

Maximizing Family Knowledge and Engagement in Child Development: Strategic Implementation Plan, 2020-2023

Introduction

Parents and families are the central actors in their child's development, and the science of child development points to the critical period from conception through birth through early childhood as foundational for every human being's physical, emotional, and intellectual wellbeing. Maximizing families' knowledge of child development and engaging them in basic activities that reflect best practices in nurturing optimal child development is fundamental to ensuring children have a great start in life.

Needs Assessment Summary on Family Knowledge and Engagement in Child Development, 2015-2017

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

The early childhood sector in Hawai'i does not have any assessment or baseline study documenting what families know about child development or how they employ their knowledge to nurture their child's development and wellbeing.

The Childcare and Parenting Support Needs Survey (2016) is a modest assessment of families' understanding of quality care when looking for child care alternatives. The survey of 426 parents of children birth to five is not representative of the entire state, but it does give clues about how parents in Hawai'i may think about quality care. In the survey, the small proportion of parents who express dissatisfaction with their child's caregiver are then asked to explain their dissatisfaction. Most respondents choose not to elaborate, but those who do, express concerns about their provider being "unreliable" or "inconsistent." Parents also express concern about a lack of structure or educational activities. Less frequent concerns include discipline, incompatible hours of care, and difficulty accessing a provider to secure an open space for their child. Unfortunately, this survey does not provide insight on families' actual knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices, teacher qualification standards, or other measures of quality for the early care and education of children birth to five.

The survey also seeks to understand parents' awareness of available supports in the community and most of the respondents indicate knowing where to access information about parenting support services and programs in their communities. The majority of them are aware of Child Care Connections Hawai'i and Preschool Open Doors child care subsidies for low-income families. Parents also express a desire for more information, most commonly identifying activities to do with children (55%), determining if a child is developmentally on track (44%), managing challenging behavior (40%), having access to play groups (30%), and knowing what public services are available (30%). Lower income families are more likely to want access to healthy food, while higher income families want support connecting with other families.

The Hawai'i Early Learning Needs Assessment (2017) includes an exploration of the opportunities early care and education providers offer families to encourage them to deepen their knowledge of child development and foster their proactive engagement with their child.

The survey of center directors, Family Child Care (FCC) providers, and Family Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) program leaders shows that family engagement practices differ significantly across types of settings and programs. Centers commonly employ what might be considered “traditional” family engagement practices, such as parent-teacher conferences, communications via newsletter, email or daily journal of school activities, social events, referrals to services as needed, and invitations to volunteer. In addition, about half of the responding centers support families as teachers by providing lending libraries, jointly setting learning goals, and providing workshops and support for parents. Licensed FCC providers report similar practices, but at lower rates of engagement. Not surprisingly, FCILs, which are predicated on the core value of family/child interaction, provide the fullest array of family engagement, including traditional practices, family-as-teacher practices, and incorporating families in continuous quality improvement. FCILs also adapt their curricula to the cultures and languages of participating families, and most provide direct services to support families, e.g. counseling, home visits, job training.

Family Hui (2015) organized parent focus groups, learning that even when engagement opportunities are available, it is not a given that families will access them. When offered the opportunity to attend a free parenting workshop, some parents indicate they will attend, while others need incentives to attend. The preferred incentives include transportation, repeated offerings of the same topic so they have scheduling options, free child care services, and meals; less common suggestions include school credit, work hours, prizes, and gift cards.

Parents report their engagement in transition activities to include “meet the teacher,” and specific programs that encourage parent involvement, such as anti-bullying and “make a friend, be a friend.” At the same time, many parents express concern about occasions when their engagement has been discouraged, such as not feeling welcomed by school staff, language difficulties, and inflexible event calendars that conflict with their work schedules.

Outstanding Questions about Family Engagement. The opportunity to deepen current knowledge on ways to maximize family engagement is significant. The Family Engagement Work Group identified these outstanding questions:

- What do professionals and leaders in early childhood want families to know about child development and developmentally appropriate practices?
- What is the current level of knowledge about child development among early care and education providers of all types and in all settings?
- What is the capacity and awareness of early care and education providers for engaging and educating parents and families?
- What supports need to be in place to encourage families to engage in existing opportunities?
- What are the best methods to provide child development information in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner?

- What do early care and education providers of all types and in all settings do to support and engage families in child development?
- What does quality engagement of parents and families look like?
- What kinds of child development information do parents want, how do they want to receive that information, and from whom do they want to receive that information?
- How do parents differentiate their role as a parent from the role of the teacher, and how might this inform efforts to engage parents?

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>

The 2020 needs assessment confirms the findings from previous research that families and child care providers alike think families need more information regarding child development and important developmental milestones. Families who self-identify as having an understanding of developmental milestones report obtaining the information through their child's primary care doctor or pediatrician. Only a few indicate receiving that information through their school setting or from their child's teacher(s).

Home visiting professionals report difficulty engaging parents and families who are not interested in receiving child development information or being engaged in related activities. On the other hand, special education teachers and preschool teachers report finding parents receptive to child development information. It is noted by several respondents that some programs require parent involvement via in-person or online trainings, and this represents a significant challenge for busy families.

Families participating in focus groups indicate that the caliber of the staff and a program's philosophy are important indicators of quality. Families are looking for teachers to be passionate about educating young children and for a structured or defined plan for learning. In addition, many families evaluate program quality based on an atmosphere that is welcoming to families and children. Families also look for programs that focus on school readiness – academic and social-emotional development – for successful transitions into kindergarten.

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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):

Provide families with opportunities to develop leadership and advocacy skills to support their children's development. *(BB2, ii)**

* The work group chose to focus on 1) families experiencing unstable housing and 2) younger, lower income families with infants and toddlers (Birth-3). While these are the primary foci, the intention is that the implementation plan be valuable to other efforts focused on families as well.

Promote early childhood evidence-based and developmental best practices and materials from the science of early childhood development in all early childhood care and education settings ... *(BB3, vi, partial)*

Objective 1: Family-Focused. Develop and implement learning opportunities for families utilizing best practice materials and models that build their capacity to be engaged in their child's development.		
Champions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Early Childhood Action Strategy: Team 2 Safe & Nurturing Families; Team 3 On-Track Health & Development; Team 4 Equitable Access to Programs & Services; and, Team 6 School Readiness for Successful Transitions – Words Matter (LENA) Subcommittee ✓ Executive Office on Early Learning ✓ Family Hui Hawai'i ✓ Hawai'i Children's Action Network & Little Minds Matter Steering Team ✓ Partners in Development Foundation – Ka Pa'alana 		
Actions	When & Resources Required	Indicators of Success
1. Develop and/or distribute materials for use with and by families in multiple ways and for all types of settings, drawing on recognized best practices (e.g., Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, Centers for Disease Control, Family Hui Hawai'i, Head Start, Little Minds Matter, Parents as Teachers, Partners in Development – Ka Pa'alana, VROOM). 1.1 Ensure materials and engagement methods validate parents' knowledge and culture; acknowledge what they are doing that helps their children build skills and bridges parental knowledge to child development best practices in ways that respect and enhance the role of parents. 1.1.1 Inventory existing culturally appropriate materials. a. Identify organization to lead the inventory. 1.2 Promote parent-friendly websites and continue to create and/or promote robust access to materials (e.g., Family Programs Hawai'i – Safe & Nurturing Families Platform, Keiki Central, Parent Line).	When: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain ongoing activities • Inventory: December 2020 • Evaluation of Little Minds Matter & VROOM: December 2021 Existing Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Disease Control's early childhood development materials and app • First Teacher • Phase 1 of Little Minds Matter materials • VROOM Needed Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization to lead the inventory • Funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Translate selected materials ○ Produce materials ○ Family engagement workshops ○ Media campaign aimed at parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families who receive resources through these programs express greater connection to peers. • Families demonstrate increased knowledge and awareness of child development and available resources.

<p>1.2.1 Expand listing of existing resources to be inclusive of all islands.</p> <p>1.2.2 Explore development of a mobile app for increased access to resources, or connect to VROOM, as appropriate.</p> <p>1.3 Develop methods and protocols for following up on learning opportunities provided to families.</p> <p>1.4 Evaluate the local impact of Little Minds Matter and VROOM, and determine if further investment is warranted.</p> <p>1.5 Evaluate the impact of the Safe & Nurturing Families Framework (ECAS Team 2), and determine if further investment is warranted.</p>		
<p>2. Housing, shelter, and outreach partners, in collaboration with the Child Homelessness Action Team (CHAT), make early childhood development information and early learning opportunities available for families experiencing homelessness or unstable housing.</p> <p>2.1 Identify key partners to design a pilot for this initiative.</p> <p>2.2 Agree on learning opportunity method(s) and materials to be utilized.</p> <p>2.3 Implement pilot.</p> <p>2.4 Evaluate effectiveness and lessons learned for future improvement.</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement pilot project: mid-2022 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Leads Home Grant • Head Start/Early Head Start • Kahauiki Village • Partners in Development – Ka Pa’alana • ‘Ohana Nui Initiative • Partners in Care/Bridging the Gap • PATCH Outreach Coordinator <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pilot project ○ Coordinator position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-10 homeless programs partner to make early childhood development resources available to families with children birth to five. • Play spaces that promote parent-child interaction are created and utilized in shelters, transitional and public housing. • Increase in the number of families that report ability to access and utilize early care and education programs and services. • Long-term. Children birth to five whose families are experiencing homelessness or unstable housing are connected with early care and education programs and/or services.
<p>3. Develop and implement community-based learning opportunities for families that support child wellbeing and growth.</p> <p>3.1 Expand the use of existing best practice models – home visiting, peer parent, and friend/family/neighbor care (e.g., Community Café, Family Hui Hawai’i, Healthy Families America, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, Learning to Grow, Parents as Teachers).</p> <p>3.2 Identify, train, and deploy community leaders to engage with families in their communities (e.g., INPEACE Ho’ala Model).</p> <p>3.2.1 Identify the best points of access to reach</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding plan for expansion of existing programs: December 2020 • Home Visiting and FCIL Program expansion: December 2021 • Words Matter – LENA (addressing early literacy and child attachment) implemented by 11 programs statewide: 2021 • Additional funding secured: December 2023 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing programs and demonstrated successes <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships at places where parents actually are or will come 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are trained community-based leaders in prioritized geographic and cultural communities identified through ongoing needs assessment. • 3-5 new sites for working with families have been established. • There is a funding plan in place addressing the long-term expansion of programs. • Community Café model is implemented in 1-2 targeted communities.

<p>3.2.2 parents/caregivers, drawing on best practices research nationwide and local testing. Work with Native Hawaiian Healthcare Systems and Community Health Centers to expand on existing community-based leadership development and engagement to include early childhood development information.</p>	<p>(e.g., Housing Authority, community colleges, employers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Compensation for community leaders ○ Incentives for parent participation and leadership ○ Long-term, sustained funding for existing programs 	
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Objective 2: Provider-Focused. Develop and implement learning opportunities for providers of all types utilizing best practice materials and models.

Champions:

- ✓ 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; and ECAS All Network

- ✓ PATCH

Actions	When & Resources Required	Indicators of Success
<p>1. Educate early care and education providers of all types and in all settings on early childhood development and on working with vulnerable families, with attention to encouraging their own self-awareness and respect for individual and community cultures (e.g., brain development, poverty simulation, and trauma-informed strategies).</p> <p>1.1 Expand family/friend/neighbor care professional development (e.g., Learning to Grow).</p> <p>1.2 Utilize and expand upon newly developed PATCH curriculum modules focused on working with children experiencing homelessness or unstable housing.</p> <p>1.3 Expand the number of Promising Minds cohorts and training, statewide.</p> <p>1.4 Provide trainings on Healthy Serve and Return Relationships within the home (ECAS Safe & Nurturing Families Team 2).</p> <p>1.5 Provide trainings on The Growing Brain.</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promising Minds: ongoing through December 2021 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECAS All Network Meetings • ECAS Team 2 Safe & Nurturing Families' Framework and its trauma-informed care training • Hawai'i Association for Infant Mental Health (HAIMH) • PATCH's Curriculum • Promising Minds <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part-time statewide coordinator for trainings • Sustained funding, long-term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of trainings delivered has increased. • Number of providers trained has increased. • Providers indicate feeling better prepared to respond to the needs of the vulnerable families they are serving. • Long-Term. There are trauma-informed, mixed delivery system early care and education providers of all types and from all settings serving prioritized geographic and cultural communities as identified through ongoing needs assessment.

Objective 3: Community-Focused. Generate increased community understanding and support for family engagement and child development.

Champions:

- ✓ Early Childhood Action Strategy: Team 4 Equitable
- ✓ Access to Programs & Services, Team 6 School
- ✓ Readiness for Successful Transitions – Words Matter (LENA) Subcommittee
- ✓ Family Hui Hawai'i
- ✓ Hawai'i Children's Action Network
- ✓ Hawaiian Electric Company
- ✓ University Health Alliance

Actions	When & Resources Required	Indicators of Success
<p>1. Design, implement, and expand public education initiatives and campaigns around early childhood topics.</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for public information campaign: 2023 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Health Child Safety initiatives • ECAS Health & Safety Campaign • HCAN Little Minds Matter • HMSA health-related education and family/community engagement projects • Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained funding for public information campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 business partners are engaged in an education campaign. • Public education campaigns are ongoing.
<p>2. Advocate for large employers taking action in support of families and promoting child development (e.g., HECO/UHA model, UHA Employer Wellness Group program).</p> <p>2.1 Identify and engage businesses in developing child development-informed, family-friendly health and wellness policies and practices.</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work group formed: 2020 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECAS Team 4 Equitable Access to Programs & Services' Infant and Toddler Plan • Family Hui Hawai'i – Hui in the Workplace <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for convener/coordinator services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an established work group that is meeting regularly. • At least one Hawai'i employer is piloting family wellness practices with their employees. • Long-term: Several large Hawai'i employers are implementing best practices supporting families and child development. • Long-term: Exemplar businesses are sharing their experiences and knowledge with other employers and are promoting broad adoption of their best practices.
<p>3. Establish a work group to examine emerging models for family engagement and application in Hawai'i (e.g., Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, Detroit Model).</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work group established: December 2021 <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convener/point person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an established work group that is meeting regularly.

Objective 4: Ensure the community can prioritize early care and education programs and services based on geographic distribution of priority populations.

Champions:

- ✓ Early Childhood Action Strategy: Team 4 Equitable Access to Programs & Services – CHAT Subcommittee
- ✓ Hawai'i Children's Action Network

Actions	When & Resources Required	Indicators of Success
1. Secure MOUs with local continuum of care lead organizations (e.g., Partners in Care, Bridging the Gap) to share certain data on families experiencing unstable housing or homelessness, drawing on the HMIS databases.	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs secured: December 2020 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridging the Gap • HMIS Data staff • Partners in Care <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined based on MOUs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs are in place.
<p>2. Develop and report anonymized data by geographic location and ages of family members.</p> <p>2.1 Distribute regular reports to early care and education leaders statewide (e.g., monthly, quarterly).</p>	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular reporting initiated: by mid-2021 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECAS data team • Partners In Care data analyst position <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for expanded data analyst capacity, as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic distribution of children birth to five who are experiencing homelessness or unstable housing is available. • Data is being used to set service priorities.
3. Convene a work group to discuss prioritization of services based on geographically-informed data.	<p>When:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work group initiated: mid-2021 <p>Existing Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined <p>Needed Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convener/coordinator for work group • Funding for convener/coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data is being used to set service priorities.

Note on Federal, State, and Local Statutory Requirements

All actions within this Strategic Implementation Plan seem consistent with existing federal, state, and local regulations. Currently, there are no identified regulatory barriers that impact the implementation of this plan.

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