

# FOCUSING RESOURCES ON VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES LEADS TO STRONGER COMMUNITIES



**RESEARCH SHOWS** that vulnerable and at-risk children stand to make the greatest gains from high-quality supports. Focusing resources on improving the health and education outcomes of young children will improve their ability to learn and thrive. Across the state, resources are especially needed for children experiencing trauma from 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.

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

- 61% 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 and basic needs is increasing the economic strain on families. 48.5% of families have incomes below the "survival wage" calculated by Aloha United Way.
- In 2017, 1,622 children under the age of 5 received shelter and outreach services due to being homeless.
- About 109,000 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: Kaua'i, Moloka'i, and Lāna'i "have no infant-toddler centers."
- Current public prekindergarten and private preschools serve only 60% of eligible preschool-aged children.

# STRONG COLLABORATIONS SUPPORT STRONG CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

**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 value, 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



## 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 communities have a solid foundation for the future because of our early and sustained investment in children. Families, caregivers, educators, health care professionals, community members, and leaders from the public and private sectors work together to ensure children can thrive.

## CORE VALUE

- Every child in Hawai'i is our child, and deserves our commitment to their care, learning, and wellbeing!

# FIVE

**KEY BUILDING BLOCKS and GOALS of the HAWAI'I EARLY CHILDHOOD STATE PLAN**

### CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLBEING

Children and their families have the care and resources they need to support their health, safety, and wellbeing in the communities in which they live.

### FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT

As their children's first caregivers and teachers, families are able to access and utilize resources and supports to nurture their children's physical, social-emotional, and intellectual growth.

### FOUNDATIONS FOR EARLY LEARNING

Families are able to access and utilize resources in all communities for affordable, quality early childhood care and education for children from birth to age eight, laying the foundation for growth and 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.

### COORDINATION OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

Children and families can access the supports they need because a coordinated, collaborative system of public and private early childhood partners is working to ensure services are aligned and accessible, and that data is available to inform program quality, good policy decisions, and smooth transitions for children.

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

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](http://EARLYLEARNING.HAWAII.GOV)

# 1

We need all expecting families and newborns to receive screening and any needed support as early as possible. Health and safety risks can cause developmental delays and other long-term challenges for children, families, and the community. **Advocate for and invest in expanded home visitation for families with newborns**, starting with those who can most benefit from additional support.

# 2

Hawai'i is stronger when vulnerable and underserved families and children are well supported, including those in rural and remote communities. **Contribute to and help implement a collaborative plan from the county to the state level to coordinate resources and services, and simplify access for families.**

# 3

Our state's future depends upon all children having access to high-quality early learning options: **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.

# 4

Our state's early childhood workforce is essential to helping children establish their foundations for a promising future. Help talented individuals enter and remain in early childhood professions: **Be a part of a broader group of stakeholders creating new models that increase compensation and support for the early childhood workforce.**

# 5

Tools, resources, and systems are needed for the public and private programs that serve children to collect and provide timely data. This data infrastructure that allows us to share information across programs and sectors will help us collaborate, learn together, and expand successful efforts on behalf of the children we serve. **Invest in data tools and infrastructure, and help gather and share data to inform statewide efforts for children and families.**

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.



# WHAT IS GOOD FOR CHILDREN IS GOOD FOR HAWAI'I



**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 Hawai'i residents is dependent upon supporting early childhood development, beginning with prenatal care.

Hawai'i's statewide education goals promoting career and college readiness depend on investments in early childhood development and education.

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

- 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.

**I WILL**  
take care  
of my  
community

**I WILL**  
educate  
future  
generations

**I WILL**  
care for the health  
and wellbeing of  
Hawai'i's families

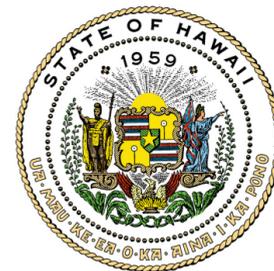
**WE WILL**  
create and fill  
the jobs of  
the future

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

(*'Ōlelo No'eau, Pukui, 1200*)

*This Hawaiian proverb translates to:*

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 - Ko'olauloa 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 are parents. It puts the facilitation, learning, and caring for children before ourselves, without diminishing the importance of kūpuna (elder).

Select photos courtesy of Partners in Development Foundation.



**HAWAI'I**  
EARLY  
CHILDHOOD  
STATE PLAN  
2019-2024  
SUMMARY

**OUR KEIKI  
OUR FUTURE**

STATEWIDE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT IS KEY TO ALL OF HAWAI'I'S COMMUNITY, WORKFORCE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS.