



State of Hawai'i
Department of Human Services

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Hawai'i Law of The Aloha Spirit

The Hawai'i Department of Human Services(DHS) strives to uphold the Aloha Spirit everyday, in all our work.

Section 5-7.5, Hawai'i Revised Statutes "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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DHS 'Ohana

The Hawai'i Department of Human Services (DHS) provides vital benefits and services that act as building blocks for individuals and families in need to achieve self-sufficiency on their own terms.

DHS includes the Director's Office, six Staff Offices, four Divisions, three Administratively Attached Agencies, and four Commissions.

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 (BPMO), the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO), and the Audit, Quality Control and Research Office (AQCR).

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 State Office on Homelessness & Housing Solutions (SOHHS), the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women (HSCSW), the Commission on Fatherhood (COF), the Hawai'i State Youth Commission (HiYC), the Hawai'i Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH), and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus Commission (LGBTQ+).

'Ohana Nui is an integrated, multigenerational approach designed to improve the social well-being of children, individuals, and families, and to reduce the incidence of intergenerational poverty. Family Resource Centers (FRCs) utilize this approach, which is multi-generational, strength-based, and family-centered. There are 21 Family Resource Centers statewide, including Neighborhood Places (community-based), school campuses, and one correctional facility.



T

TEAM-ORIENTED

Internal and external partnerships are critical to the success of DHS.

H

HUMAN-CENTERED

Everything we do is driven by our focus on what matters for people—and are constantly improving to meet our communities' needs.

R

RESPECTFUL

We recognize the inherent value of every person we serve, as well as the diverse cultures of Hawai'i.

I

INTENTIONAL

We are mindful of our collective decisions and actions and how they impact the people we serve.

V

VISIONARY

We support people and our communities by co-creating innovative and forward-looking strategies.

E

EVIDENCE-BASED

We are committed to making decisions based on data and taking action that supports sustainable outcomes.



Director's Message

Bend but do not break: Resilience, Aloha, and Community

In Hawai'i, we are guided by the spirit of Aloha—a way of living rooted in kindness, compassion, and unity. Aloha is not just about offering support; it is about cultivating strength, perseverance, and the ability to rise in the face of adversity. This same spirit is at the heart of the Department of Human Services (DHS). Like the bamboo in the Japanese proverb that bends but does not break in the wind, we help individuals and families navigate life's challenges, providing the stability and resources needed to regain their footing and thrive.

Through a wide range of essential programs, DHS is here to help individuals and families build that resilience. We provide food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), financial assistance to help meet basic needs, and child care subsidies that allow parents to work or pursue education. Med-QUEST ensures that children and adults in vulnerable and underserved communities receive access to healthcare—because well-being is the foundation for self-sufficiency and a better future.

But beyond providing assistance, we are committed to protecting, empowering, and uplifting. Child Welfare Services safeguards our keiki, while Adult Protective and Community Services ensure that our kūpuna and vulnerable adults are cared for with dignity and respect. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation helps individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities gain independence through employment and training opportunities, reinforcing the belief that every individual has the potential to contribute and succeed.

We also work alongside attached agencies to address critical needs. The Office of Youth Services supports at-risk youth, while the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority ensures access to affordable housing. DHS collaborates with the State Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions to develop long-term strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness.

At the core of these efforts are our approximately 2,000 dedicated DHS staff across the islands. They are the backbone of our mission, embodying the values of Aloha and resilience every day.

Our work is more than a job—it is a commitment to uplifting individuals, strengthening families, and fortifying communities. Through their dedication, Aloha is not just spoken; it is lived.

With one of the largest state department budgets—\$4.1 billion—DHS ensures that more than 80% of these funds go directly toward benefits and services. These resources represent more than financial support; they are an investment in hope, opportunity, and resilience for Hawai'i's people.

To those facing hardship: know you are not alone. Like the bamboo, you may bend in difficult times, but you can rise again. DHS is here to support you with care, resources, and hope, helping you move forward. Together, with resilience and the spirit of Aloha, we stand strong.

Ryan Yamane
Ryan Yamane

Director, Department of Human Services

Our Mission

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

DHS Organizational 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.

Administrative Appeals Office

Budget Planning & Management Office

Audit, Quality Control & Research Office

Fiscal Management Office

Office of Information Technology

Human Resources Office

ATTACHED AGENCIES

DHS DIVISIONS

COMMISSIONS

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 health care, protecting vulnerable adults and Hawai'i's keiki, and providing services and supports to individuals with disabilities to succeed as members of the workforce.

HPHA
Hawai'i
Public
Housing
Authority

OYA
Office
of Youth
Services

SOHHS
Statewide Office on Homelessness
and Housing Solutions

BESSD
Benefit,
Employment
& Support
Services
Division

MQD
Med-QUEST
Division

DVR
Division of
Vocational
Rehabilitation

SSD
Social
Services
Division

HSCSW
Hawai'i State
Commission
on the Status
of Women

COF
Commission
on
Fatherhood

HiYC
Hawai'i State
Youth
Commission

LGBTQ+
Hawai'i State Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual, Transgender,
Queer, Plus Commission

SERVING INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES IN HAWAII

A detailed line drawing of a hibiscus plant, featuring large, five-petaled flowers and several large, serrated leaves. The drawing is in a light, sketchy style, with some areas filled with a light pink color. The plant is positioned diagonally across the page, with the top of the plant in the upper right and the bottom in the lower left.

BESSD

Benefit, Employment and Support
Services Division

BESSD

The Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division

The Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division (BESSD) plays a broad and crucial role in supporting individuals—keiki to kūpuna—and families across Hawai‘i. BESSD’s mission is to provide timely, efficient, and effective programs, services, and benefits to empower state residents and expand their capacity for self-determination, independence, healthy choices, quality of life, and personal dignity.

Each month, BESSD public assistance benefits provide basic daily necessities for nearly 1 in 8 individuals statewide. This includes providing support to families in need through financial assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and the Hawai‘i Energy Assistance Program (H-HEAP). BESSD also assists with child care licensing, child care subsidies, homeless services, employment and job training.

In addition to concrete supports, BESSD 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 immediately, improve their well-being and economic security, and ultimately achieve self-sufficiency.

There are more than 700 BESSD staff members, with a presence on every island, including Lāna‘i and Moloka‘i—making it the largest DHS Division. The volume of work at BESSD has significantly increased in recent years. For example, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Division typically received approximately 4,400 applications for SNAP and financial assistance per month. Today, BESSD receives more than 40,000 calls per month and nearly 8,000 applications per month.

BESSD Statewide Branch Processing Centers

260

Applications
Received Daily

7,797

Applications
Received Monthly

7,397

Eligibility Renewals
Processed Monthly

2,235

Number of Calls
Received Daily

40,233

Number of Calls
Received Monthly





BESSD: FY2024

Priorities and Accomplishments

BESSD's work focused on key areas, including:

SUN BUCKS:

Sun Bucks are a new program to provide benefits to eligible households with school-aged children to purchase food during the summer. Sun Bucks benefits are 100% federally funded and provide nearly \$16 million in food purchasing benefits that can be spent at local food retailers. Sun Bucks served over 90,000 children statewide in the summer of 2024 and provided each child with a food benefit of \$177 to use to purchase approved food items to address their food needs during the summer break period. Sun Bucks are also a boost for the economy, with each \$1 in Sun Bucks spent having a multiplier effect of generating \$1.80 in economic stimulus for the local economy.

PRESCHOOL OPEN DOORS

(POD) PROGRAM:

The POD program's goal is to promote school readiness for eligible 3- and 4-year-old children by focusing on the needs of the child. It provides services state-wide to families sending their children to a licensed preschool during the two school years prior to kindergarten entry. In FY2024, new laws and rules were implemented for the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program, expanding eligibility for child care subsidies to include eligible 3-year-olds for the first time. DHS also increased the gross income eligibility limits for the program so that families who previously were not eligible may now qualify and also increased monthly child care rates to \$1,200 for non-accredited DHS licensed preschools and up to \$1,500 for accredited DHS licensed preschools. The expansion of the POD program is one part of the state's larger efforts to address cost of living and to support families with young children.

BESSD: FY2024

Priorities and Accomplishments

BESSD also focused the division's work on additional key areas, including:

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN:

- BESSD Child Care Regulations Program Office (CCRPO) and Child Care Subsidy Program Office (CCSPO) partnered with the Executive Office on Early Learning, Early Learning Board, Department of Health (DOH), and community partners toward a coordinated system of care and early learning for children ages birth to 5 years old.
- DHS supported child care providers statewide with the final round of grants from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Supplemental Grant program. These grants ensure access to child care by providing over \$32 million to help support operating expenses for child care services and nearly \$9.5 to help retain provider staff.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS:

- BESSD Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Office (SNAPO) worked with the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) and University of Hawai'i (UH) to develop programming that assists with linking SNAP households with direct education and program activities.
- BESSD partnered with Maui Economic Opportunity (MEO) to help launch and run the Maui Relief TANF Program (MRTP) services to aid in the recovery from the Maui wildfires. MEO hit the ground running to launch the program in a number of days—including quickly setting up an online application and sending staff to conduct outreach at local hotels hosting Maui wildfire survivors.

BESSD: FY2024

Priorities and Accomplishments

HOMELESSNESS:

The DHS Homeless Programs Office (HPO) administers State and federal funding for homeless service programs, including shelter, homeless outreach, civil legal services, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, housing placement program, and the state homeless emergency grant program.

- HPO reopened and expanded its Family Assessment Centers, including:
 - Reopening the Family Assessment Center, which relocated this year from urban Honolulu to Leeward Oahu. Since reopening in early 2024, the Family Assessment Center has assisted over 76 families with minor children with emergency shelter and had a 100% housing placement rate for eight families that exited the program and successfully transitioned into long-term housing.
 - A second Family Assessment Center in Puna on Hawai'i island has assisted over 43 families and placed 20 successfully into permanent housing.
 - DHS is also working in partnership with the City & County of Honolulu to add a third Family Assessment Center next year in Hauula, which increase Hawai'i's capacity to serve families and children experiencing homelessness.
- The HPO collaborated with shelter providers and the Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) Community Homeless Concerns Liaisons (CHCL) to ensure program participants understand their educational rights and are connected to the services they need to succeed.



TECHNOLOGY:

BESSD continued the utilization of the Public Assistance Information System (PAIS) which enables individuals to submit applications and reviews online and to upload documents.

**Since PAIS went live in 2020,
there have been:**

+325,719 Applications

+597,424 Uploaded Documents

+82,375 Eligibility Reviews (ERs)

TANF & TAONF

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Temporary Assistance for Other Needy Families (TAONF):

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Temporary Assistance for Other Needy Families (TAONF) programs provide monthly benefits to families with children for food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials. Family participation in TANF or TAONF depends on the household composition. When all members are U. S. citizens, the family is eligible for federally-funded welfare under TANF. Families that include at least one non-citizen are eligible for state-funded welfare under TAONF.

In FY2024, BESSD implemented the Maui Relief TANF Program (MRTP), which provided Maui wildfires survivors with 4 months of assistance with rent, mortgage, utility assistance, and car payments for families with a dependent child up to age 24. The program also provides assistance with clothing, school supplies, and the purchase of household appliances. Since the program's start, it has served 2,746 households (totaling 7,932 individuals) with over \$16.2 million in assistance from federal TANF and philanthropic funds. The Hawai'i Community Foundation provided philanthropic funding for this effort to expand the reach of the program to include non-citizens and other households that may not have qualified for federal TANF assistance.

H-HEAP

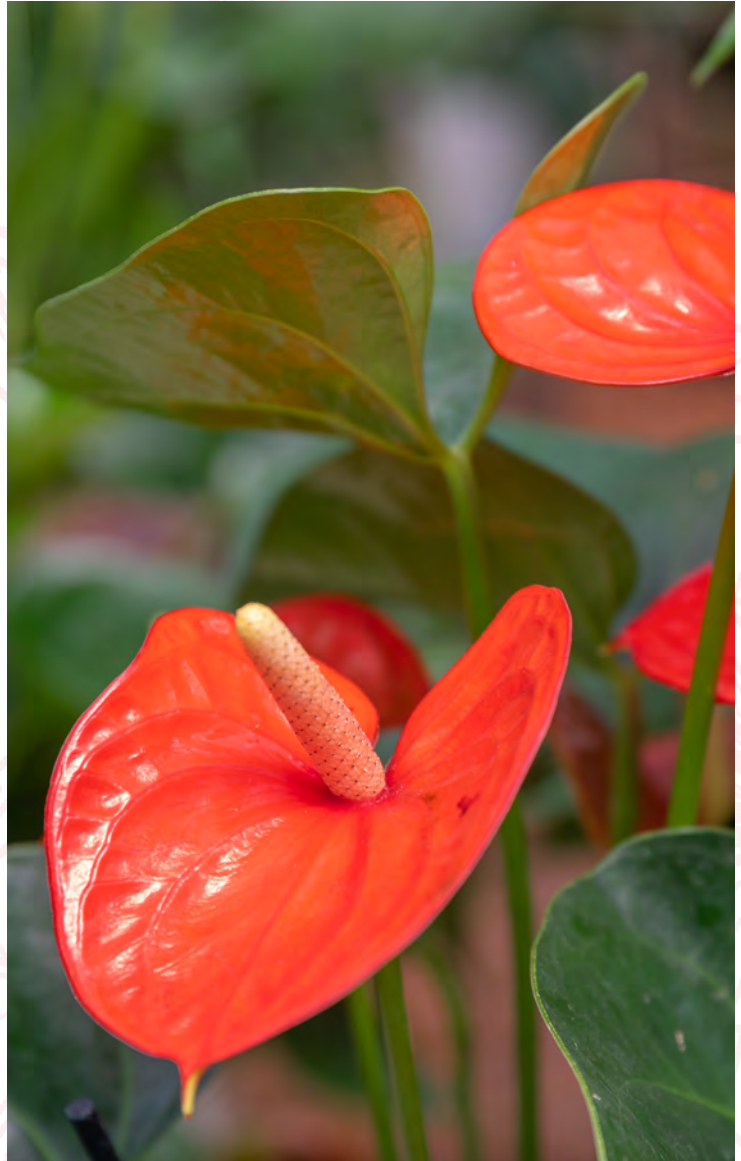
The Hawai'i Home Energy Assistance Program (H-HEAP), formerly the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), provides heating and/or cooling assistance to eligible Hawai'i households by assisting with a one-time payment towards their utility bill (electric or gas) in two ways:

Energy Crisis Intervention (ECI) assists eligible households in crisis when the electric or gas service has been or will be terminated, as the household has been notified via a disconnect notice from the utility company.

Energy Credit (EC) assists eligible households who are not in crisis but want assistance with bill payment for the purpose of heating and/or cooling of their residence.

H-HEAP begins each October 1st and ends each September 30th. Households in need may apply for and receive one type of benefit per year. H-HEAP benefit amounts are based on the amount of federal funding awarded each fiscal year, thus approved credits will vary.

In FY2024, H-HEAP provided Energy Crisis Intervention support for 1,641 households with an average payment of \$652.15 and provided Energy Credit Assistance to 7,171 households with an average payment of \$857.17.



IN FY2024, H-HEAP PROVIDED:

Energy Crisis
Intervention
support for:



1,641
Households

With an average payment of

\$652.15

Energy Credit
Assistance
support for:



7,171
Households

With an average payment of

\$857.17

SNAP

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides crucial food and nutritional support to qualifying low-income and needy households, and those making the transition from welfare to self-sufficiency.

In FY2024, BESSD continued to provide this vital support for eligible families. Additionally, in the Fall of 2023, BESSD worked to secure SNAP replacement benefits, waivers to expand the use of SNAP benefits, and a dedicated program that expanded SNAP access for eligible survivors of the Maui wildfires called the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP). From September 18-23, 2023, a team of 50 BESSD staff processed D-SNAP applications for thousands of Maui Wildfire survivors who experienced loss of housing or employment, incurred disaster-related expenses, or food loss due to the disaster.

SNAP Metrics



Helping
87,296
Households



Totaling
162,733
Individuals



Disbursing a total of
\$753,064,986
In SNAP benefits

D-SNAP Metrics



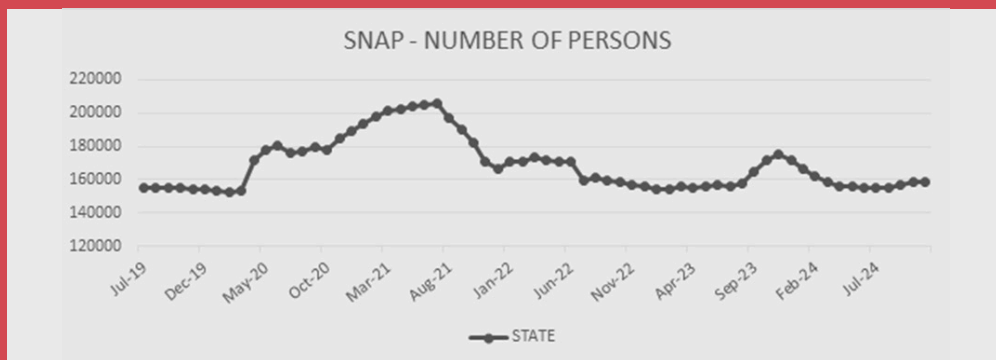
Helping
3,222
Households



Totaling
8,616
Individuals



Disbursing a total of
\$4,005,391
In D-SNAP benefits



Testimonial:

Rosalina Maders

Rosalina Maders had worked as a landscaper for many years but never felt fulfilled by her job. She had always had a passion for working with children and was eager to find a role that aligned with her interests, as well as allowing her to stay close to her home.

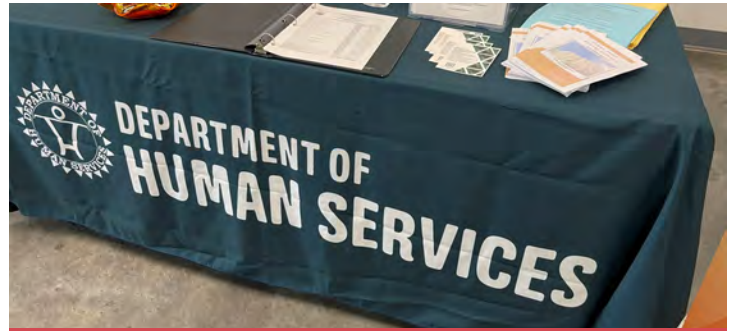
Rosalina enrolled in the SEE (Supporting Employment Empowerment) Hawai'i Work program, which helps clients enrolled in the DHS First-to-Work program, an important requirement of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) that supports self-sufficiency. The DHS First-to-Work program takes the concept of apprenticeship and expands it into an effective training-for-hire model with private sector management.

With the support of the SEE Hawai'i Work program team, Rosalina gained the knowledge and tools needed to find opportunities that would match her interests, and she became interested in becoming a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) to help children with special needs. Together, Rosalina and her SEE Hawai'i Work program team found an RBT position at the Malama Pono Autism Center. It was the perfect fit—offering full-paid training, licensure, and located near her home.

"Thank you, SEE Hawai'i, for helping me take this important step toward a fulfilling future. I'm so grateful for their support. They've given me the tools to make a career change I'm truly passionate about. I'm now able to work with children while staying close to home, and I couldn't be more excited."

– Rosalina Maders

Rosalina's SEE Hawai'i Work program team helped her to apply for the role and prepare for the interview, and she was thrilled to be hired. The SEE Hawai'i Work program team also provided assistance in what she should expect in the first 90 days in her new role and how Rosalina could ensure her success.



Testimonial:

Codi Kohatsu

Codi Kohatsu is a graduate of the Ho'ala Program at the Kailua First-to-Work unit, part of the City and County of Honolulu's WorkHawai'i Division. The Ho'ala Program works closely with the First-to-Work Program to help facilitate the successful transition of families from welfare dependence to work.

The Ho'ala curriculum is focused on creating a learning environment that stimulates participants' willingness to learn and motivation to work and is aligned with the First-to-Work curriculum, which includes five daily modules and is offered in an open-entry and open-exit format to provide the greatest customer choice. The modules include self discovery, building blocks, foundations of retention, interviewing, and fitting in—all aimed at supporting job readiness.

Codi had been referred to the Ho'ala Program several times but had not been able to overcome some difficult circumstances in his life. But Codi decided to start taking steps toward living and providing his family with a better life. His initial steps were to complete a TANF application, which referred Codi and his family to a variety of housing and support partners, and enrolling in the Ho'ala Program.

Less than three weeks after finishing the program, Codi was excited to share that he had secured employment at the Mid-Pacific Country Club—and credited the curriculum and coaches who provided support for his job search and overcoming his personal barriers.



Spotlight on Employees: Christine Wong and Iva Cain

BESSD Statewide Branch Administrator Christine Wong and Assistant Statewide Branch Administrator Iva Cain have gone above and beyond in leading the Statewide Branch, which administers direct operations and services for BESSD through a period of steadily increasing demand for services.

The Statewide Branch's responsibilities include licensing and regulating child care facilities statewide, maintaining case management and employment services for First-to-Work program participants, and providing federally-funded child care subsidies to eligible families. On top of this, the number of individuals applying for SNAP and financial assistance has nearly doubled since 2020, from 4,400 to nearly 8,000 applications each month.

To meet this increased demand, Christine and Iva developed and implemented a number of changes over the past two years, including:

- Establishing a new Child Care Subsidy Unit (CCSU) to directly administer and streamline applications for federal child care subsidy;
- Establishing and supervising a Backlog Team of 17 senior Eligibility Workers to work the oldest applications for public benefits and have been critical to improving the Division's overall timeliness and accuracy for benefit processing.
- Supervising dedicated Eligibility Workers who conduct outreach at homeless shelters and drop-in sites on Oahu to increase access to applicants who are unable to walk in to a Processing Center or contact the Department by phone.

Christine and Iva's leadership and innovation have been essential to the Division continuing to meet the needs of families in the community. Together, they provide strong and steady leadership to the Statewide Branch's 14 Processing Centers, 22 First-to-Work Offices, Child Care Subsidy Unit and six Child Care Licensing Units statewide.



SSD

Social Services Division

SSD

Social Services Division

The Social Services Division (SSD) provides protection from abuse and neglect for children and dependent adults through its branches, Child Welfare Services (CWS) and the Adult Protective and Community Services Branch (APCSB). SSD also works to provide safe living arrangements with the goal of reducing abuse, neglect, and maltreatment.



APCSB

Adult Protective and Community Services Branch

The Adult Protective and Community Services Branch (APCSB) provides crisis intervention, investigation and emergency services to vulnerable adults who are reported to be abused, neglected or financially exploited by others or seriously endangered due to self-neglect.

It is important to note that although many clients are older adults, age in itself does not determine vulnerability (many older adults are not considered “vulnerable”). Section 346-222, HRS defines a vulnerable adult as a person aged 18 years of age or older who, because of a mental, developmental, or physical impairment is unable to:

- Communicate or make responsible decisions to manage the person's own care or resources
- Carry out or arrange for essential activities of daily living
- Protect oneself from abuse

From July 2023 through November 2024, APCSB intake staff assigned and APCSB field staff investigated 1,231 cases of abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable adults and addressed issues of health and safety while supporting their right to self-determination.



In FY2024, the APCSB has made significant progress, embracing change and working collaboratively with our community partners to achieve shared goals. This work includes:

STRENGTHENING ADULT PROTECTIVE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES:

Through solid recruitment and retention efforts, APCSB hired and supported 13 new staff members, bringing the vacancy rate down to 14% (lower than the national average, and the lowest vacancy rate for the branch since before the COVID-19 pandemic) and secured two new registered nurse positions, expanding the crucial services available for Hawai'i residents.

All APCSB professional staff were trained on the use of reliable and validated tools to address cognition. A selection of these tools are utilized by staff to ensure that we better understand and address the needs of our clients.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY:

The branch made significant progress with the building of a new system of record to replace outdated technology. The LAVA (Living Aloha for Vulnerable Adults) system improves overall service delivery.

APCSB utilized grant funding to continue forward momentum with the new LAVA system build and section-driven Quality Assurance (QA). Through weekly meetings, focus groups, a newsletter, and regular updates for all staff, APCSB is working to ensure the new system is successful.

As a part of the LAVA system build, APCSB launched the new DHS 1640 WEB “Report Form for Vulnerable Adult Abuse,” a web-based on-line reporting form that makes it easier for both reporters and staff, who more efficiently make dispositions and complete intake reports. This saves time and increases productivity and accuracy.

CWS

Child Welfare Services Branch

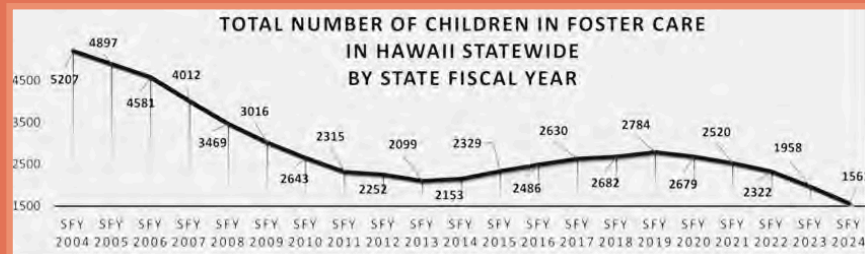
The mission of the Child Welfare Services Branch (CWS) is to ensure the safety, permanency, and wellbeing of children in their own homes first or, when necessary, in out-of-home placements. When a child cannot be safely returned to the family within a reasonable time frame, CWS will proceed with establishing a permanent placement for the child through adoption, legal guardianship, or another long-term substitute care.

CWS provides services to children and their families to address identified risks of harm, and to keep children from entering foster care. These services include child protection, prevention, and diversion services to keep children out of foster care. CWS also includes family support; foster care; adoption; legal guardianship; independent living; adoption assistance and guardianship payments; and licensing of resource caregivers, group homes, and child placing organizations.

In FY2024, CWS continued their essential work, including:

- Collaborating with state and community entities, young people on Extended Foster Care (EFC), Imua Kakou (IK), Higher Education (HE), Educational Training Vouchers (ETV), and Independent Living (IL) to help young people become employed and self-sufficient.
- Establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Education (DOE) and DHS regarding the sharing of data to ensure that children in foster care were automatically enrolled in the DOE free lunch program for their respective home school. During this period, DHS sent data to DOE each month, which was used to successfully enroll children in foster care in the DOE free lunch program.
- Pursuing a resolution with the housing workgroup—which includes CWS, the Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR), the Office of the Governor, and the Administration for Children and Families Children's Bureau—to allow young adults receiving support to access Housing and Urban Development (HUD) vouchers (Family Unification Program (FUP) and Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers).

CWS reached an important milestone in FY2024, achieving the lowest total number of children in foster care in Hawai'i in more than two decades. The below graph shows the number of children in foster care statewide from FY2004 to FY2024—a span of twenty-one years. During this period, Hawai'i CWS has safely reduced the number of children in foster care by 70%.



Three major CWS initiatives have impacted this reduction of children in out of home care and are essential to keeping the numbers from rising to previous heights:

- Hawai'i's Differential Response System (DRS), implemented in 2005;
- The Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project, beginning in 2015 and ending in 2019; and most recently,
- Family First Hawai'i (FFH), initiated in October 2021.

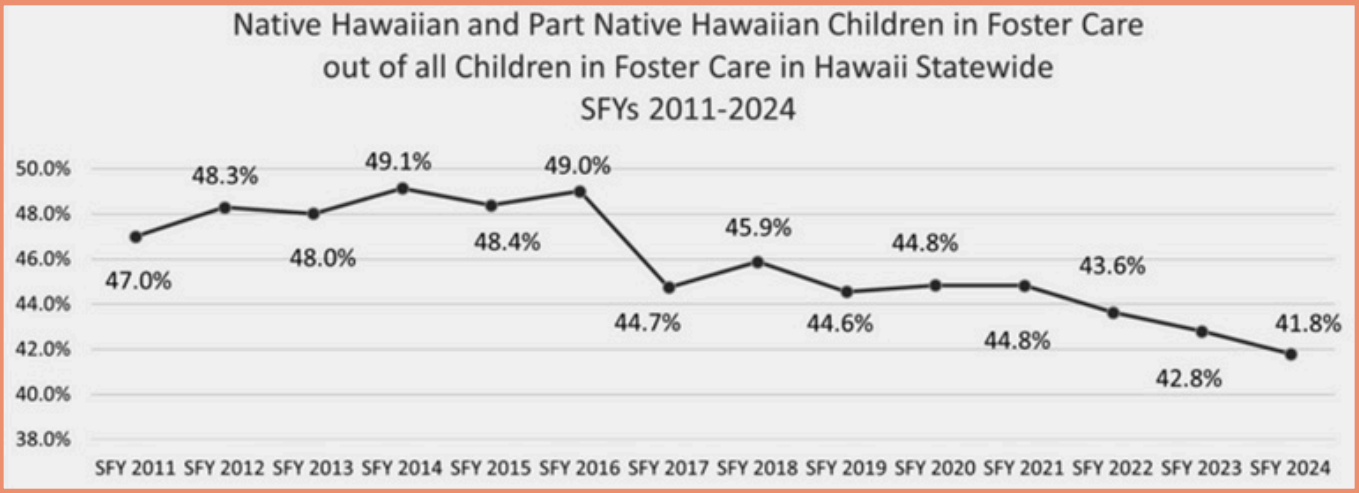
FFH

Family First Hawai'i

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) provides Hawai'i the opportunity to utilize federal Title IV-E funding for prevention services with the goal of keeping children safe at home with their families. The Family First Prevention Services Act Plan: Family First Hawai'i, Keeping Families Together, was approved by DHS's federal partner agency, Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Hawai'i was the first state in ACF's Region 9 to receive approval of the plan.

The Family First Hawai'i (FFH) initiative is committed to ensuring that the voices and perspectives of individuals with lived experience are truly heard, valued, and reflected in our work. Recognizing that meaningful participation requires more than just having a seat at the table, FFH has sought technical assistance to develop a structured and sustainable framework that empowers members with lived experience to participate fully and contribute meaningfully to our initiatives.

In our efforts to cultivate a more inclusive and family-centered approach, we actively seek the guidance and insights of our Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) in key decision-making points—whether it's shaping policies, refining procedures, or providing training. The LEEF workgroup also includes CWS staff to ensure their valuable perspectives are part of building a comprehensive framework. To further elevate the role of lived experience, LEAG members are now integrated into our core operations, contributing directly to key FFH workgroups. Our LEAG members actively engage in our workgroups and are also offered leadership roles, such as serving as workgroup co-leads or tri-leads.



Lower percentages of disproportionality reflect true progress toward equity, as they are based on the total number of children in foster care each year, whether high or low. Reducing Native Hawaiian disproportionality is a priority for CWS.

A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows the silhouettes of a family—a man, a woman, and two children—walking along a beach. They are walking away from the camera towards the ocean under a dramatic sunset sky with orange and blue hues. The man is on the left, holding the hand of a small child. The woman is on the right, carrying a child on her back.

FFH: FY2024

Priorities and Accomplishments

In FY2024, FFH continues important prevention work including:

LIVED EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT:

FFH's efforts to engage individuals with lived experience is ongoing and we are currently looking at next steps to move forward with building this framework.

EQUITY IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE (EIC):

The EIC aims to promote and improve equity for all people involved with CWS, with a current focus on eliminating racial disproportionality and providing appropriate supports for Native Hawaiian children and families. The EIC is working toward completing and implementing the Hawai'i CWS Equity Action Plan in 2025.

FAMILY SUPPORTED ARRANGEMENTS

CONTINUUM (FSAC):

This initiative was formed to provide comprehensive guidance for CWS staff to encompass the spectrum of placement options from prevention to foster custody. FSAC is charged with establishing clear definitions for placement options, legal statuses, and assessment tools and terminology; creating a Decision Tree to aid staff in navigating child placement decisions; and revising the Child Safety Assessment Tool and Instructions.

FFH PATHWAYS:

Family First Hawai'i implemented its first evidenced-based service, HOMEBUILDERS® Intensive Home-Based Services, in October 2021. Home Visiting Services (Parents as Teachers and Healthy Families America models) were implemented in March 2022. In March 2023, a dedicated FFH pathway for Expectant and Parenting Young People (EPYP) in foster care was established. The development of a pathway for EPYP in extended foster care is underway.

Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group:

Launched in early 2024, the Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group was created by the Office of Wellness and Resilience in the Office of the Governor to redesign and recommend transformative changes to Hawai‘i’s existing child welfare system by working alongside families who have lived experience in the system.

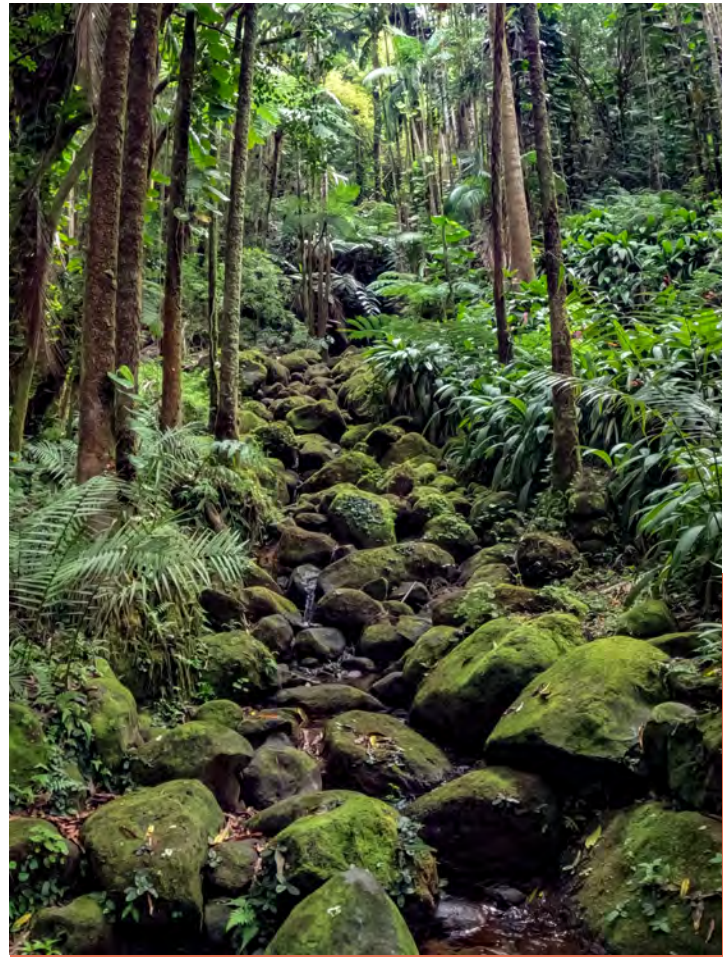
Grounded in the values of mālama (to care for) and ‘ohana (family), their work seeks to bring about a future where every child in Hawai‘i has the opportunity to thrive, and every family is supported in maintaining their wholeness, dignity, and cultural identity. Mālama ‘Ohana includes 17 members, and those who bring important lived experience and expertise as youth, birth parents, and both kinship resource caregivers and licensed resource caregivers in the state child welfare system, as well as representatives from EPIC ‘Ohana, Hale Kipa, the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services, Kamehameha Schools, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Lili‘uokalani Trust.

DHS actively participated in the Mālama ‘Ohana Working Group’s processes throughout FY2024, and looks forward to continuing to collaborate on ways to best serve the children and families of Hawai‘i.

Employee Spotlight:

Cornelius Patrick

Maui-based Registered Nurse Cornelius Patrick, a member of the APCS team, initiated a search-and-rescue operation in the wake of the Maui wildfires. Cornelius quickly organized a mobile medical unit just outside of the burn zone and was able to provide crucial aid and support to survivors. Cornelius is just one of the many Maui APCS staff that assisted with relief efforts in emergency shelter operations and personally sheltered victims of the Maui wildfires.



Testimonial:

Ashley Viluan

“Working with Family First Hawai‘i, I felt heard. It gave me more of an understanding of the process, and it helped me to see through different lenses, including as a birth parent, social worker, and part of the CWS system. I felt a part of a team, working with other staff and social workers. I used to feel less than, but I no longer feel that way. The Family First Hawai‘i team took what we as Birth Parents/Parent Partners said into consideration in order to move forward towards improvement. Being a part of the Decision Tree workgroup provided me with a better understanding of how I can work with my clients, the families I work with, and I was able to familiarize myself with the CWS process.”

The background of the slide is a dark green color. Overlaid on this background are several stylized, light green leaves. The leaves are elongated with pointed tips and have a prominent central vein with smaller veins branching off. They are arranged in a way that some are partially overlapping others, creating a sense of depth. The leaves are positioned in the upper right, middle right, and bottom left areas of the slide.

MQD

Med-QUEST (Quality, Universal Access,
Efficiency, Sustainability,
Transformation) Division

MQD

Med-QUEST (Quality, Universal Access, Efficiency, Sustainability, Transformation) Division

Med-QUEST (Quality, Universal Access, Efficiency, Sustainability, Transformation) Division, also known as MQD, is a division of DHS that provides healthcare benefits to Hawai'i residents who are eligible for Medicaid. This includes children, pregnant women, parents, caretaker relatives, and adults—including the elderly (age 65 and older), blind, and disabled individuals that are covered by Medicaid.

Med-QUEST delivers essential services to those in our community who depend on the program for their health insurance coverage while supporting the crucial health plans and providers who are at the front lines of service to Hawai'i's people. The division works toward a vision of the people of Hawai'i embracing health and wellness and seeks to empower Hawai'i's residents to improve and sustain wellbeing by developing, promoting, and administering innovative and high-quality healthcare programs with aloha.

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.



MQD: FY2024

Priorities and Accomplishments

MQD's work focused on key areas, including:

DATA, UPDATES, AND TECHNOLOGY:

- Successfully completed unwinding of Medicaid renewal process:
 - Following the pandemic-related “continuous coverage” requirement of states to continue to provide Medicaid coverage, states have been working to ‘unwind’ this approach. This includes resuming evaluations of participants’ eligibility for Medicaid and reviewing renewal processes for more than 500,000 Hawai‘i enrollees.
 - MQD also invested in communications and outreach efforts around eligibility renewals restarting in order to reach individuals whose eligibility had not been redetermined during the pandemic and while Public Health Emergency protections were in place. This included providing training and technical assistance, enabling online renewals to allow members and Kōkua/Navigators to submit renewals through the Med-QUEST Client and Navigator Portal, a texting campaign, implementing the Stay Well Stay Covered Campaign, and completing surveys to assess member satisfaction with services delivered.
- States Advancing All-Payer Health Equity Approaches and Development (AHEAD) Model
 - MQD was one of six states chosen to participate in a ten-year Cooperative Agreement that will focus on payment transformation for hospitals and primary care so that financial incentives are aligned with improved population health and community well-being.
- 1115 Waiver Renewal
 - Section 1115 of the Social Security Act allows for experimental, pilot, or demonstration projects to assist in promoting the objectives of the Medicaid program. These demonstrations give states the flexibility to design and improve their programs and show how state-specific policy approaches can better serve Medicaid populations.
 - Hawai‘i’s Section 1115 Demonstration is up for renewal in 2025 and will include many new and innovative initiatives, such as:
 - Health-related social needs/ social drivers of health: MQD is working with a broad range of state agencies and community based organizations on policy and implementation planning, including:
 - Health/ Housing: Community Integration Services to support individuals who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. Expansions include transitional rental assistance, utilities and short-term medical respite services.
 - “Food as Medicine” Nutritional Supports: Nutritional education and instruction, fruit/ veggie/ protein box prescriptions, pantry restocking, and medically tailored meals.

MQD: FY2024

Priorities and Accomplishments

MQD's work focused on key areas, including:

WELLNESS:

- Expanded Services and Continuous Eligibility for keiki: Implementing a continuous eligibility for MedQUEST program access for children up to age 6, and two years of continuous eligibility for children ages 6-19.
- Implemented the Hawai'i Child Wellness Incentive Program: This program provides \$50 per child per year to Medicaid-enrolled parents to help ensure the health of children in Hawai'i. Thousands of families have applied for and received their incentive payment within the first six months of initiation.
- Expanded Hearing Screening in schools: Increasing access to hearing screenings in schools by partnering with a private community based group, Project Vision, so that any child in a school that primarily serves economically disadvantaged children can have their hearing screened and receive treatment if needed. Since it was approved and implemented, more than 3,300 children have been screened.

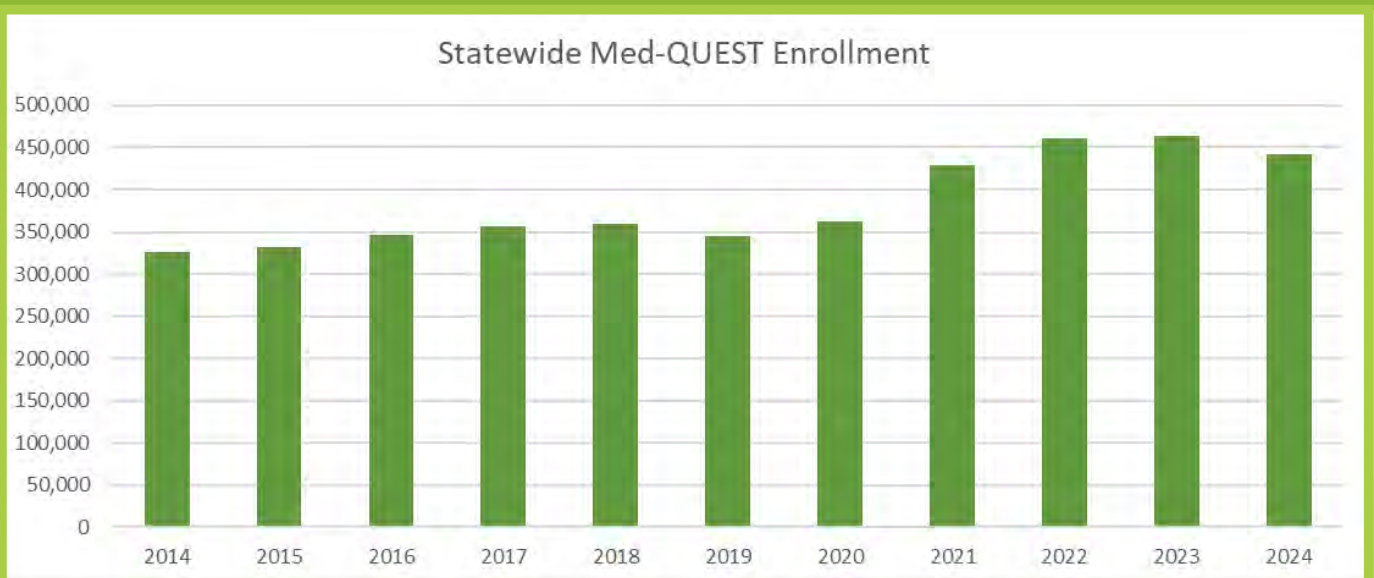
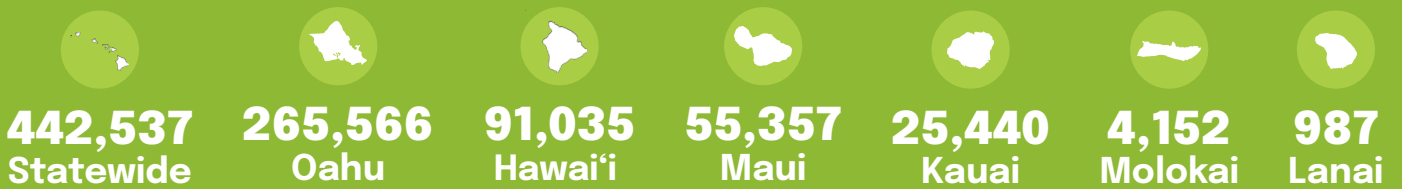
PALLIATIVE CARE:

- MQD received CMS approval for Community Palliative Care, a new initiative which supports a multi-disciplinary team for individuals and their families facing serious illness. It fills a care gap for people who may be struggling with their illness but do not need and/or do not want hospice.

MQD:

By the Numbers

Number of Recipients in FY2024



Employee Spotlight:

Lori-Lei Aponte

"When I think about a person who embodies the best of what we all hope to be as dedicated members of the Department of Human Services, I think of Lori-Lei Aponte. Throughout the years, Lori-Lei has maintained a high standard of service that is centered around Aloha. She follows closely the teachings and wisdom of Aunty Pilahi Paki who was the guiding force behind our State's creation of the ALOHA Statute. Lori-Lei works with compassion and a firm dedication to serving all in our community with aloha. She flew to Maui to assess the devastation and find out how the Med-QUEST division could help the Maui 'ohana who lost everything in the fire. Lori-Lei worked alongside others to get families the services they deeply needed from medical assistance, to food, as well as housing. She brought eligibility branch employees from other islands to help relieve our Maui branch staff and to assist the community. We are so very fortunate to have her as a leader within DHS. She is a bright example for all of us that when we keep aloha as the piko (center) of our work, we respect and uplift our communities and the many dedicated employees of DHS."

- Meredith Nichols – Med-QUEST Assistant Administrator.

*Pictured from left to right: Meredith Nichols and Lori-Lei Aponte
(Assisting at the Ka La'i Ola modular homes on Maui).*



DVR

Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation



DVR

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) assists individuals with disabilities in pursuing gainful employment, independence, self-sufficiency, and full integration into community life. Services support eligible individuals in preparing for, securing, retaining, advancing in, or regaining competitive, integrated employment. DVR offers a broad range of services to support each individual's goals based on their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choices.

Vocational rehabilitation services help individuals with disabilities ages 14 and above prepare for, obtain, maintain, or advance in competitive employment in integrated work settings, with the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency. DVR supports these individuals through post-high school education, vocational training, and employment, helping each person to reach their full potential in a meaningful career, regardless of their income level. Specially trained counselors work in partnership with our consumers to help them reach these career goals according to their abilities, capabilities, priorities, preferences, and informed choice.

In addition to vocational counseling, DVR provides a wide variety of services to help along the road to self-sufficiency, including but not limited to self-advocacy training, vocational/technical training, credential attainment, higher education, equipment and supplies, technology, benefits counseling, workplace readiness training, and customized job placement with supports as needed.

In FY2024, 3,273 people participated in the DVR's Vocational Rehabilitation programs, an increase of 261 more participants over the previous year. DVR services also enabled participants to increase their median earnings by \$222 in FY2024. DVR, through its Ho'opono Services for the Blind Branch, continues to offer specialized services for those who are blind, low vision, or deaf-blind. The Counseling Section supported 221 active VR cases.

DVR administers the following primary 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.



Services for the Blind (Ho'opono):

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.



Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities:

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.



Disabilities Determination Services:

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



DVR: FY2024

Priorities and Accomplishments

DVR's work focused on key areas, including:

- The state was awarded the National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) grant from the Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) as one of 13 Core States and Territories. States selected as NEON Core States receive technical assistance to improve employment outcomes within their systems serving people with disabilities, specifically in focus areas including benefits planning, blending, braiding and sequencing of funding resources, State as a Model Employer, and state strategic planning.
- DVR received remote and online technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), sponsored Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center—Quality Management (VR TAC-QM). This included assistance with streamlining processes, revising Policies & Procedures, creating mechanisms for internal controls, analyzing programmatic and fiscal data, conceiving new innovative strategies for rapid, ongoing engagement and improving quality and timeliness provision of VR services with successful results.
- DVR's collaboration with the Department of Education (DOE) has continued to be strengthened during this time in our efforts to create a new State Educational Agency (SEA) Agreement. The SEA aligns the delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Transition Services to youth, while avoiding duplication of services. The collaboration between the two agencies through FY2024 has yielded a product that is on its way for signature by the DHS and DOE Department Heads.

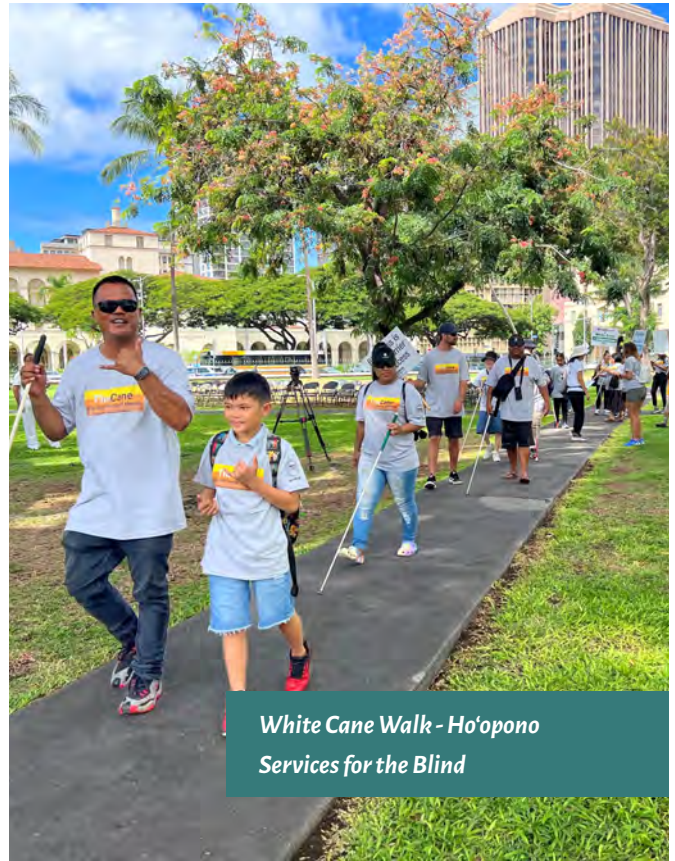
Testimonials:

#1 In 2007, a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) client was rapidly losing their hearing. They were working with a VR Counselor, who provides services through their specialized training, to help determine their path forward. The Counselor was able to help them further their education at Gallaudet University, a leading school for the deaf, as a special graduate student.

Today, the client is working in the Deaf Health Care and Biomedical Science Hub at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) through the Rochester Institute of Technology. They are focusing their studies on the long-term care of deaf elders and credits their Counselor with their success—and adding that their help “saved my life.”

#2 A client who was assaulted and suffered a traumatic brain injury worked with a VR counselor for several years. Before his injury, the client had been working at Pearl Harbor as a janitor with security clearances to work on submarines and pursuing a Master's Degree in Business Administration. Unfortunately, his injury meant that he could no longer hold this job or pass the necessary classes for his degree.

Instead, the client created his own company, a cleaning service for homes and businesses that is continuing to grow. With the support of DVR, the client is learning scheduling, payroll, and overall management skills to help him hire employees and pursue additional contracts.



*White Cane Walk - Ho'opono
Services for the Blind*

Employee Spotlight: Alison Lee

Staff Specialist Alison Lee works in the DVR Administration Office and was recognized by DHS as DVR's Sustained Superior Performance Awardee. Alison has worked for DVR for well over 30 years in a variety of capacities and has most recently taken the initiative to assist DVR with contract administration, bringing the department into compliance and updating all current contracts. She has also worked on new contracts with a novel service delivery model to expand the number of services and choices offered to DVR clients statewide.



HPHA

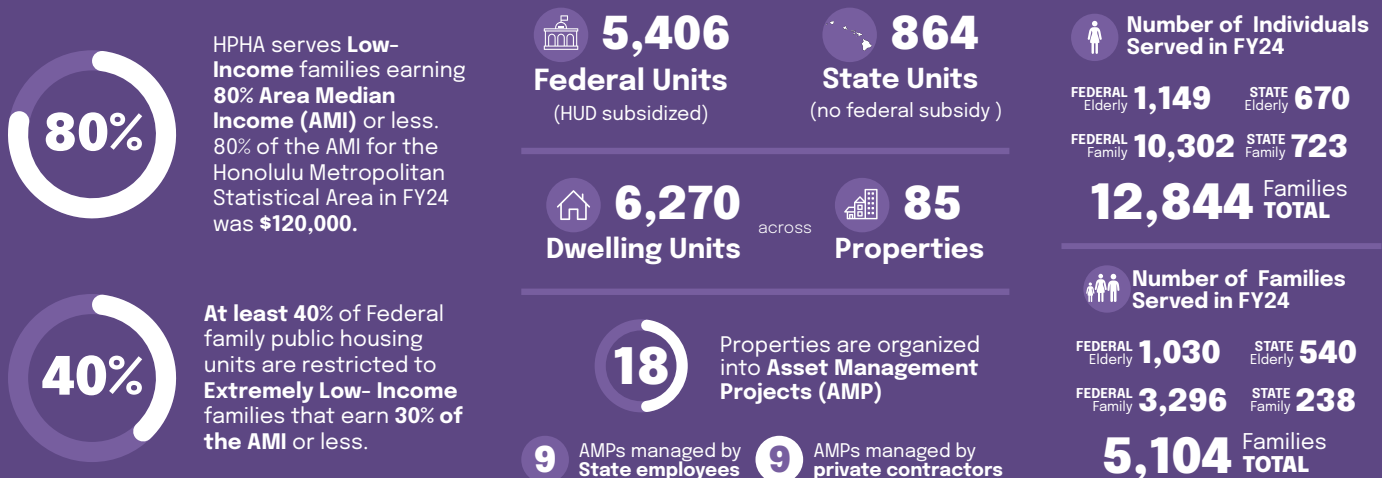
Hawai'i Public Housing Authority

HPHA

Hawai'i Public Housing Authority:

The Hawai'i Public Housing Authority (HPHA)'s mission is to provide our community with safe, decent, and affordable housing. The HPHA accomplishes this primarily through housing and rental subsidies programs which target assistance for low-income individuals and families.

The HPHA is the sole provider in Hawai'i of Federal Public Housing, a program through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The HPHA also administers State Public Housing, which operates similar to, but independent of, the federal program. Both programs combine to serve approximately 5,200 families, or approximately 13,000 individuals.



"Our determination to uplift and empower our community drives our efforts, and we eagerly anticipate continuing our collaboration with all stakeholders to cultivate a brighter future for those in need of safe and affordable housing."

—Robert Hall, Chair of the Board, HPHA

HPHA: FY2024

Priorities and Accomplishments

In FY2024, the agency has continued to make strides in fulfilling our mission of providing safe, affordable housing to Hawai'i's most vulnerable families, touching the lives of over 45,000 individuals across our islands, including:

- The School Street Senior Affordable Housing Community is moving forward, with the first phase of 250 units—part of a planned 800—set for completion by 2026, setting a new standard for affordable housing for our kupuna.
- At Kuhio Park Terrace, HPHA is revitalizing and advancing redevelopment for a brighter future for residents. The Ka Lei Momi Redevelopment Project and our initiatives at Mayor Wright Homes, Kapaa Homes, Lanakila Homes, and Kaahumanu Homes further demonstrate our dedication to creating vibrant communities.
- The HPHA also played a crucial role in the recovery from the Maui wildfires. Through key partnerships and support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), HPHA helped displaced residents to find stability through relocation or housing vouchers.

Construction Management

The Construction Management Branch (CMB) is committed to providing affordable housing and services that improve quality of life, enhance safety, and promote personal success for the people it serves and the surrounding community. The CMB provides overall administration for all capital improvement projects with a priority on health, safety, accessibility, and occupancy.

In FY2024, the HPHA initiated another Lead Risk Assessment of all properties that are still indicating positive for Lead-Based Paint (LBP) that were not removed from ongoing modernization projects. HPHA is reviewing the results of the recent Lead Risk Assessment reports to ensure that the agency is aligned with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) revised stricter standards.

HPHA made significant infrastructure upgrades across a variety of projects and properties and structural assessments and repairs of HPHA's many aging public housing buildings were also undertaken. This work is essential to ensuring that buildings reaching the end of their useful life are still structurally sound.



HCV Program

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, commonly referred to as "Section 8," is a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program established to provide rental subsidies for units that are chosen by the tenant in the private market. Assistance is provided through a tenant-based voucher and the program is the largest of the HPHA's rental subsidy programs-- and is only administered on Oahu. The State of Hawai'i also provides the HPHA with funding to operate the Rent Supplement Program (RSP), which is administered similarly to the HCV program and provides shallow rent subsidies for rental units statewide.

In FY2024, HPHA provided crucial housing assistance to:

HCVs and Project-Based Vouchers (PBV):

3,672

Average HCV Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

\$1,438

417 HCVs and Project-Based Vouchers

Average HAP of **\$940** per month

208 State Rent Supplement Program

Average HAP of **\$433** per month

123 Non-Elderly Disabled (NED) Vouchers

Average HAP of **\$1,284** per month

208 State Rent Supplement Program

Average HAP of **\$1,438** per month

83 Tenant Protection Vouchers

Average HAP of **\$1,477** per month



SOHHS

State Office on Homelessness
& Housing Solutions

SOHHS

The Statewide Office on Homelessness & Housing Solutions

The Statewide Office on Homelessness & Housing Solutions (SOHHS) is focused on developing policies and programs to end homelessness. Together with community partners, SOHHS designs, tests, and evaluates innovative approaches to address homelessness in Hawai'i. The office also identifies and addresses gaps in the homeless service system, maintains a homelessness data clearinghouse, and coordinates the Hawai'i Interagency Council on Homelessness.

- In FY2024, SOHHS continued their important work across a variety of issue areas, including on the Kauhale initiative, which works to create deeply affordable spaces for housing and healing our people, through intentional 'kauhale' design and operation. Kauhale are communal living spaces, with modest housing units for individual households, and shared space for cooking and eating, recreation, growing food, or engaging in industrious activities together. The defining feature of a Kauhale is that it functions like a village, with people taking care of place and each other. SOHHS opened four Kauhale and worked with the providers and community resources to implement job readiness and other workforce development training.
- As part of the Kauhale initiative, SOHHS partnered with the Workforce Development Council to implement work readiness programs into Kauhale, and opened a dedicated mental and behavioral health and wellness Kauhale. SOHHS also opened a medical respite Kauhale, which quickly addressed the needs of people discharged by hospitals, in urban Honolulu for a limited period of time and is working to identify sites and operators for additional medical respite Kauhales.
- To help people who are homeless or at-risk for homelessness that are seeking employment, SOHHS connected individuals with the Institute for Human Services Hele2Work Program, which helps individuals to get workforce ready, and worked with MQD to establish the ability to pay for peer navigators and peer support specialists as an onramp to career pathways for unhoused individuals.





OYS

Office of Youth Services

OYS

Office of Youth Services

The Office of Youth Services' (OYS) mission is to provide a continuum of programs and services for Hawai'i's youth including the provision of balanced and comprehensive services for at-risk youth, to prevent delinquency, reduce recidivism, and maximize opportunities for youth to become productive, responsible citizens through community based and family-focused treatment interventions. OYS strives to provide a clear sense of responsibility and accountability for all youth services in Hawai'i.

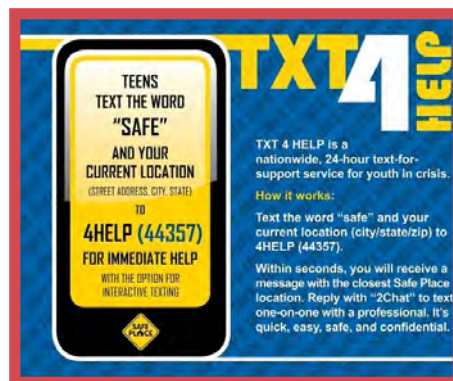


OYS: FY2024

Priorities and Accomplishments

OYS' work focused on key areas, including:

- Launched the Safe Places program, in partnership with the Hawai'i Youth Services Network, to provide outreach and prevention services for youth in need of immediate help and safety. Part of a national network of Safe Place programs in 38 states, the Safe Places programs make help readily available throughout communities and display yellow Safe Place signs. A licensed national Safe Place and two Safe Place sites were established, and 24/7 phone lines were activated.
- Received a technology grant from the Department of Health (DOH)/ Child & Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD) to improve communication between the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF) staff, wards and their families, and CAMHD staff.
- Initiated an innovative new program to address the mental health needs of LGBTQ+ youth using indigenous Hawai'iian cultural practices and soliciting additional support for youth and families in the community.



OYS: FY2024

Priorities and Accomplishments

Building on its first year of progress, the Kawailoa: A Transformative Indigenous Model to End Youth Incarceration in Hawai'i and Beyond project continued its work to replace youth incarceration with a Native Hawaiian restorative system that empowers communities, trains youth healers, and shifts resources to community-driven and culturally grounded sanctuaries of support. Kawailoa partners came together for a two-day workshop to strengthen relationships, address challenges and create opportunities. Kawailoa also hosted tours for Family Court Judges and members of the Hawai'i State Legislature to bring awareness of the work done on campus to divert youth from the juvenile justice system.

OYS also launched its first-ever agency logo, aiming to communicate its broad mission and components, including the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility, Kawailoa Youth and Family Wellness Center and statewide Program Development Office.

The logo represents kuleana (responsibility), malama (to care for), 'aina (land), and 'ohana (family). The image shows k̄naka (people) and 'ohana (family) surrounding and caring for a baby kalo. Through this care, the kalo will grow and flourish, signifying the new beginnings to embrace and empower youth and families to flourish in all of Hawai'i.



Kawailoa Collective Accomplishments

Kellog Racial Equity 2030 Milestones (Year 2)

- 
401 Youth engaged in healing and wellbeing through Kawailoa services.
- 
99 Youth diverted through positive pathways out of justice system involvement.
- 
38 Emerging leaders trained in cultural curriculum, learning and applying kupuna Ike (wisdom) for healing and well-being.
- 
1 New diversion pathway established, alternative to justice system processing Ho'okanaka at Kupa 'Aina, a culturally relevant.
- 
24 Organizations and Institutions engaged with Kawailoa, including local communities and BIPOC communities from the Continental US and other countries.
- 
17 New partnerships activated for youth.
- 
2 Additional new programs created to connect youth to culturally relevant resources and partners: workforce development for community response careers at Kinai 'Eha and a cultural healing curriculum at RYSE.



Maui Wildfire Relief

Maui Wildfire Relief

On August 8, 2023, strong winds drove wildfires out of control on Maui—resulting in the worst natural disaster in Hawai‘i’s history and one of the worst American wildfires of the last century. Nearly all of the town of Lāhainā was destroyed, and Kula was significantly damaged. Following the Maui wildfires, and at Governor Josh Green’s direction, DHS focused on helping lead the state’s response and the community’s recovery to help our ‘Ohana recover— and plan for the future. Each day, we work to support and rebuild the fabric of our communities, providing essential support to survivors, including access to nutrition support, temporary housing, support services for disaster relief, financial support, medical and mental healthcare, and comprehensive disaster case management services.

While there is still a long road ahead, DHS is honored to provide for and help our community in this time of need. We are proud of the progress made and continue to focus on rebuilding our future. We are enormously grateful to Governor Green for his leadership in this work and to our many partners in helping to serve our community, and to each member of the DHS team for their tireless work and commitment to make a difference for the people of Hawai‘i each day.

Pictured is a rendering of the Ka La‘i Ola modular homes on Maui.



A People-focused Disaster Response

Recognizing the need for immediate assistance led with a human services approach, DHS, was well-positioned to help lead the disaster response efforts. Throughout FY2024, our work focused on crucial areas of need for survivors, including:

1. Disaster Case Management Services
2. Temporary Housing solutions
3. Access to nutrition
4. Financial assistance

DHS leadership immediately mobilized on Maui, setting up information and service hubs and coordinating with local and federal assets to expedite support to survivors.

Creating Innovative Emergency Shelter and Housing Solutions

The wildfires displaced approximately 13,000 Maui residents, meaning their homes had either been destroyed or were within the restricted areas in Lāhainā and Kula. Shelter and interim housing for these survivors was an immediate concern, and DHS led the effort to ensure that all survivors had their housing needs met.

DHS worked closely to support the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA), FEMA, and the American Red Cross with the launch of the non-congregate sheltering (NCS) program. In the two weeks following the fires, DHS, local, state, federal and non-profit partners worked together to move 7,796 survivors into hotel rooms across Maui. Then, with the Safe Harbor housing program drawing to a close, DHS launched Pu'uhonua o Nēnē in September 2023, as a congregate—or group housing location—interim solution for pre-disaster homeless that were no longer eligible for NCS.

DHS also partnered with Airbnb to provide both emergency shelter options, and later, longer-term housing solutions with an innovative Rental Assistance Program for survivors ineligible for FEMA housing assistance.



Partnering with Airbnb

Governor Green also collaborated with Airbnb to facilitate temporary stays for people in the immediate wake of the wildfires, and directed DHS to lead that partnership on behalf of the state. Initially, DHS was able to secure free, local, temporary stays for up to 21 days—a crucial lifeline for survivors, and especially families, in the early disaster response efforts and provided more stable, home-like accommodations. This initial collaboration then expanded to enable eligible households to remain in Airbnb listings for an additional 30 days. Ultimately, this partnership provided more than 3,000 eligible survivors with free, local housing totaling over 97,500 nights—helping families stay together and providing a readily available and much-needed local housing solution during the initial days following the disaster.

Housing Innovation at Scale:

The Rental Assistance Program

Governor Green and DHS recognized a need for a state housing solution for additional survivors and took action to create and launch the innovative Rental Assistance Program (RAP) specifically to help survivors of the Maui wildfires who were not eligible for FEMA housing assistance.

In November 2023, DHS launched the state RAP to provide assistance quickly by connecting eligible households with an Airbnb property, helping to secure housing for up to 12 months. This first-of-its kind program makes creative use of Hawai'i's short term rental market and was immediately successful. RAP's initial goal was to provide an interim housing solution for 200 survivor households who did not qualify for a FEMA interim housing solution.

By June 2024, RAP had expanded to a \$35M program that was a key component to the transition of survivors from NCS to long-term, stable housing options. RAP

successfully placed over 300 households, totaling nearly 850 individuals, in long-term interim housing solution for up to 12-months—and did so both ahead of schedule and significantly under budget. Throughout FY2024, RAP integrated with the launch of the Hawai'i Interim Housing Program (HIHP), and continued to assist eligible households achieve safe, stable interim housing solutions, with support to assist with ultimately identifying long-term permanent housing solutions.

“This new housing program was a novel way to enable us to help more families find places to live and to recover without having to worry about where they will move next, or high rental costs. Survivors, especially those that don’t qualify for federal assistance, needed the state to step in and the Department of Human Services is proud to offer this help.”

– DHS Deputy Director Trista Speer

Creating Refuge at Pu‘uhonua O Nēnē

DHS identified a critical need for survivors who were ineligible to remain in the NCS program, specifically those experiencing homelessness prior to the fires who resided in the burn zones. In coordination with Project Vision Hawai‘i, a local organization dedicated to improving access to health and human services for the people of Hawai‘i, DHS moved quickly to develop a housing solution, securing access from the Hawai‘i Department of Transportation to unused land for up to 18 months, acquiring military field shelters, and partnering with additional aid organizations to help support a temporary shelter.

Pu‘uhonua o Nēnē opened in September 2023 specifically to help individuals who were experiencing homelessness pre-disaster and therefore did not meet shelter eligibility requirements to remain in NCS. Through FY2024, Pu‘uhonua O Nēnē continued to provide wrap-around support services, including on-site medical facilities, showers and restrooms, meals, transportation for medical and other appointments, and case managers. Pu‘uhonua O Nēnē is the only housing option for pre-disaster homeless individuals in need and has helped a total of 390 individuals.

“Pu‘uhonua o Nēnē is a place survivors can go to receive a wide array of services. I know Project Vision Hawai‘i will create a safe, welcoming environment that supports recovery, and I appreciate the Department of Human Services and Department of Transportation for their efforts to build this site so quickly.”

– Governor Josh Green





Building for the Future at Ka La‘i Ola

DHS created another innovative housing solution on Maui: Ka La‘i Ola, which means ‘The Place of Peaceful Recovery.’ It is the largest interim housing development for Maui wildfire survivors, and aims to create 450 temporary housing units, including studios and one-, two-, and three-bedroom homes. DHS expects to be able to house up to 1,500 total survivors through this new project.

Located in West Lāhainā, Ka La‘i Ola’s temporary homes will be occupied for up to five years, providing those impacted by the fires a safe place to continue on their path to recovery. Ka La‘i Ola is also providing property management and support services to help residents as they heal, recover, and rebuild their lives, including from dedicated Disaster Case Managers (DCMs) through the Disaster Case Management Program (DCMP). After the five-year program is complete, Ka La‘i Ola’s 57-acres and structures will be transferred to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL), helping to support Native Hawaiian beneficiaries.

“Ka La‘i Ola is a special project for our community, providing a safe place of refuge for survivors that have not been able to receive disaster aid from FEMA. DHS is committed to ensuring that all survivors have access to the supports and resources they need, and housing is a crucial part of this.”

–DHS Deputy Director Joseph Campos



The Disaster Case Management Program

Long-term, Comprehensive Recovery

Almost immediately following the wildfires, DHS leadership recognized the need for assistance in helping survivors navigate the many, and often complex, support and resources available at the local, state, and federal levels, as well as through additional community-based organizations.

To achieve this, DHS agreed to administer the Disaster Case Management Program (DCMP) on behalf of the state. Within six weeks of the Maui wildfires, DHS applied for a Disaster Case Management Program (DCMP) grant through FEMA—one of the fastest application completions and submissions in the program's history.

"It is an honor and a privilege for DHS to be able to help our community in this time of need. We are committed to continuing this work each day, and unwavering in our dedication to our mission and to the people of Hawai'i."

—DHS Director Ryan Yamane

DHS recognized the need for immediate assistance and secured \$750,000 in private funding from the American Red Cross to launch the program on a 90-day interim basis ahead of the final approvals and launch of the FEMA-funded program. This funding enabled DHS to provide support for up to 700 households that were ineligible for FEMA support. By November 2023, the interim program was able to begin offering services to survivors on an expedited timeline, building on Governor Green's commitment to ensure all survivors were able to access the support they needed.

In March 2024, DHS launched the full DCMP, expanding on the interim program and leveraging a \$17.2 million grant from FEMA to help survivors navigate their recovery for a minimum of 2 years, with the possibility of a 12-month extension. DHS has partnered with St. Vincent de Paul to manage the program, which is, in turn, operated by 7 Community Based Organizations providing direct services to survivors on Maui: Catholic Charities of Hawai'i; Family Promise of Hawai'i; Family Life Center; Aloha House; Pacific Gateway Center; Global Empowerment Mission; and Aloha United Way.

The DCMP connects survivors of disasters with Disaster Case Managers (DCMs), specialists in disaster recovery planning, to help assess and address their needs. Together, the DCMs and survivors develop a disaster recovery plan, which includes resources, decision-making priorities, providing guidance, and tools across key issues including transportation, child care, health, legal aid, assistance with government documents, financial guidance, insurance information, FEMA appeals, employment, and housing.

DCMP FY2024 Highlights



1,589
Households Served



2,724
Referrals for Services



\$19,090,582
In Resources and Services Provided

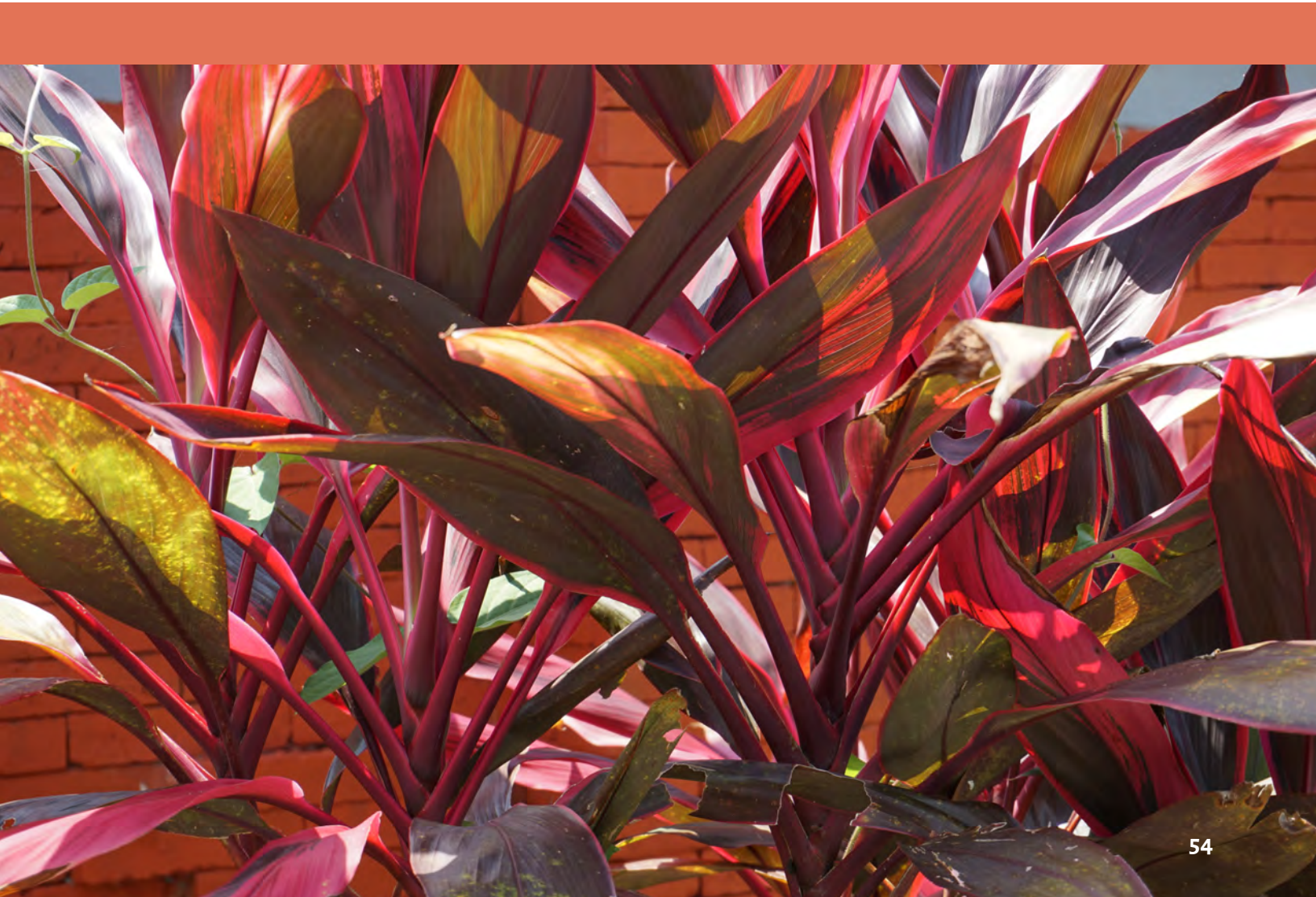


COMMISSIONS

COMMISSIONS

The Governor appoints and nominates to more than 170 boards and commissions established by state constitution, state statutes or executive orders. Boards and commissions provide an opportunity for citizens to have a voice in their government and provide a means of influencing decisions that shape the quality of life for the residents of Hawai'i.

DHS oversees four commissions, including the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women (HSCSW), the Commission on Fatherhood (COF), the Hawai'i State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus (LGBTQ+) Commission, and the Hawai'i State Youth Commission (HiYC).



Hawai'i State Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus (LGBTQ+) Commission:

The Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commission was established to improve the State's engagement with members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus citizens, to identify the short-and long-range needs of its members, and to ensure that there is an effective means of researching, planning, and advocating for the equity of this population in all aspects of state government.

The inaugural eight Commissioners for the LGBTQ+ Commission, appointed by Governor Josh Green, were confirmed by the Hawai'i State Senate on or before May 1, 2024. They were sworn into office by Lt. Governor Sylvia Luke on June 28, 2024, marking the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, a catalyzing series of events centered around the Stonewall Inn in New York City in support of LGBTQ+ rights. The Hawai'i State LGBTQ+ Commissioners officially took office on July 1, 2024.



Commission on Fatherhood:

The Hawai'i State Commission on Fatherhood (COF) is focused on promoting healthy family relationships by emphasizing the important role fathers play in the lives of their children. Children are more likely to thrive with the support, guidance, and nurturing of both parents—yet many children across the country are growing up without fathers. As a result, they may lack appropriate male role models and face greater risks of health, emotional, educational, and behavioral problems during their developmental years.

The Commission serves in an advisory capacity to state agencies and makes recommendations on programs, services, contracts, policies, and laws relating to children and families, and works closely with social service programs that help fathers with recovery and getting involved in their children's lives. This includes submitting testimony on a variety of bills. In FY2024, this included bills related to recreational marijuana, the Constitutional Amendment Relating to Marriage, Vaping, and the Sunshine Law.

In FY2024, the Commission was proud to announce their annual Father of the Year Award, which celebrates fathers and father figures who have made their 'ohana a priority while balancing careers and community involvement to David Bown. David was honored with a ceremony and Kauai Mayor Derek Kawakami issued a proclamation recognizing his award.

"Mr. David Bown epitomizes the spirit of fatherhood through his dedication to his family, community, and personal growth."

—Brian Alston, the Kaua'i Commissioner to the Hawai'i State Commission on Fatherhood





HSCSW

Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women

In Hawai'i, the fight for gender equity is grounded in both history and heart. The Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women (HSCSW) was created to be more than just a government agency—it's a driving force for justice, advocacy, and positive change for women and girls across our islands.

Since 1964, the Commission has served as a strong and consistent voice for women's rights in Hawai'i. We work to shape public policy, support community programs, and provide trusted information to uplift and empower women and girls in every corner of the state.

Our focus is on real-world solutions to real-life challenges. We advocate for:

- Paid family and medical leave
- Affordable child care and housing
- Pay equity
- Data sharing agreements amongst state, county and non-profit service providers
- Mandatory K-12 gender-based violence prevention education

At the heart of it all, HSCSW is about action, inclusion, and progress. We're here to make sure the needs and voices of women and girls are heard—and met.



**HAWAII STATE
COMMISSION**

ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

HiYC

Hawai'i State Youth Commission

Signed into law in 2018, the Hawai'i State Youth Commission (HiYC) is an official recognition of the unique obstacles the youth of Hawai'i face and the great burden future generations will inherit and was created to advise the governor and legislature on the effects of legislative policies, needs, assessments, priorities, programs, and budgets concerning the youth of the State.

New members of the Youth Commission were sworn in by Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke, followed by a keynote speech from State Senator Stanley Chang. Following the swearing in ceremony, commissioners and their families toured the Kawaihoa Youth and Family Wellness Center and spent the weekend connecting with each other during this first in-person event after several years serving virtually.

In 2024, HiYC continued its goals of advocating for the youth by focusing on voter registration and education. With 2024 being an election year, one of the main goals the HiYC had was to get as many youth registered and aware about voter education. HiYC's efforts focused on voter registration drives and Town Hall events to help youth be prepared for upcoming elections and learn more about the importance of voting.

Apart from voter advocacy, the HiYC continued to amplify its voices in the 2024 legislative session by supporting 22 bills ranging from education, housing, and the environment. Through testimony, a bill that requires the University of Hawai'i schools to provide free menstrual products to their students was successfully passed. HiYC is committed to building on this success and continuing to engage legislators in the important conversations that Hawai'i's youth are having.





State of Hawai'i
Department of Human Services

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