

Access to More Resources for Children and Families: Strategic Implementation Plan, 2020 - 2023

Introduction

The phrase “access and availability” is commonly used in discussions on the early care and education needs of children and families, reflecting the deep interrelationship between the presence of resources (availability) and the ability of families to locate and secure them (access). However closely linked these two concepts are, the strategies for improving access are not the same as those for increasing availability. Consequently, Strategic Implementation Plans were developed separately for Access and Availability.

Needs Assessment Summary on Access, 2015-2018

The summary can be found at: <https://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Pre-2019-Needs-Assessment-Summary-for-Access-to-More-Resources-SIP.pdf>

Current needs assessment studies identify three significant barriers for families in Hawai'i attempting to access early care and education – cost, system fragmentation, and eligibility requirements for health and economic supports.

Cost. The average cost of center-based childcare rivals that of a college education (\$9,553), and is even higher for infants (\$13,404) and toddlers (\$11,904). When combined with data indicating that 33 percent of Hawai'i's children birth to five live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL), the cost barrier comes into sharp relief. At the same time, there are also many financial supports intended to mitigate the cost burden for families such as no-cost early care and education settings for qualified families and financial aid in the form of subsidies, scholarships, and sliding fee scales.

System Fragmentation. Within the state system a number of different agencies administer early childhood programs and this results in complex challenges.

- **Access and navigation challenges for families.** Many of the families attempting to secure the resources that would enable them to access early care and education services face inconsistent eligibility criteria and repetitive application processes.
- **Unclear state and federal funding mechanisms to enlarge available resources.** Views differ among state agencies and early care and education advocates regarding Hawai'i's efforts to fully optimize access to federal funds (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) to expand available resources (e.g., Child Care Development Fund).

Eligibility Requirements for Health and Economic Supports. As recently as 2018, the National Center for Children in Poverty reported that access could be improved by amending eligibility requirements. Among the suggestions, providing continuous eligibility for child care subsidies for twelve months rather than redetermining eligibility every six months; and revising policies to keep family copayments for child care subsidies at or below 7% of family income for households of three earning an income that is 150% of FPL (currently 19% of families in Hawai'i). It should be noted that DHS is currently working on instituting these requirements in compliance with the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, as demonstrated by

the Child Care and Development Fund State Plan for fiscal years 2019-2021. Proposed administrative rules addressing these changes are moving through the necessary steps for public review and the Governor's approval in 2020.

Perspective from Families. Families are highly aware of the high cost of child care, and yet often find themselves ineligible for subsidies or publicly-funded no-cost center-based programs. These families often turn to informal family/friend/neighbor care that are legally exempt from regulation by DHS. Families attempting to secure state services report challenging application processes that they find long, tedious, rushed, and requiring extensive documentation, often complicated by cultural differences and language barriers. In the case of some minority communities, a general lack of trust in state agencies and nonprofit organizations represents an additional barrier to accessing available services.

Outstanding Questions about Access to Child Care. The opportunity to deepen current knowledge on the barriers to access is significant. The Access Work Group identified these outstanding questions:

- Is the general perception that transportation presents a significant barrier, especially in rural and remote areas of the state, accurate?
- What are the needs, interests and/or preferences of families with children birth to five who are not accessing regulated early care and education services?
- What is the knowledge base and what are the needs of community-based partners who help families access early care and education services and supports?

Hawai'i PDG Birth to Five Early Childhood Comprehensive Needs Assessment 2020

The complete report can be found at: <https://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Hawaii-Early-Childhood-Comprehensive-Needs-Assessment-and-Using-Risk-and-Reach-Data-supplement-to-ICFs-comprehensive-NA.pdf>

A risk and reach analysis based on indices that measure family and economic stability, health and school readiness identified six school complexes as having the highest overall risk; together, they represent 9,867 children (10.8%) birth to five. Hawai'i County has the greatest concentration of high-risk complexes, including Ka'u, Kealakehe, Laupāhoehoe, and Pāhoa. Other high-risk complexes are Moloka'i as well as Wai'anae/Nānākuli.

Geographic communities where high risk is found in combination with low reach by existing early care and education supports and related programs and services indicate need by several measures:

Child Care Assistance reaches 4.7% of the estimated income-eligible population statewide. The school complexes with the highest risk/lowest reach are Ka'u, Lāna'i, and Moloka'i. (Note: The DHS child care subsidy programs require parents/guardians to be actively employed, in school, and/or in job training, and these factors were not included in the estimated income-eligible population figure used by the needs assessment; if they were included the percentage would be higher.)

Food Assistance (SNAP) reaches just over 100% of the estimated eligible population statewide. The reach in some complexes exceeds 100%, likely due to additional eligibility criteria that allow

participation in the program above the income requirements. The school complexes with the highest risk/lowest reach are Ka'ū, Lāna'i, and Laupāhoehoe.

Housing Assistance reaches 71.3% of the estimated eligible population statewide. The school complexes with the highest risk/lowest reach are Ka'ū and Lāna'i.

Income Assistance reaches 10.9% of the estimated eligible population statewide. The school complex with the highest risk/lowest reach is Ka'ū.

Family preferences in selecting early care and education programs and services for their children indicate two priorities: 1) cost and 2) flexible drop off/pick up time. Families also indicate a strong need for programs and services with both morning and evening hours. Families who have chosen informal care alternatives (family/friend/neighbor care) indicate a preference for a family-like environment and a satisfactory level of trust in the provider(s). Finally, families identify an array of barriers affecting their ability to access desired programs and services, including: shortage in quality programs, long waitlists, arduous application process to access subsidies, stringent subsidy qualifications, and challenges in knowing where and how to access all available resources.

Key leaders in the early childhood sector are focused on outreach and marketing of services to community partners and families using a wide array of network partners, community events, web and media promotion, and building on existing access services such as Hawai'i's child care resource and referral agency, PATCH, and Aloha United Way 2-1-1. They desire not only marketing services to families, but also increasing the agencies' visibility and building greater state-level support for early childhood care and education. However, these leaders also express concern that programs remain siloed, managing their own outreach and marketing efforts, with each focused on their particular target population. Efforts are underway to develop hub models that allow families to access multiple services and supports through a single physical or virtual portal.

State agency leaders report difficulties in reaching rural areas and ensuring adequate services. None of the islands have a robust array of services, even medical services. Efforts are underway to extend tele-help services to increase access. Barriers to tele-help include the availability and reliability of technology, internet access, and bandwidth, as well as both workforce and family capacity to utilize the technology that is available. Efforts to increase access through public and private prekindergarten programs face barriers in terms of available workforce and ability to secure adequate facilities, as well as the financial constraints imposed by the state constitution's prohibitions on public funds distributed to private sector education programs.

The Hawai'i PDG Birth to Five Early Childhood Comprehensive Needs Assessment 2020 recommends that plans for increasing access to more resources target those communities experiencing the highest need in combination with the lowest reach:

- **Hawai'i County:** Hilo & Waiākea, Ka'ū (cited in all four areas), Kohala, Kona (Kealakehe), Laupāhoehoe, and Pāhoa

- **Maui County:** Hāna, Lānaʻi and Molokaʻi
- **Oʻahu:** Waiʻanae/Nānākuli

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Key Priority for Collective Action

Drawn from the Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan 2019-2024, italics refer to the Building Block (1-5), Key Strategy (A-D), and Priority (i-viii):

Increase supports for families, children, and providers, including state departments' capacity to deliver wrap-around supports, and increase families' ability to navigate resources as informed consumers when accessing services. *(BB2, iv)*

Objective 1: Providers of all types and families are actively utilizing a resource hub – virtually and/or physically – and report being able to locate resources to meet identified needs.		
Champions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Aloha United Way/2-1-1 ✓ Department of Human Services ✓ Early Childhood Action Strategy: Team 4 Equitable Access to Programs & Services – Keiki Central Subcommittee ✓ Executive Office on Early Learning 		
Actions	When & Resources Required	Indicators of Success
1. Support ongoing design and implementation of Department of Human Services' Benefits Eligibility Solution (BES) project. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Inform key partners about BES – what it is and the long-term vision for its build out – and seek their support for full implementation and utilization. 	When: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BES for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) & Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility integration has been implemented and is online. • There is "no wrong door" to entry ... regardless of where you enter.
2. Drawing on successful models at the national level and partnering with community members and leaders at the state and local level, identify ways to make services more accessible and convenient for families that are navigating through multiple State of Hawai'i systems by developing systemic navigation hubs and supports. <i>(BB5, vi, modified)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Assess existing hubs and navigation models (virtual and physical) and identify best options to make available throughout the state (e.g., Keiki Central for virtual hub and Kauhale model of co-locating service providers at the Community Learning Center at Mā'ili for physical hub). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1.1 Clarify how to train and efficiently connect Navigators to up-to-date information. 2.1.2 Develop methods for keeping resources and information updated. 2.2 Based on assessment, expand physical hubs statewide. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.2.1 Find opportunities to integrate or co-locate navigation services with existing programs and 	When: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual hub: 2021 • Physical hub, 1 new site: 2023 Existing Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aloha United Way, 2-1-1 • BES project framework • Federal resources are available • Kamehameha Schools • Medicaid money for outreach, used innovatively • Models of both virtual and physical hubs Needed Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicaid money for outreach • Ongoing/sustained funding • Partners with big resources • Private donors • Training resources statewide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment exists for expansion of a physical hub to one more community and the resources to do so. • Federal resources for physical hub expansion are secured. • Families report finding the resources they need. • Families are linked to other services with a warm handoff. • Long-term: Physical navigation sites are widely dispersed throughout all the Islands.

<p>services to assist families with accessing resources (e.g., WIC locations, Community Health Centers, malls).</p> <p>2.2.2 Pilot physical hubs in different communities statewide.</p>		
<p>3. Working with providers of navigation hubs, develop a system for moving families to intervention and/or case management services when navigation is insufficient to meet individual or family needs.</p> <p>3.1 Ensure best practice protocols are developed for identifying when navigation support is insufficient and also for identifying methods for moving families to intervention services (e.g., in a crisis situation).</p> <p>3.2 Train appropriate personnel on protocols and methods (e.g., navigators).</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triage system outlined: 2020 • Training for 2-1-1 navigators: 2020 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Programs Hawai'i • Funding to deliver training to 2-1-1 navigators • Keiki Central <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for all other providers/navigators • Ongoing/sustained funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triage system is mapped out. • Protocols and methods are established. • Training is being provided to navigators.

Objective 2: Providers, information network leaders, and families in communities statewide understand how to access information and resources based on proactive information-sharing and ongoing training.

Champions:

- ✓ Aloha United Way/2-1-1
- ✓ Department of Human Services
- ✓ Early Childhood Action Strategy: Team 4 Equitable Access to Programs & Services – Keiki Central Subcommittee
- ✓ Executive Office on Early Learning
- ✓ PATCH

Actions	When & Resources Required	Indicators of Success
<p>1. Early Care and Education Provider-Focused. Understand the constraints experienced by early care and education providers and support services partners (e.g., housing and shelter partners) in enrolling children from vulnerable families into early care and education settings and services.</p> <p>1.1 Interview early care and education providers and partners to identify barriers and opportunities for enrolling vulnerable children and families into early care and education settings and services.</p> <p>1.2 Inform training development by incorporating lessons learned from existing early learning programs that specifically serve vulnerable families (e.g., Early Head Start, Head Start, Partners in Development Foundation – Ka Pa'alana).</p> <p>1.3 Provide training for early care and education providers statewide addressing the needs of children and</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment of providers and partners serving children experiencing homelessness and unstable housing completed: 2019 • Training developed: 2020 • Training delivered statewide: initiated 2022 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Homelessness Action Team (CHAT) • Education Leads Home Grant for a small needs assessment • PATCH curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers are trained in 1-3 prioritized communities. • # of providers trained. • Long-term: Increase in the number of children enrolled in early care and education settings for those experiencing homelessness or unstable housing.

<p>families experiencing homelessness or unstable housing.</p> <p>1.4 Rollout similar process and training to address the needs of other vulnerable populations (e.g., special needs, child abuse and neglect, mental health).</p>		
<p>2. All Types of Providers-Focused. Provide training and outreach to providers of programs and services of all types on available resources and network opportunities.</p> <p>2.1 Develop statewide training program.</p> <p>2.2 Prioritize communities for training opportunities.</p> <p>2.3 Within prioritized communities, identify community-based leaders and service providers to train on accessing information and resources so they can provide information more effectively to others.</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keiki Central: Launch Fall 2019 and ongoing • Statewide Training Program: Initiated 2021 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aloha United Way/Early Childhood Action Strategy collaboration • Cross-training opportunities and models, e.g., Mā'ili Center • Homeless Concerns Liaisons <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide Training Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-1-1 usage data exists on who is calling and for what. • # of trainings. • # of resources added to Keiki Central, annually. • At least one training focusing on available resources and/or network opportunities has occurred on each island.
<p>3. Family-Focused. Ensure parenting resources, support programs, and parenting classes are available in all communities, are culturally responsive for diverse families, and are accessible in the state's two official languages, as well as in dominant immigrant languages. <i>(BB2, i)</i></p> <p>3.1 Building on Keiki Central and the Early Learning Board's resource mapping efforts, identify existing resources and relevant gaps in parenting resources (e.g., match identified gaps to community-based priorities and preferences).</p> <p>3.1.1 Identify barriers to finding, sharing and/or using the information.</p> <p>3.2 Create a prioritized list of communities for expanded services and secure resources for expansion.</p> <p>3.3 When appropriate, translate information into major languages in the state.</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping by Early Learning Board and Early Childhood Action Strategy completed: 2022 • Identify materials for translation: 2023 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aloha United Way 2-1-1 • Early Childhood Action Strategy • Early Learning Board • Keiki Central • Parent Line • 808 Youth <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Translate a large number of written documents and provide oral interpretation services ○ Evaluate this Objective and identify opportunities for improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory of existing resources by zip code is available. • Gaps have been identified and prioritized for action. • Expanding services to address priority gaps has been initiated. • Translation of materials has been initiated.

Objective 3: Collaborative partners are working on and with the structures for accessing services, they are achieving common goals, and they are encouraged to share knowledge, questions, and feedback on a regular basis.

Champions:

- ✓ Aloha United Way/2-1-1
- ✓ Department of Human Services
- ✓ Early Childhood Action Strategy: Team 1 Healthy & Welcomed Births; Team 2 Safe & Nurturing Families; Team 3 On-Track Health & Development; Team 4 Equitable Access to Programs & Services; Team 5 High Quality Early Learning Programs; Team 6 School Readiness for Successful Transitions; Policy Team; and Funders’ Hui
- ✓ Early Learning Board

Actions	When & Resources Required	Indicators of Success
<p>1. Utilize the Early Childhood State Plan's Priorities for Collective Action to enhance collaboration, bring government agencies together (and also government/nonprofit organizations) to generate innovative, collaborative projects and continue to move the work forward to implementation (e.g., state and county departments identify administrative gaps and convene to align them).</p> <p>1.1 Create safe spaces for sharing ideas and feedback candidly, including respect for cultural perspectives, whether working inter- or intra-agency, with nonprofit and for-profit partners, or with families.</p> <p>1.1.1 Where beneficial and helpful to create clarity of roles and responsibilities, develop written agreements between collaborative partners.</p> <p>1.2 Identify laws, policies, and operating practices that are acting as barriers to accessing services.</p> <p>1.3 Develop actionable priorities to diminish barriers within the system and for families (e.g., advocating for federal Homeless Children and Youth Act, increasing our investment in early care and education for families, improving access to child care subsidies).</p> <p>1.4 Continue to explore the establishment of a Children's Cabinet to help ensure the continuity of priorities over time.</p> <p>1.5 Engage in and share results of evaluation and feedback efforts, including family feedback where appropriate, in order to keep collaborative partners informed on the impact of actions implemented.</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Learning Board & Executive Office on Early Learning generate annual reporting on status of Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan: December 2020 and ongoing • Children's Cabinet formalized: 2022 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding support from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Department of Health ○ Department of Human Services ○ Omidyar 'Ohana Fund • Early Childhood Action Strategy • One Shared Future and its model for collaborative engagement among state partners <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space, time, and resource commitment to support collaboration • Avenues for safe space for sharing candidly and confidentially • Expanded funding, overall • Funding support for evaluation of collaborative efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress on Priorities for Collective Action in Hawai'i Early Childhood State Plan reported annually. • Children's Cabinet has been established.

Note on Federal, State, and Local Statutory Requirements

All actions within this Strategic Implementation Plan seem consistent with existing federal, state, and local regulations. Within this plan there are identified sub-actions (pg. 10) related to the exploration of policies and regulations that **may** act as barriers full implementation of specific actions in the future. At this time, however, no specific regulatory barriers affecting implementation of the plan were identified.

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