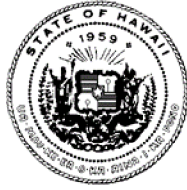


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



DEPT. COMM. NO. 154

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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

December 17, 2024

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi, President
and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura, Speaker
and Members of the House of
Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 431
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

In accordance with Section 26-61(c), Hawaii Revised Statutes, the joint report of the Department of Human Services and the Executive Office on Early Learning on the progress of implementing the early care and education sector programs per Acts 46, Session Laws of Hawaii (SLH) 2020, as amended by Act 210, SLH 2021, is enclosed.

Per section 93-16, HRS, the report is available to review electronically at the Department's website, <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/reports/legislative-reports/>, and the Executive Office on Early Learning's website, <https://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/about-us/early-learning-board/reports/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "R. Yamane".

Ryan I. Yamane
Director
Department of Human Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Yuuko Arikawa-Cross".

Yuuko Arikawa-Cross
Executive Director
Executive Office on Early Learning



Enclosure

- c: Governor's Office
- Lieutenant Governor's Office
- Department of Budget & Finance
- Legislative Auditor
- Legislative Reference Bureau Library (one hard copy)
- Hawaii State Public Library, System State Publications Distribution Center (two hard copies, one electronic copy)
- Hamilton Library, Serials Department, University of Hawaii (one hard copy)

**REPORT TO THE THIRTY-THIRD
HAWAI‘I STATE LEGISLATURE 2025**

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 26-61(c), HAWAI‘I
REVISED STATUTES, UPDATES ON THE PROGRESS OF
IMPLEMENTING THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION
SECTOR PROGRAMS.**

**Executive Office on Early Learning
and the
Department of Human Services
Benefit, Employment & Support Services Division**

December 2024

Annual Report on the Progress of Implementing the Early Care and Education Sector Programs
Pursuant to Section 26-61(c), Hawai‘i Revised Statutes

Background

This report responds to section 26-61(c), Hawai‘i Revised Statutes (HRS), by updating the August 2024 joint report of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) on the progress of implementing the early care and education sector programs. This report updates the progress made since the joint report was submitted in August 2024.

The first report due in August ("August Report"), per section 26-61(a), HRS, was numbered and filed as [Departmental Communication No. 501](#) and can also be found at the DHS website at https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Sec-26-61HRS_Act-462020_early-learning-benchmarks.pdf.

Section [26-61](#), HRS provides, in relevant part:

- (a) The department of human services and . . . executive office on early learning shall ensure access to learning through preschool programs that meet or exceed the following benchmarks:
 - (1) Fifty percent of all otherwise unserved children who are three to four years of age, or will not be at least five years of age on or before July 31 of the current school year, shall have access to enrollment in a preschool program by December 31, 2027; and
 - (2) One hundred percent of all children who are three to four years of age, or will not be at least five years of age on or before July 31 of the current school year, shall have access to enrollment in a preschool program by December 31, 2032.

The department of human services and . . . executive office on early learning shall submit an annual report to the legislature, no later than August 31 of each year, on the progress toward achieving the benchmarks until all children who are three to four years of age, or will not be at least five years of age on or before July 31 of the current school year, are enrolled in a preschool program.

- (b) The department of human services . . . executive office on early learning shall collaborate to identify the need for child care and early learning in geographic regions of the State and consider using public facilities including schools, libraries,

and the University of Hawaii system as locations for child care and early learning programs.

(c) The department of human services shall work jointly with the executive office on early learning to monitor the progress of implementing the early care and education sector programs. No later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular sessions of 2025, 2026, and 2027, the department of human services and . . . executive office on early learning shall submit to the legislature a joint report on the progress of implementing the early care and education sector programs.

(d) The department of human services shall facilitate and support data sharing among public and private entities to the extent not otherwise prohibited by law or rule.

Agency Reports

Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL)

Family Child Interaction Learning Programs

Family Child Interaction Learning (FCIL) programs improve families' understanding of developmentally appropriate approaches that support child growth and development, increase families' use of interactive strategies that promote growth and development through play, and enhance home literacy. Family members also receive instruction on workforce readiness, financial literacy, and community resources and services.

EOEL issued a Request for Proposals for FCIL services at Nānākuli Elementary School and Kailua Elementary School. The contract was awarded to the Partners In Development Foundation (PIDF), and the contract began on July 1, 2024. PIDF deployed two of its FCIL programs to implement this contract: Ka Pa'alana Homeless Family Education Program (Ka Pa'alana) at Nānākuli Elementary and Nā Pono No Nā 'Ohana (Nā Pono) at Kailua Elementary. Both programs meet the intentions and high-quality expectations of the EOEL contract, support families in taking active roles in their young children's social, emotional, and cognitive development, and maintain the dual focus of child development and family strengthening.

Participant data reported by PIDF for Quarter 1 (Q1) of the 2024-25 school year is as follows:

- Nānākuli - 15 keiki & 19 caregivers
- Kailua - 22 keiki & 30 caregivers

EOEL is in the process of procuring contract(s) for up to two additional FCIL locations on Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) campuses with a projected date for services to begin in the 2025-26 school year.

Stanford Center on Early Childhood RAPID Survey Project

The Stanford Center on Early Childhood RAPID Survey Project collects information from households with young children across the U.S. to better understand how they are doing at the moment. It makes this information available to policymakers, key stakeholders, and others who are able to use this information. On April 18, 2024, EOEL applied for the RAPID Community Voices Cohort 2 Project. To address the high volume of applicants, the Stanford Center on Early Childhood responded with a decision to engage in a planning process with state-focused applicants. It aimed to design a branch of the survey to more effectively respond to each state's needs, interests, and priorities that demonstrated interest in the Project. On October 1, 2024, EOEL was one of two states invited to pilot state-level data collection. The survey is active as of November 2024 and is expected to continue through April 2025.

EOEL intends to use the RAPID Survey Project to complement the Comprehensive Needs Assessment connected to the Preschool Development Grant – Birth to 5 Renewal Grant (PDG B-5 Grant) received by the State of Hawai‘i in December 2022. EOEL anticipates that the information provided by the RAPID Survey will inform the development of the Early Childhood State Plan for the next term of the State Plan.

Expansion of EOEL Public Pre-K Program for Fiscal Biennium 2025-27

Governor Josh Green, M.D.’s Executive Budget request for Fiscal Biennium 2025-27 includes funding and positions to continue the expansion of the EOEL Public Prekindergarten (Pre-K) Program. If approved by the Legislature, EOEL will partner with HIDOE, the Hawai‘i School Facilities Authority (SFA), and the Ready Keiki initiative to open 50 additional classrooms and add up to 1,000 preschool seats. This expansion will improve access to high-quality learning opportunities for at-risk 3 and 4-year-olds and advance our progress toward meeting the benchmarks for access to learning established by Act 46, SLH 2020.

Hawai‘i State Public Charter School Commission (HSPCSC or Commission)

Through the [Ready Keiki Initiative](#), together with community partners, the Hawai‘i State Public Charter School Commission (Commission) embraced the shared goal for the state of Hawai‘i aligned with Act 46 (SLH 2020) as amended by Act 210 (SLH 2021): 1) To meet fifty percent of unserved three- and four-year-old keiki by 2027; 2) To meet one hundred percent of unserved three- and four-year-old keiki by 2032; 3) To honor the two educational pathways – in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) and English; 4) To commit to working collaboratively as partners to address the challenges; and 5) To maximize the use of Act 257, (SLH 2022) – which invests \$200 million to expand early learning facilities.

To effectuate this plan, the Commission envisioned implementing the following: 1) Create a new pathway to increase access to pre-K programs in charter schools; 2) Maximize the use of Act 257, SLH 2022, to expand early learning facilities in charter schools; 3) Consider amending the charter application to expand pre-K-only charter schools; and 4) Communicate unified support for high-quality pre-K for all of Hawai‘i’s keiki.

On May 25, 2023, the Hawai‘i State Public Charter School Commission approved the recommendation to open the charter application and process seeking the first-ever, pre-K-only charter school under the authority of section 302D-39, HRS. On September 15, 2023, Parents And Children Together (PACT) at Parkway Villages of Kapolei was the sole applicant. After a thorough review of the application, on January 11, 2024, the Commission unanimously voted to approve PACT's application. PACT is completing its pre-opening assurances to become a state entity and charter school with the goal of opening by January 2025. This will add 80 more prekindergarten seats to the state public pre-K system.

Department of Human Services (DHS)

DHS successfully dispersed \$114,000,000 from the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law No. 117-2) (ARPA) received in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. These funds sustained and buffered child care providers through the most tumultuous parts of the pandemic and recovery period. Between December 2021 and September 2023, DHS distributed \$72,000,000 of ARPA child care stabilization funds directly to 616 licensed and registered family child care homes, group child care centers, group child care homes, infant and toddler centers, before and after school facilities, and exempt center-based providers of afterschool A+ services. DHS concluded its supplemental grant program on November 14, 2024, providing an additional \$42,000,000 directly to 617 child care providers between May and November 2024.

The supplemental grants were intended to prevent permanent closures and support child care businesses by offsetting providers’ operating expenses, improving quality, and increasing workforce compensation so that child care providers could recruit and retain a skilled workforce. Providers received two (2) rounds each of operating expense and staff retention awards which directors, teachers, assistant teachers, lead caregivers, and caregivers received a disbursement of \$4,500, and all other caregiving staff received a disbursement of \$3,000. DHS is currently working on data collection and analysis of the supplemental grant program.

The end of ARPA funding is a significant concern for the child care sector and for working families who need to rely upon affordable and accessible child care to maintain their education, employment, and career goals.

New DHS Early Childhood Workforce Registry System

DHS is pleased to announce the recent implementation of a new online early childhood workforce registry system, which was developed in collaboration with the community organization People Attentive to Children (PATCH). Caregivers are no longer required to send via U.S. mail copies of their professional qualifications and certifications, employment history, educational background, and other documents related to their experience and training to receive and update their DHS staff qualifications. Now, caregivers may access and monitor their own professional development and training records, and directors are able to verify and track their staff's qualifications and training. In contrast, previous methods required caregivers to call PATCH to check on their records. We also anticipate that the online workforce registry system would be a valuable resource tool to collect more data about the early childhood workforce.

New DHS Child Care Provider Search Portal

DHS launched its child care provider search portal in September 2024. Individuals and families can search for a licensed or registered child care provider or facility in a specific area or neighborhood based on their needs. Users can view and filter information such as type of care, age range, and other important information to make the best choice for their keiki. This information, along with visiting a provider or facility, may be used to decide whether a provider meets a family's needs. DHS is currently working on implementing the next phase of the provider search portal, which will post provider inspection reports and substantiated complaints.

Accreditation

DHS works with the Hawaii Association for the Education of Young Children (HAEYC) to provide technical assistance to twenty (20) group child care centers that are interested in obtaining national accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC accreditation will meet the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program requirement that a licensed group child care center must be accredited and must start the accreditation process by July 1, 2029, and be accredited by July 1, 2034, mandated by section [346-184](#), HRS. As DHS provides technical assistance for accreditation, it may be necessary to consider extending the accreditation deadline or providing additional funding to meet and maintain accreditation requirements.

Child Care Subsidy Update

The 2025 – 2027 Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan for the period October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2027, has been approved with conditions by the Office of Child Care. For the child care subsidy program, DHS will need to address areas of non-compliance related to Eligibility and Equal Access. This will be accomplished by rule amendments to Chapter 17-798.3, Child Care Payments, which the department is planning to adopt in the upcoming year.

DHS successfully implemented the POD program's First Come First Served open application period, which runs from July 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025. The change in application processing per Act 153 (SLH 2024) allows DHS to process applications to be processed on a first-come, first-served basis after the priority period closes to allow a continuous enrollment process throughout the program year. The change facilitates more children to access subsidies and a school readiness program without delay. For this period, nearly 2,000 applications have been received, with July 2024 bringing in the highest total of 938 applications. As of November 2024, the number of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in POD totals 1,963 children. By the end of November, POD will achieve an enrollment count of more than 2,000 children. This is a significant increase from the previous school year of 600+ children. The department is also looking at rule amendments to further support the expansion of POD through increased eligibility limits and lowered co-payments for families.

Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE)

HIDOE continues to partner with EOEL and SFA to open Public Pre-K Program classrooms, with 44 additional classrooms opened this SY 2024-2025. HIDOE will maintain this partnership as EOEL works toward classroom expansion.

HIDOE maintains the rostering counts of students participating in EOEL Public Pre-K on HIDOE school campuses. The rostering guidelines have been streamlined to delineate EOEL Public Pre-K students, HIDOE Migrant Education Program (MEP) students, and HIDOE Special Education students, as well as whether the classroom is a Kaiapuni immersion classroom. These delineations will be useful for data analysis of seat access and service provision to a variety of vulnerable populations in Hawai'i.

HIDOE collects all entering kindergarteners' prior early learning experiences with the HIDOE Supplemental Kindergarten Enrollment Form (HIDOE SKEF). HIDOE monitors the completion of the HIDOE SKEF and will report findings annually to EOEL and DHS.

HIDOE administers the statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) to all students in English-medium kindergarten classrooms within the first 30 days of each child's entry to kindergarten. The data is reported to the Hawai'i State Board of Education and the Early Learning Board, as well as to EOEL and DHS.

The Kaiapuni KEA was field tested this SY 2024-2025. A technical report of the administration will be compiled, leading to any revisions to the assessment. The Kaiapuni KEA will have an operational field test in SY 2025-2026.

HIDOE was awarded the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant 2024-2029. HIDOE will award and administer sub-grants to complex areas for birth to age 5 (B-5), as well as to kindergarten to grade 5 (K-5) and sixth grade to twelfth Grade (6-12). HIDOE will prioritize the Pre-K programs operating on HIDOE campuses in these grant awards, focusing on fostering language and literacy development amongst three- and four-year-old children.

HIDOE Special Education Preschool Settings (HIDOE Special Education)

HIDOE continues to administrate HIDOE Special Education service provision for children ages three to five, per the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, Section 619. This includes providing assessment services to determine whether a child is eligible for Special Education services. If eligible, Special Education services begin by the child's third birthday.

Services are provided based on the individual needs of the child, as determined by the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team. The amount of time a child receives services is determined by the specialized interventions a child needs to participate in preschool-age activities with typically developing peers. Therefore, HIDOE Special Education services include school-day classroom placements, placements in other programs, including EOEL and HIDOE MEP, placements in Head Start, placements in community-based preschool programs, and/or services provided outside of a preschool setting, such as in the home. HIDOE Special Education placement decisions always consider inclusive, natural environments that recognize the developmental and educational benefits of learning alongside typically developing peers.

HIDOE Migrant Education Program (HIDOE MEP)

HIDOE continues to administrate the HIDOE MEP on four school campuses on Hawai'i Island. The HIDOE MEP classroom schedule is based on HIDOE's academic year schedule, aligning with the kindergarten full-day schedule. Students are eligible for the HIDOE MEP Program from ages three to five. Per the funding parameters of Title I, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), preference is given to migratory children who may experience educational and social disruption caused by frequent moving. Enrollment preference is also given to children who will be entering kindergarten the following school year and meet the other eligibility criteria. Each classroom is limited to 10-12 students to establish a low student-teacher ratio.

Conclusion

The EOEL, Commission, DHS, HIDOE, Executive leadership, the Legislature, and community partners continue to work together, taking necessary steps toward achieving the State's early learning goals. Increasing access to affordable quality child care and early childhood programs remains a priority that supports the development of Hawaii's keiki and assures working parents

and caregivers that their child is in the best environment suited to their child's and family's needs. Confidence in the quality and reliability of their child's care or early learning program supports parents' employment, career, and educational goals that contribute to Hawaii's economy.

During this next biennium, continued dialogue on strategies to address the difference between the cost of care and how much providers receive in subsidies is necessary for the sector to continue to build upon past investments and achieve Hawaii's early learning goals.