent discharge. He also could not activate his ERS benefits. Despite his refusal of interventions, APS diligently worked to ensure his safety, arranging medical appointments and delivering essential services. They frequently checked in with him and delivered food. During a routine check-in, APS found John on the floor in critical condition. APS staff immediately contacted emergency medical services, leading to his stabilization in the hospital. Through court involvement for Legal Guardianship and swift action, APS facilitated John's transition to a care home, ultimately saving his life and ensuring his ongoing well-being post-case closure.

HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY



SUCCESS STORY

Ka Lei Momi Project

On July 3, 2023, HPHA alongside Governor Josh Green, M.D., announced the selection of Highridge Costa Development Co. as the master developer of the Ka Lei Momi Project.

This year marked a significant milestone in Hawai'i Public Housing Authority's (HPHA) goal to rehabilitate and redevelop its aging public housing inventory. In early 2023, HPHA issued a Request for Qualifications for its Ka Lei Momi Project, to redevelop the creation of more than 10,000 affordable housing units at nine properties throughout the state. These include: Mayor Wright Homes, Pu'uwai Momi, Ka'ahumanu Homes, Kamehameha Homes, Hale Laulima, Nanakuli Homes, Lanakila Homes, Kahekili Terrace, and Kapa'a. All nine of these targeted sites total nearly 80 acres of land and have significant potential. In June, the Highridge Costa Development Company was selected as the master developer for this project. HPHA is grateful to work in partnership with Highridge Costa, the Green Administration and the Legislature, to transform their existing low-density public housing properties into modern, mixed-use,

mixed-income communities. With Mayor Wright Homes and Kapa'a Homes identified as priorities to be the first two Ka Lei Momi sites to begin redevelopment, proposed master plans are being developed with input from residents, community leaders and stakeholders, elected officials, government agencies, and service providers.

"...to redevelop the creation of more than 10,000 affordable housing units at nine properties throughout the state."

— **Hakim Ouansafi**
Executive Director, Hawai'i Public Housing Authority

Meetings have been held at Mayor Wright Homes with a townhall in the area thus far. Kapa'a had their first resident meeting. If the state allocates all the 9% needed, HPHA can provide 100 units in a year. Obtaining two-thirds of the federal tax-exempt bond cap would yield 900 units per year. There would also be one 501c3 transaction around 350 units every other year, but this only applies to O'ahu. Some challenges in building 10,000 units are infrastructure, bond and credit allocation, and availability of RHRF funding.

PARTNERSHIP WITH HAWAII LITERACY

The HPHA has partnered with Hawaii Literacy, a local nonprofit, to provide educational and literacy services for families at Mayor Wright Homes and the Kuhio Park properties. These services help disadvantaged children prepare for and succeed in school and give adults a second chance to read and write. Hawaii Literacy provides books, mentors, literacy promotion, and the skills needed to break cycles of poverty and under-education.

BY THE NUMBERS:

170 Learners Served	450+ Classes Held
39 Volunteers	1,250 Volunteer Hours
30 Countries Represented (Learners)	24 Different Languages Spoken

Moving to Work Demonstration

HPHA introduced three new incentives within its Section 8 program aiming to enhance landlord participation.

H PHA was accepted into the Moving to Work Demonstration (MTW) Program Expansion in January 2022 as part of HUD's Landlord Incentive Cohort. As part of Phase 1 of HPHA's MTW designation, the agency has implemented three new incentives as part of the Section 8 program to increase landlord participation:

1. Vacancy Loss Payments
HPHA will pay a landlord up to one month of contract rent as reimbursement for the time a unit is spent vacant in between Section 8 participants.

2. Initial Inspection Flexibilities
HPHA will waive the requirement for an initial inspection prior to the start of tenancy if the dwelling unit (1) is less than five years old, (2) passed an HQS or equivalent inspection in the last three years, or

(3) is in a census tract with a poverty rate of 10% or less.

3. Signing Bonus Payments
HPHA will provide a "signing bonus" of up to one month of contract rent to incentivize new landlords to join the Section 8 program.

As of November 1, 2023, the HPHA has offered 22 signing bonuses to newly recruited landlords, for a total of \$55,716. The HPHA has received no vacancy-loss claims. For more information on these and other upcoming Moving to Work initiatives, please visit: <http://www.hpha.hawaii.gov/mtw>.



Farm Fresh Fridays

➔ The HPHA collaborated with Aloha Care, Hawaii Foodbank, Lanakila Pacific, CVS, Project Vision, Kapiolani Community College, and DHS to hold Farm Fresh Friday events at several elderly, low-income public housing communities. These events provide elderly tenants with bags of fresh produce, COVID-19 vaccinations, SNAP, Med-Quest, digital literacy information, and vision screenings with the distribution of reading glasses.

OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES

OYS provides and coordinates a continuum of services and programs for youth-at-risk.

➔ The Office of Youth Services (OYS) continues to strive to improve outcomes for at-risk youth by improving and expanding its programs and services. In FY23, OYS' program office managed 76 contracts in areas of positive youth development, advocacy and outreach, cultural programs, residential and emergency shelter, diversion, and others. These contracts served over 4,200 youth in the community.

AGE/GENDER SERVED THROUGH CONTRACTS

AGE	MALE	FEMALE
Under 9 years	143	123
9 to 12 years	938	640
13 to 17 years	1,139	920
18+ years	172	165
TOTAL	2,392	1,848

TOP 2 ETHNICITIES SERVED

32.9% Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian
20% Micronesia

Youth's Voice in Community

HiYC youth demonstrated their commitment to positive change and youth empowerment in Hawai'i.

The Hawai'i State Youth Commission (HiYC) has been highly active and engaged throughout the year, focusing on recruitment efforts, legislative advocacy, and community service initiatives. Their increased involvement in the 2023 legislative session marked a significant milestone, with youth voices being more prominently represented in the state legislature than ever before. HiYC championed a record number of bills—40 in total—centered around crucial areas such as education, public health, and environmental justice. Notably, several bills addressing public health priorities were successfully passed during

this session, reflecting the commission's commitment to affecting positive change in Hawai'i. Looking ahead, HiYC is dedicated to furthering its community engagement efforts, advocating for the youth of Hawai'i, and forging strong partnerships with legislators and leaders to foster a brighter future for generations to come.

In keeping with its legislative priorities, HiYC put their advocacy into action by not only testifying on public health legislation, but also collaborating with Shut Down Red Hill Mutual Aid to lead a water distribution event to affected communities. This successful event distributed over 7,000 gallons of bottled water



to those in need. After a hard day of work in the sun, several members had time to connect and share shave ice.



Hawai'i State Youth Commission members Eric and Logan collaborated with the Shut Down Red Hill Mutual Aid organization at a water distribution event in response to the continuing need for safe and clean water.



53% OF YOUTHS PAID RESTITUTION IN TOTAL (FY23)

Continuing in the Right Direction

HYCF collaborates with partners to offer programs aimed at facilitating youths' successful reintegration into the workforce and society.

Vocational and Certification Program

Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF) through a partnership with Olomana Schools, DVR, and Kāpili Like, developed on-job training, vocational, and certification programs for the youths at the facility. It provides opportunities to transform their lives, emphasizing self-improvement, personal responsibility, and community healing. These programs provide paid opportunities for youths to learn vocational skills to prepare them for the workforce. Income earned through paid experience is used to pay for restitution. Some of the vocational opportunities for youths are Automotive/Mechanic, Maintenance (Carpentry, Electrical, Plumbing, Masonry, Painting, Roofing), Groundskeeping, Food Service, and Farm and Ranching (Animal Husbandry, Pasture Maintenance). These programs aim to enhance the youth's marketability and increase their chances for successful reintegration.

Restitution

Youths, through restorative or conventional processes, are taking accountability to earn income to compensate the victims for financial losses. The youths taking responsibility and

"Youths, through restorative or conventional processes, are taking accountability to earn income to compensate the victims for financial losses."

— Mark Kawika Patterson
Administrator, Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility, Kawaioloa Youth and Family Wellness Center

paying restitution increases victim satisfaction, and it has been associated with reductions in recidivism. In 2023, 45% of restitution was paid to victims to compensate for financial losses caused by the youths' law violations.

Capstone Project

In the summer, HYCF was selected to attend training at the Center For Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University on the Youth in Custody Certificate Program. The training supports and educates leaders to advance a balanced, multi-system approach to improving outcomes and promoting the positive development of youth at risk of juvenile justice involvement. Approximately ninety percent of youth committed to the correctional facility receive services and or are in the custody of the Child & Adolescent Mental Health

Division (CAMHD), Department of Education SPED (DOE), the Judiciary (courts), and/or independent providers. HYCF and collaborating agencies are pursuing a Capstone Project to develop a strategic process, track its progress, and evaluate and report it to stakeholders. The focus is to create and implement an agency-collaborative individualized service/treatment plan for multi-system, justice-involved youth committed to HYCF.

First Place in Culinary Competition

A number of youth from HYCF participated in the Windward School District's Career and Technical Education (CTE) performance-based assessment culinary challenge and placed first.

Innovation + Imagination (I+I) Student Challenge

The I+I Challenge introduces students to the diverse world of Hawai'i's woods and students are challenged to construct artwork using a mix of donated Hawai'i-grown woods and other materials of their choice. Coordinated by Steven Hill, IDSA, 3DLab Director at UH-Mānoa School of Architecture, the program exposes students to a hands-on experience of design and production and familiarizes them with the value of using locally sourced wood. At the 2023 Hawaii Wood Show Competition, a HYCF youth placed first in their category and another received the honorable mention award for the student challenge. Schools that participated in the student challenge included students from UH-Mānoa School of Architecture; Brigham Young University; Hawaii, Maui and Kalani high schools; Mid-Pacific Owl Robotics; and, Punahou School.



Safe Spaces for Youth Pilot Program

➡ Passed by the 2022 Legislature, OYS in partnership with Hawaii Youth Services Network and National Safe Place Network, held a key stakeholder symposium in March 2023. The symposium aimed to unite youth professionals statewide in addressing the urgent needs of our youth, devising effective strategies, and fostering community partnerships and engagement. Highlighting the urgency of the matter, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Developments 2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report revealed Hawai'i as the state with the third-highest population of homeless unsheltered youth in the nation. Leanne Gillespie, OYS Executive Director, emphasizes the significance of initiatives like Safe Spaces, which, through public and private partnerships, offer vital support and refuge for Hawai'i's homeless youth. She says, "With homelessness on the rise, providing more safe spaces and access to programs and services is critical. We need to provide our youth with hope for their future. Hope for Hawai'i's future." With continued collaboration, this promising program is slated for



an official launch in Spring 2024, offering round-the-clock assistance to children in need of safety, support, shelter, treatment, and comprehensive services.

STATEWIDE OFFICE ON HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING SOLUTIONS



Secured funding to provide housing for people experiencing homelessness

➔ **The Statewide Office of Homelessness & Housing Solutions (SOHHS) was successful** in securing SFY24 funds including \$15,000,000 for the Kauhale Initiative (deeply affordable, community housing for people experiencing homelessness); \$15,000,000 for the ‘Ohana Zones Pilot Program (which will be re-focused on programs that result in permanent housing placements for homeless individuals); and \$2,784,000 for Permanent Supportive Housing support services to be paired with \$1,740,000 in rental assistance from the Hawai‘i Public Housing Authority (HPHA).

Homeless Emergency Proclamation

In January 2023, Governor Green issued a Homeless Emergency Proclamation (EP) that cleared a path toward the expedited resolution of Hawai‘i’s homelessness crisis that threatens the health, safety, security, and well-being of our community.

By signing an emergency proclamation to work collaboratively with federal and county agencies on measures to provide relief, it speeds up the process for the construction of facilities or housing that are specifically designed for individuals experiencing homelessness.

The Homeless EP was used to expedite the creation of the Pūlama Ola medical respite kauhale; to secure continued development of Pu‘uhonua o Wai‘anae Farm Village and Pahoia Homeless Housing, which will house 250 and 80 people respectively. The Homeless EP also helped to expedite State and local contracts for a number of homeless housing and services programs.

“As long as we are in a housing crisis, we will treat it like an emergency,” said Governor Green, in his State of the State Address. “This emergency proclamation streamlines the

construction process for housing, removing unnecessary red tape, and enables our community partners to tackle homelessness and the housing shortage head-on.”

The construction of the 12 kauhale provide shelter with minimal, if any, impact on the environment. They also are built faster than large-scale projects. Kama‘okū in Kalaeloa, for instance, provided 37 tiny homes, a commercial kitchen, shared hygiene facilities, and close proximity to services for residents. Kama‘okū was built in six months under a similar emergency proclamation.

“HOUSELESS” VS. “HOMELESS”

Many people without housing choose not to identify with the word “homeless”. The term “houseless” has been adopted as the preference. A house is just a physical space, while home is beyond a singular location. Home is community and social connection. It’s friends and family. Not everyone has housing, but everyone can experience home. Making a conscious effort on this adjustment with word choice can empower this community. Not everyone uses the term “houselessness,” but it’s important to acknowledge housing and home as two different things.

SUCCESS STORY

Pūlama Ola Kauhale

This groundbreaking medical respite tiny home village provided a supportive haven for discharged hospital patients experiencing homelessness.

In June 2023, SOHHS opened the first medical respite tiny home village pilot project that served hospital patients being discharged into homelessness and who needed a safe, stable place to continue to recover. The 10-unit village was constructed by nonprofit HomeAid Hawaii, steps away from the State Capitol, and across the street from The Queen’s Medical Center. Named Pūlama Ola—it speaks to how a person embraces life, health, and potential—and the kauhale’s embrace of those who seek that health and life. “By embracing the idea of ‘yes in my backyard,’ we have the power to create a more compassionate community that nurtures change from within. Our partners who have made this kauhale a reality have shown us that excellence and care can be emulated, and that by working together, we can achieve long-lasting change,” Governor Green shared.

Project Vision Hawai‘i (PVH), a nonprofit organization, provided round-the-clock staffing at the kauhale for intake, supervision, and care coordination. Registered nurses made daily rounds and a hygiene trailer provided hot showers and restrooms for all housed and unhoused neighbors in the community.

Unlike the state’s plan for permanent kauhale villages, the temporary medical respite kauhale was one step in the process, designed to address a gap in the current systems that discharge medically frail people back into homelessness. James Koshiba, Governor Green’s Coordinator on Homelessness, says, “An immediate response to the need for medical respite highlights the bold, quick action necessary to tackle the issues immediately as we work to create long-term, permanent solutions for affordable housing and help our unhoused neighbors statewide.” The state continues to work with private and community-based partners to make

available additional medical respite space within existing community facilities. As spaces become available, the units will be relocated to other areas, with the intention of being used at a long-term kauhale site.

The mini kauhale has served 20 patients and more than 150 individuals from the surrounding area providing access to health care, hygiene service, and other critical services such as cell phones and public assistance. It has helped to prevent return visits to emergency rooms and operates at a fraction of the cost of a hospital stay. The insights gained from Pūlama Ola are informing the enhancement and expansion of medical respite facilities and ongoing kauhale development initiatives.





Governor Green and Mayor Blangiardi alongside key partners at the blessing of the Pūlama Ola Kauhale.

SUCCESS STORY

In Community

This former resident continued to come back to Pūlama Ola Kauhale to assist their peers, even after transitioning to long-term housing.

Kauhale are guided by the principle that “kuleana wakes up mana” (responsibility awakens the spirit), as articulated by Twinkle Borge. This ethos was exemplified by one of our former residents at Pūlama Ola Kauhale, who not only assisted in taking other residents to their appointments but also offered moral support in navigating the challenges of homelessness. Despite transitioning to more stable housing, this resident continued to come back to the kauhale to uplift and support his fellow residents. The success of Pūlama Ola Kauhale, recognized by SOHHS, lies in its provision of a nurturing environment for medical care, healing, and community-building for their clients.



“An immediate response to the need for medical respite highlights the bold, quick action necessary to tackle the issues immediately as we work to create long-term, permanent solutions for affordable housing and help our unhoused neighbors statewide.”

— James Koshiba, Governor’s Coordinator on Homelessness

CLARIFYING MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT HOUSELESS INDIVIDUALS

The mission of SOHHS is to end homelessness. They focus their time and resources on expanding the limited supply of deeply affordable housing accessible for those experiencing homelessness and improving existing homeless services in ways that make it quicker and easier for people to get from street to home. While they value public input, they do not handle nuisance calls related to homeless individuals or encampments. Calling for “sweeps” works against their mission, because in the process, people lose vital documents and break contact with case managers, which makes it harder for them to get housed.

Many times, the root cause of homelessness is blamed on issues such as substance abuse and mental illness. While these issues are apparent for

some, many fail to consider the larger problem and root cause of homelessness: Hawai‘i’s high cost of living and lack of deeply affordable spaces to live in. Below are misconceptions about unhoused people that we would like to clarify:

Not all houseless people are addicts. According to the 2023 Point-In-Time count, only 28% of our unhoused neighbors reported chronic substance abuse.

Not all houseless people are suffering from mental illness. According to the 2023 Point-In-Time count, severe mental illness affects 39% of our homeless population and is often catalyzed by the trauma of displacement.

Most houseless people are not newcomers from the mainland. The reality is that the majority of houseless

individuals are from Hawai‘i, and according to the 2023 O‘ahu Point-In-Time count, 35% of the houseless population are Native Hawaiian. As a resource to address this perception, the 2023 legislature made funding available for a pilot program to reconnect homeless individuals with their families on the continent.

Not all houseless people are criminals. Criminal activity happening within broader neighborhoods is often what people face in homeless encampments—both being victimized by criminal actions, but also becoming a target of blame.

Not all houseless people are dangerous. Stereotypes and stigmas about our unhoused neighbors have been boldened by repeated and unfair imagery of some of our

community’s most vulnerable.

Most houseless are not “service resistant.” Our unsheltered neighbors have often given up on the system because of its inaccessibility and inconsistency, rather than the pure turn-down of needed services.

Encampments are communities. Homeless encampments often organically form because folks find trust and comfort in one another, becoming each other’s main source of support. The idea of safety in numbers is also an aspect of community that bonds people, protecting them from being victimized by criminal activity and other threats. Encampments band together to represent themselves in community discussion and take care of one another and the space they occupy.



James Koshiba, Governor’s Coordinator on Homelessness

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Lindsay Ann Pacheco

Leveraging her seven years of lived experience and leadership within the homeless community, Lindsay strives for impactful change, advocating for holistic solutions to homelessness while emphasizing the importance of empathy, hope, and genuine connections.

As the Homelessness Community Development Specialist, Lindsay Ann Pacheco, was the Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions' (SOHHS) first hire and a key player in laying down the foundation for the office's mission. With seven years of firsthand experience grappling with homelessness, Lindsay brings a crucial perspective and voice to the team. Her journey began when she crossed paths with James Koshiha, then-president of Hui Aloha, a

volunteer organization that worked to bring houseless and housed people together to create permanent solutions to homelessness. Unbeknownst to her, this encounter would alter the trajectory of her life, leading her out of homelessness and eventually to her position at SOHHS.

Recognized by the Hui Aloha team as a natural leader within the Ka Po'e o Kaka'ako houseless community, Lindsay drew inspiration from the village of Pu'u honua o Waianae and took charge in advocating against "sweeps" at neighborhood boards. With a housing voucher, she transitioned out of the shelter, went back to college, embarked on internships, and reconnected with Hui Aloha to volunteer, re-engaging with the community she once belonged to. Through these experiences, Lindsay not only learned to advocate for herself, but how to advocate for others.

What sets Lindsay apart is her lived experience perspective, enabling her to forge genuine connections or pilina and earn the trust of communities, proving invaluable in her role. She possesses a unique ability to identify gaps and establish correlations, such as

recognizing the link between low pay and high turnover rates among homeless outreach workers. Her primary focus has been working on the Kauhale Initiative, drawing upon her vast understanding and experience to devise effective solutions. Lindsay's contributions extend to projects like the Pūlama Ola medical respite kauhale, as well as other initiatives covered under the Homeless Emergency Proclamation, including the state's third kauhale, Ho'okahi Leo on Middle Street. Collaborating closely with James, she has advocated before legislators, fostering dialogue, and seeking innovative solutions.

In her work with homeless communities, Lindsay emphasizes the importance of an open mind, empathy, and connection. She encourages others to come from a relationship perspective rather than a transactional one, and adds that once you start building genuine connections and learning about a homeless individual's personal story, you realize there's so much more to homelessness than just homelessness itself. Her advice to anyone facing hardships, housed or unhoused, is to cling to hope, the driving force that propelled her forward and continues to sustain her. She says, "If you're having struggles in life, don't give

up hope. Never lose hope because hope is what got me going all this time and it still does. Without hope, we have nothing."

Lindsay also co-founded the O'ahu Lived Experience Council, a group dedicated to sharing their stories, knowledge, and experiences with others in hopes of shaping better solutions to homelessness. She also engages with Partners in Care Continuum of Care and with an international network of homelessness experts. Currently pursuing a Bachelor's in Social Work, Lindsay is positioned to further contribute to addressing homelessness in our community.

"If you're having struggles in life, don't give up hope. Never lose hope because hope is what got me going all this time and it still does."

— Lindsay Ann Pacheco
Homeless Community Development Specialist, SOHHS

"If we create an entire system of support for anyone going into housing from homelessness then we are setting them up for success versus failure."



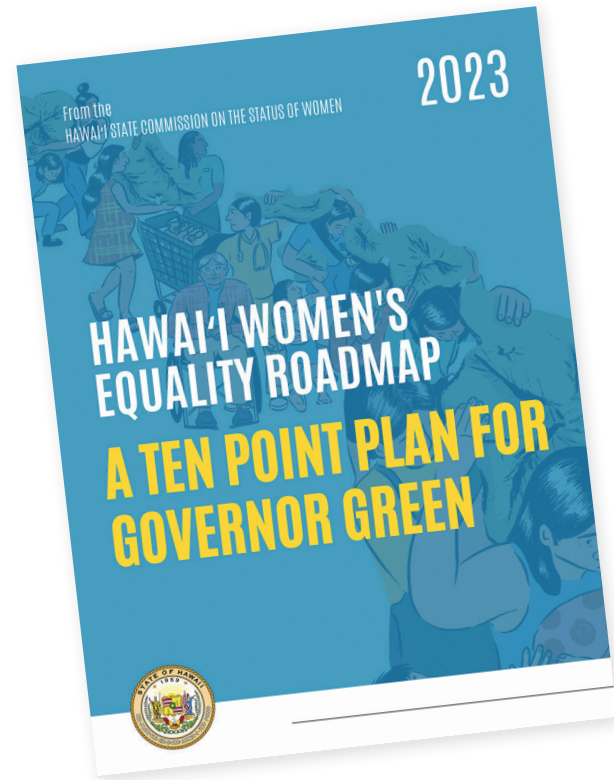
Hawai'i Women's Equality Roadmap

Drawn from local advocacy experience and global gender equality metrics, a Ten-Point Plan advocates for specific measures to advance women's rights in Hawai'i.



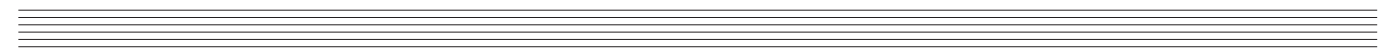
Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women (HSCSW) Executive Director, Khara Jabola-Carolus, created a Ten-Point Plan for Governor Green, drawing from over half a decade of insights gleaned from the forefront of women's advocacy in Hawai'i. Informed by a comprehensive global analysis, including metrics like the Gender Equality Index and the Institute for Women's Policy Research's Status of Women, the plan underscores the urgent need for elevating gender equality indicators and fostering continuity in governmental efforts to empower women. For Hawai'i, Jabola-Carolus calls for a focus on raising certain gender equality indicators and continuity in government work for women. Some examples of the Ten-Point Plan include developing a Women's Equality Index specific to Hawai'i that measures progress, creating an intra-government group of women leaders across Departments of the Executive Branch, ending the neglect and under-sourcing of gender-based violence prevention, and expanding access to reproductive health care. For further details, please visit humanservices.hawaii.gov/hscsw/.

\$150,000
PRIVATE FUNDING
SECURED
BY HSCSW
(FY23)



“The world will turn to Hawai'i as they search for world peace because Hawai'i has the key... and that key is Aloha!”

— Auntie Pilahi Paki



20 YEARS OF CHAMPIONING FATHERHOOD

➔ In June 2023, the the Hawaii State Commission on Fatherhood (COF) and the flagship Fatherhood Program of the National Fatherhood Initiative celebrated 20 years of educating and promoting positive fathering skills as essential to the emotional, physical, and social development of children and families. The Hawaii COF mission is to promote healthy family relationships by emphasizing the important role fathers play in the lives of their children. The Commission serves in an advisory capacity to state agencies and makes recommendations for programs, services, contracts, policies, and laws relating to children and families.



