IN 2017, THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 154,000 CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF EIGHT AND 17,500 BIRTHS IN HAWAI'I.

• 81% of children from birth to age three in Hawai'i have at least one risk factor known to increase the chance of poor developmental outcomes.

• The high and growing cost of housing is increasing the economic strain on families. 46% of families have incomes below the “survival wage” calculated by Aloha United Way.

• In 2017, 1,622 children under the age of six lived in poverty and outreach services due to being homeless.

• About 100,000 children under age six have working parents and need care arrangements. According to the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family study, “licensed infant/toddler center seats... serve only one out of every 37 children under age three.” Child care is less available in rural areas. Kea‘i, Moloka‘i, and Lāna‘i have “no infant/toddler services.”

• Current public prekindergarten and private preschools serve only 6% of eligible preschool-aged children.

Focusing Resources on Vulnerable Children and Families Leads to Stronger Communities

Research shows that vulnerable and at-risk children stand to gain the most gains from high-quality supports. Focusing resources on improving the health and education outcomes of young children improves their ability to learn and thrive. Across the state, resources are especially needed for children living in poverty, family crises, lack of housing, health, and safety issues, and recent natural disasters. Children and families in Hawai‘i’s rural and remote locations also need immediate increased access to early childhood development resources and early learning programs and services.

Over the past five years, the State of Hawai‘i created the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) and expanded the scope of the Early Learning Board (ELB) to help agencies, organizations, and individuals work together to support children and families. Hawai‘i is laying the groundwork for a statewide early childhood system that includes health and safety, early care and learning, and family partnerships. This comprehensive approach helps to support the “whole child” and reduce the barriers that can prevent children and families from accessing vital programs and services. When we align early childhood efforts, we build strong foundations for our community’s long-term wellbeing. Together, we have generated an Early Childhood State Plan organized around a shared vision, core values, and goals within five key building blocks.

Investments in early childhood programs and strengthening the early childhood workforce are some of the smartest community development strategies. — Dr. James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics

Strong Collaborations Support Strong Children, Families, and Communities

In 2017, there were approximately 154,000 children under the age of eight and 17,500 births in Hawai‘i.

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Vision

• Hawai‘i’s children have the best possible foundation for the future because they are healthy, safe, and ready for lifelong learning. Hawai‘i’s commitment has been illuminated for the future because of our early and sustained investment in all Hawai‘i. Partnerships embrace community health, care professional, community members, and partners from the public and private sectors work together to ensure children can thrive.

Coordination of the Early Childhood System

Children and families can access the supports they need through a coordinated, collaboration-expanding public and private early childhood partnerships working as one entity. This includes an aligned early care and education system that is available to inform program quality, policy decisions, and transitions for children.

Core Values

• Hawai‘i is stronger when vulnerable and underserved families and children are supported, including those in rural and remote locations.

• Hawai‘i is a strong and innovative state where we lead and inspire others.

• Hawai‘i is a state where vulnerable and underserved families and children have access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

Foundation for Early Learning

Children are able to access and utilize resources at all scales for affordable, quality early care and learning. By age eight, 100% of children are healthy, safe, and ready for lifelong learning.

A well-prepared, well-supported workforce

The professional workforce serving children and families from prenatal care through age eight is robust, well-supported, adequately compensated, and highly qualified to serve in the diverse settings involved in child development and education.

Family Partnerships and Support

By age eight, Hawai‘i’s children and families are able to access and utilize resources at all scales for affordable, quality early care and learning.

Invest in expanding public prekindergarten and increasing capacity in the full range of early care and education settings, including public and private settings, to create a strong, statewide early learning system.

The ELB and EOEL invite you to join this collective effort to serve our children and families. To see the full plan and learn how to get involved, please visit the EOEL website.

EARLYLEARNING.HAWAII.GOV

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I WILL take care of my community

I WILL educate future generations

I WILL care for the health and wellbeing of Hawaii’s families

WE WILL create and fill the jobs of the future

EARLY CHILDHOOD is an incredible window of opportunity, and when we invest our resources in young children, we position those children and our state for success. Investing in young children will build a strong foundation for their future and ours.

Improving health outcomes for all Hawaii residents is dependent upon supporting early childhood development, beginning with prenatal care.

Hawaii’s statewide education goals promoting career and college readiness depend on investments in early childhood development and education.

In Hawaii and across the world, we know that when children can develop to their fullest potential, communities can as well.

What is Good for Children Is Good for Hawaii

Recognize others, be recognized; help others, be helped; such is a family relationship.

IN THE FIRST YEARS OF A CHILD’S LIFE, BETWEEN THEIR PRENATAL CARE AND EIGHTH YEAR, WE HAVE A SPECIAL KULEANA (RESPONSIBILITY) TO DO ALL THAT WE CAN TO PROMOTE AND ENSURE THEIR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND OVERALL WELLBEING.

- The foundations of a child’s lifelong health, including risk for obesity and chronic disease, are largely set during the first 1,000 days between a woman’s pregnancy and the child’s second birthday.

- The first years of life are crucial to a child’s developing brain. Neural connections formed by environment and experiences create the brain’s foundation for all later health, behavior, and learning.

- High-quality early childhood education programs can reduce academic achievement gaps.

- Children from low-income households who participate in high-quality early education are more likely to finish high school and twice as likely to attend college.

- The percentage of high-needs students in public schools locally and nationally now exceeds 50% of the overall student population.

- Quality early childhood programs improve school readiness for all children, and especially benefit at-risk children that live in poverty or face other challenges.

- Investing in young children will build a strong foundation for their future and ours.

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Hawaii Early Childhood State Plan 2019-2024

Statewide support for children’s development is key to all of Hawaii’s community, workforce, and economic development goals.

OUR KEIKI

OUR FUTURE

Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan 2019-2024

Summary

Statewide support for children’s development is key to all of Hawaii’s community, workforce, and economic development goals.

Programs focus on children from birth to age five.

Statewide funding of high-quality early childhood education programs.

Building on early childhood investment fills gaps in the current system of care.

Multi-sector approach to support children's development.

Quality early childhood education programs improve school readiness for all children, and especially benefit at-risk children that live in poverty or face other challenges.

Recognize others, be recognized; help others, be helped; such is a family relationship.

The phrase “every child is our child” was used by the late Keoana Hanchett, co-founder of Nā Kamalei – Koolauloa Early Education Program (K.E.E.P.). In K.E.E.P. programs, every adult cares for all children, regardless of ‘ohana origins. In this protected environment all adults become parents. In this environment everyone learns and learns to care for other children without diminishing the importance or place of kūpuna (elder).

This Hawaiian proverb translates to:

‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku, kōkua mai; pēlā ihola ka nohona ‘ohana

(‘Olelo No'eau, Pukui, 1200)

Select photos courtesy of Partners in Development Foundation.