

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII



DEPT. COMM. 100-272
KENNETH S. FINK, M.D., M.P.H., M.G.A.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P. O. BOX 3378
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

December 26, 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:

For your information and consideration, I am transmitting a copy of the Annual Report on Recommended Primary Health Care Incentives, Strategies, and Implementation, pursuant to Section 321-1.5 Hawaii Revised Statutes.

In accordance with Section 93-16, Hawaii Revised Statutes, I am also informing you that the report may be viewed electronically at:

<https://health.hawaii.gov/opppd/departments-of-health-reports-to-2025-legislature/>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Fink", written over a light blue circular stamp.

Kenneth S. Fink, M.D., M.P.H., M.G.A.
Director of Health

Enclosures

c: Legislative Reference Bureau
Hawaii State Library System (2)
Hamilton Library

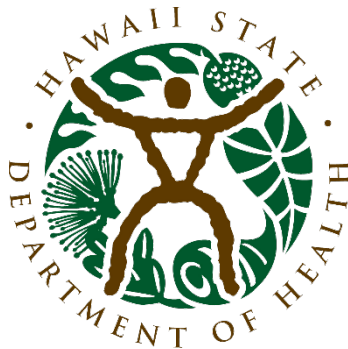
REPORT TO THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE

STATE OF HAWAI‘I

2025

**PURSUANT TO SECTION 321-1.5
HAWAI‘I REVISED STATUTES**

**REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO SUBMIT
AN ANNUAL REPORT ON RECOMMENDED PRIMARY HEALTH CARE
INCENTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION**



PREPARED BY:

**STATE OF HAWAI‘I
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HEALTH RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION
FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION**

DECEMBER 2024

IDENTIFY PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PARTNERS (PHCP)

The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is part of a comprehensive network of organizations and associations across our state that impact primary care and rural health. These key partners represent various sectors such as public health, education, workforce development, safety-net, nonprofit, philanthropy, telehealth, priority populations, and advocacy.

Big Island Docs (aka East Hawai'i Independent Physicians Association)

Big Island Docs represents more than 60 private individual physicians on Hawai'i Island as a community working together to achieve better health. Its goal is to empower independent healthcare providers on Hawai'i Island to improve quality, increase access, and lower costs to achieve better health. With the blessing of its physician members, the organization started the Big Island Health Care Clinic, a private group whose mission is to deliver compassionate care of the highest quality with the best customer service. The purpose is to have the best of both systems of care: personalized aloha care with the financial, management, and operational infrastructure characteristics of larger systems.

Broadband Hui

The Broadband Hui is an alliance of 500 partners representing wireline and wireless carriers; federal, state, and county legislative and administrative leaders; local, national, and international nonprofits; public and private schools, universities; and private businesses that seek opportunities to expand broadband capacity and move Hawai'i toward a more equitable digital future. The Broadband Hui has made notable progress by supporting the establishment of the Broadband and Digital Equity Office, making Hawai'i one of the first states nationwide to prioritize digital equity.

Community First Hawai'i

Community First Hawai'i is a community-based forum bringing stakeholders together for dialogue and the exchange of ideas to find solutions that will improve health and reduce medical costs on Hawai'i Island for the good of all. Community First Hawai'i convened the Hawai'i Island Healthcare Conference on October 10, 2024, to promote exchanging ideas and collaborative goals. Other initiatives include the Community Action Network (CAN) and the Access to Care – Health of Our Communities report.

Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN)

HCAN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and the only one in the State of Hawai'i solely committed to advocating for children. They address the root causes of poverty and inequity and develop public policies that help children and their families. HCAN's mission is to build a unified voice educating and advocating for Hawai'i children. HCAN's vision is that all Hawai'i children will be healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center

This center serves Hawai'i communities by reducing the harm and fighting the stigma of HIV, hepatitis, homelessness, substance use, mental illness, and poverty. Populations served include those living with and/or affected by HIV, hepatitis, substance use, and the LGBTQIA+ and Native Hawaiian communities. The center fosters health, wellness, and systemic change in Hawai'i and the Pacific through care services, advocacy, training, prevention, education, and capacity building.

Hawai'i Independent Physicians Association (HIPA)

HIPA represents nearly 1,275 independent primary care physicians and specialty physicians in Hawai'i. The organization's mission is for physicians to help physicians through education, support, and leadership to better care for the people of Hawai'i. The organization's vision is to preserve independent practice by creating an engaged, connected health community that empowers our physicians and their patients. HIPA allows for a strong, viable, independent practice sector, which encourages competition and protects the freedom of healthcare choice for patients.

Hawai'i Learning Groups (HLG) ECHO

HLG is a Hawai'i-based collaborating partner with [Project ECHO®](#) (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) of New Mexico. The program aims to increase access to specialty care, especially for rural and underserved populations, by providing a standardized format for clinical tele-education between interdisciplinary groups, allowing them to collaborate regardless of geographic separation.

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition (HOHC)

The mission of HOHC is to improve the overall health and well-being of all Hawai'i residents by increasing access and equity in oral health care through collaborative partnerships, advocacy, and education. HOHC was established in the summer of 2019 but follows in the footsteps of decades of collaboration within the oral health community. HOHC is community-owned, with membership representation from all islands and diverse sectors. The DOH Office of Primary Care and Rural Health (OPCRH) partners with the HOHC to strengthen workforce development by participating in public high school career fairs. The dental professionals who are members of HOHC are interested in visiting public high schools to promote the dental professions.

Hawai'i Primary Care Association (HPCA)

HPCA is the Hawai'i membership association of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), comprising the state's safety net of primary care providers for the underinsured and uninsured. HPCA helps FQHCs improve programmatic, clinical, and financial performance and operations. HPCA offers technical assistance and training in health center leadership and administration (including governance, fiscal, and program management), operational support, administrative assistance, and quality improvement.

Hawai'i State Center for Nursing

Hawai'i State Center for Nursing is located on the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa campus and was mandated by the Hawai'i State Legislature in 2003 to address nursing workforce issues (Act 198, 304A-1406). The center compiles data on the nursing workforce supply and the nursing education capacity in the State of Hawai'i. The center also promotes advocacy and supports nurses with career and research publication goals.

Hawai'i State Rural Health Association (HSRHA)

Membership includes advocates, partners, and innovators who strive for a future where rural communities have equal access to the providers, infrastructure, and resources they need to support an equitable, healthy Hawai'i. HSRHA leads multisector initiatives that improve access to care and leverage financial and technological resources that strengthen and sustain rural

communities. HSRHA champions the needs of rural patients and rural providers, fostering partnerships that promote collaboration, equity, and a shift of resources to support complete systems of care in those communities.

HSRHA is a comprehensive network of local organizations, including community-based organizations, provider groups, and business and government leaders committed to working together to strengthen and sustain the Hawai'i rural healthcare system. HSRHA is moving toward a Chapter Format, using each unique island as a chapter of the larger association.

HSRHA leads efforts to improve healthcare access and address provider shortages across Hawai'i and U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands, serving diverse communities in geographically isolated regions. Through their comprehensive Hawai'i Rural ECHO programs in Pediatrics, Behavioral Health, Geriatrics, Care Home, and Health Equity and a robust network of over 2,000 health professionals, HSRHA delivers vital technology-enabled learning and specialist knowledge. This is accomplished while managing federal and state grants that tackle critical issues like the opioid crisis, rural healthcare infrastructure, and digital equity—all aimed at bridging healthcare gaps and enhancing access for our rural communities.

Hawai'i Trauma Advisory Council (HTAC)

HTAC comprises a broad and representative array of multidisciplinary trauma stakeholders to disseminate information and advise the Department of Health on all matters of the comprehensive statewide trauma system. Their mission is to reduce the burden of trauma in Hawai'i through collaborative programs of injury prevention, optimal treatment, research, and education. The vision is to ensure all trauma patients within the State of Hawai'i receive quality comprehensive trauma care aligned with national trauma standards.

Healthcare Association of Hawai'i (HAH)

The Healthcare Association of Hawai'i is a 170-member organization that includes the acute care hospitals, public and private skilled nursing facilities; type II adult residential care homes; Medicare-certified home health agencies; hospices; assisted living facilities; and home infusion/pharmacies. Members also represent other healthcare providers throughout the continuum, including case management, air and ground ambulance, blood bank, dialysis, and more.

The primary focus of HAH is working with healthcare executives and their employees on vital industry issues, such as advocacy (in Washington D.C. and Hawai'i), quality and reimbursement improvement, strategic education, emergency preparedness, healthcare workforce, public relations, shared savings, and reducing costs.

In a time of unprecedented change in healthcare, the HAH is committed to working with providers across the continuum of care toward a healthcare system that offers the best possible quality of care to the people of Hawai'i.

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)

The HIPHI is a statewide nonprofit organization that began in 1996, then known as the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i. In 2012, the organization moved from a singular focus on tobacco issues to a broader public health mission and became the first public health institute serving Hawai'i. Our work has broadened to include food and agriculture; transportation and public safety; oral health; healthy eating + active living (HEAL); drug and alcohol prevention; tobacco; COVID-19 response efforts; and workforce development.

HIPHI continues to be a bridge between the community and partners from government and healthcare so that all relevant stakeholders throughout the Hawaiian Islands are involved in public health policy, programs, and investment decisions. We can play a significant role in the shift of public health from being primarily about treating disease to the promotion of preventing it.

Hawai'i Statewide Physician Shortage Crisis Task Force

The Hawai'i Physician Shortage Crisis Task Force is a group of 60 physicians and community members who, along with local and federal lawmakers, seek to improve conditions for physicians. Efforts include working toward an improved Medicare fee schedule and lifting state general excise tax requirements associated with Medicare and Medicaid patient visits, which physicians must pay out of the insurance payments received. For Medicare and Medicaid, physicians are not allowed to pass these required charges (taxes) on to patients, so they must pay them out of the billings received.

Starting in 2026, healthcare providers will no longer have to pay the state's general excise tax on healthcare for Medicare, Medicaid, and Tricare patients. The new law will allow healthcare providers to take on more patients with government insurance plans.

Hilo Benioff Medical Center Foundation

Hilo Benioff Medical Center Foundation supports various projects, capital improvements, and events that benefit Hawai'i Island and the greater community. The foundation is dedicated to fostering philanthropy to provide programs, projects, and services that recruit and retain healthcare professionals and educate the community about health management techniques. We support initiatives that enhance healthcare quality and ensure that our community has access to skilled professionals. One such example is the Hawai'i Island Family Medicine Residency Program. This program fulfills a need for patient-centered, culturally responsive physicians by training evidence-based, full-spectrum family medicine physicians and leaders dedicated to elevating the community's health.

Housing and Services Partnership Accelerator (HPSA)

In 2024, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) selected Hawai'i to participate in the first cohort of the Housing and Services Partnership Accelerator (HPSA). This opportunity offers individualized technical assistance to help states reduce homelessness by addressing health-related social needs, such as services connecting older adults and people with disabilities to accessible, affordable housing. The opportunity is open to states leveraging Medicaid authorities and flexibilities to provide innovative housing-related services and supports for people with disabilities and older adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. In 2024, the first round of the HSPA provided intensive technical assistance and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning to eight states (including Hawai'i) and the District of Columbia. Med-QUEST is currently working on the HPSA.

Maternal and Child Health Block Grant (Title V)

Title V is the only federal program devoted to improving the health of all women, children, and families. These groups comprise a large percentage of the uninsured and underserved populations. Funding is used to build infrastructure by creating linkages to healthcare and other maternal and child health services in the community; collaborating with state and local partners to assure access to preventive health services and information; assessing community health and wellness needs; and gathering data about the health status of the target population.

States decide how to use the funding. This helps them address the priority health needs in their state. Funds from the Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant help to reduce infant death; provide better access to quality health care services; and deliver family-centered, community-based systems of coordinated care for children with special health care needs.

Native Hawaiian Health Care System – Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL)

POL is charged with implementing the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act (42 USC 122), which is the national legislation for coordinating, implementing, and updating a Native Hawaiian comprehensive master plan, as well as conducting training for Native Hawaiian care practitioners, community outreach workers, counselors, and cultural educators to educate the Native Hawaiian population regarding health promotion and disease prevention. POL provides local technical assistance for the Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program, administered through HRSA, to increase the representation of Native Hawaiian health professionals dedicated to serving the needs of Native Hawaiian communities.

Listed below are the Native Hawaiian Health Care Centers:

- Ho'ola Lahui Hawai'i on Kaua'i
- Ke Ola Mamo on O'ahu
- Nā Pu'uwai on Moloka'i
- Hui No Ke Ola Pono on Maui
- Hui Mālama Ola Nā 'Ōiwi on Hawai'i Island

Office of Primary Care and Rural Health (OPCRH)

OPCRH is part of the DOH's Health Resources Administration (HRA), Family Health Services Division (FHSD). Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), specifically the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) and the Bureau of Health Workforce (BHW). These federal agencies provide funding for the State Offices of Primary Care (PCO); State Offices of Rural Health (SORH); Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (FLEX); and Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP). Also housed within FHSD is the Community Health Center Special Fund, the repository of cigarette tax revenues that provide subsidies for uninsured and underinsured patients statewide.

Office of Program Planning and Policy Development (OPPPD)

The OPPPD is part of the DOH administration. It is responsible for department-wide government relations and public policy, strategic planning, special projects, technical assistance supporting compliance, administrative rulemaking, performance and practice management, and scientific services.

Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center (PBTRC)

The U.S. DHHS HRSA Office funds PBTRC for the Advancement of Telehealth, which is part of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP). The PBTRC is a federally funded technical assistance center at the University of Hawai'i as part of the Telecommunications and Social Informatics Program/Pacific Health Informatics Data Center (TASI/PHIDC). The PBTRC goal is to assist in developing existing and new telehealth networks and offer education, training, strategic planning, and background information regarding telehealth technology, medical information technology, infrastructure, mobile health applications, and telehealth creation, growth, and maintenance.

Partners in Development Foundation (PIDF)

With its expansive and multigenerational reach among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander families, PIDF is a centralized resource for Hawai'i rural and underserved communities in education, social services, Hawaiian language and culture, and the environment. Their mission is to inspire and equip families and communities for success and service using timeless Native Hawaiian values and traditions.

Preventive Health and Human Services Block Grant (PHHSBG)

This federal program allows the DOH to address emerging health issues and gaps; decrease premature death and disabilities; work to achieve health equity and eliminate health disparities by addressing social determinants of health; support local programs to achieve health communities; and establish data and surveillance systems to monitor the health status of targeted populations.

Rural Health Service Providers Network (RHSPN)

This organization is a national network of healthcare service providers offering clinical, behavioral, recovery, and/or mental health services but are not designated as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs); FQHC Look-A-Likes (LALs); Indian Tribal Units (ITUs) of the Indian Health Service; Tribal Hospitals; Dual-Funded Community Health Centers/Tribal Clinics; or CMS-Certified Rural Health Clinics (RHCs).

Rural Health Service Providers (RHSPs) are a vital component of the American public health infrastructure that often serve as entry points into care for vulnerable populations who may not otherwise engage in health or social services. RHSPs are domestic public or private, nonprofit or for-profit organizations and corporations, including faith-based and community-based organizations that may be located in rural, suburban, or urban areas but providing any number of healthcare-related services in rural counties, as designated by the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA), or rural census tracts in urban counties, but do not meet any existing federal designations set forth by the HRSA, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and/or any other federal entity from whom funding originates.

University of Hawai'i – Hawai'i/Pacific Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

AHEC's areas of concentration include recruitment, placement, and retention activities to address community, state, and regional health workforce needs; performing health and health workforce needs assessments; and improving distance learning and telehealth utilization. AHEC provides local technical assistance for the State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP), an incentive program for primary care providers working at approved healthcare sites and funded by HRSA with matching contributions from public and private resources.

In 2023 and 2024, the Hawai'i Healthcare Education Loan Repayment Program (HELP) was funded \$30 million by the Hawai'i State Legislature. HELP provides qualified educational loan debt repayment to health professionals licensed or otherwise certified to practice and care for patients in Hawai'i. The Internal Revenue Service defines Qualified Educational Loans under 26 USC 221(d)(1). The state expects HELP to help improve the number of providers in medically underserved areas of Hawai'i and improve the recruitment and retention of healthcare workers by lessening the burden of sizeable educational debt. Governor Josh Green intends to propose an additional \$30 million to the legislature over the next two years to recruit and retain the next group of healthcare professionals.

University of Hawai'i Office of Public Health Studies (OPHS)

OPHS's mission is to advance and protect the health and well-being of the people of Hawai'i, the Pacific, Asia, and Indigenous peoples through teaching, discovery, innovation, community engagement, inclusion, and leadership. OPHS is part of the Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health and offers specializations in epidemiology, health policy and management, Native Hawaiian and Indigenous health, and social and behavioral health sciences.

University of Hawai'i Office of Strategic Health Initiatives (OSHI)

The University of Hawai'i (UH) System plays a critical role in educating and training the local health workforce and researching and addressing health challenges throughout Hawai'i and the Pacific. Established in 2018, the UH Office of Strategic Health Initiatives (OSHI) is dedicated to improving health and healthcare in Hawai'i and the Pacific through strategic partnerships, community-engaged activities, federal strategies, and research and service opportunities.

University of Hawai'i Rural Health Research & Policy Center (RHRPC)

The RHRPC focuses on improving rural healthcare challenges in Hawai'i through policy-relevant research and actionable, evidence-based strategies and recommendations, specifically on health workforce and equity. The center will collaborate with key rural health partners, including the Hawai'i State Rural Health Association, State of Hawai'i Office of Primary Care and Rural Health, Hawai'i/Pacific Basin Area Health Education Center, and Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center. The RHRPC was launched in September 2022 and is housed in the UH System Office of Strategic Health Initiatives as part of the UHealthy Hawai'i Initiative. Focus groups and site visits to impacted regions across the state and with key stakeholders will provide the center with critical information to support its research and policy efforts.

University of Hawai'i Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing (NAWSON)

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing is the premier nursing and dental hygiene school in Hawai'i. Located on the UH Mānoa campus, NAWSON the only doctoral/research university-intensive institute in the state. The institution is dedicated to improving health through education, research, and service. It provides instructional, clinical, and research activities to enhance the health and care of diverse populations in the State of Hawai'i and the Asia-Pacific region.

DESCRIBE FY24 ACTIVITIES (07/01/23 – 06/30/24)

Our Primary Health Care Partners (PHCP) gather the most current best practices from nationwide sources and share it with each other to implement programs and offer incentives for our state healthcare workforce as they provide the highest quality healthcare to the people of Hawai'i. Sharing information with partners concerning policies and topics that impact our communities is vital to the strength and integrity of our healthcare infrastructure. PHCP collaborates to increase health workforce capacity, assess health professional shortages statewide, and bolster the healthcare delivery system. PHCP partnered on a wide range of activities in 2023-2024, including Advocacy, Funding, Health Systems Planning and Collaboration, Shortage Designation, Telehealth/ Telemedicine/Tele-Education, Training and Technical Assistance, and Workforce, which are all described in this section.

ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION

Acts in 2024

(https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/advreports/advreport.aspx?year=2024&report=deadline&rpt_type=gov_acts&measuretype=HB,SB&title=Acts)

- HB1827 HD2 SD1 CD1 (Companion SB 3225) RELATING TO HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT. Appropriates funds to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations and Department of Education to support healthcare workforce development programs, specifically the public high school healthcare workforce certificate program and glide path program for certified nurse aides. Appropriates funds to renovate and equip certain public high school classrooms for healthcare training. (CD1)

Bills to be Reintroduced in 2025

- SB3126 SD1 HD1 (Companion HB2437) RELATING TO EMERGENCY AEROMEDICAL SERVICES. Establishes an Emergency Aeromedical Services Partnership Program to be administered by the Department of Health in counties with a population of less than 500,000. Requires cost-sharing for program operations, maintenance, and revenue sharing between the state and counties of Hawai'i, Kaua'i, and Maui. Authorizes deposits into the Emergency Medical Services Special Funds. Requires rulemaking. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000 (HD1).
- SB3128 SD2 HD1 (Companion HB2439) RELATING TO ACT 212, SESSION LAWS OF HAWAII 2021. Extends the transfer of the Oahu Regional Health Care System (Oahu Region) from the Hawai'i Health Systems Corporation to the Department of Health to 12/31/2026. Requires the working group established by Act 212, SLH 2021, to submit a report to the legislature on updates to the operating and budget plan and pro forma capital improvements plan and a breakdown of costs related to the transfer. Requires the Oahu Region to enter into an agreement with the Department of Health regarding the Oahu Region taking care of low acuity patients in the Department's custody by the end of 2024. Requires the Oahu Region to report to the legislature. Effective 7/1/3000 (HD1).

FUNDING

Fiscal Year 2024 is the fifth year of the contract cycle for the Comprehensive Primary Care contracts, which are funded by the Community Health Centers Special Fund (CHCSF). These contracts provide safety-net, comprehensive primary care services as the payer of last resort to uninsured and underinsured individuals whose income is at or below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level. Services include medical care, behavioral health care, dental treatment, support services, and pharmaceutical services. The contracts are being improved and strengthened to better utilize the CHCSF.

The Office of Primary Care and Rural Health (OPCRH) is organizationally placed within the Family Health Services Division (FHSD). The four federal grant programs (PCO, Flex, SHIP, SORH) have complementary goals in interacting with and supporting healthcare providers and partner organizations. This integration strengthens the capacity and outreach of all grant programs, supports leveraging scarce resources, and provides a more comprehensive array of services over time.

Under the Flex Program, the Medicare Beneficiary Quality Improvement Project seeks to improve the quality of care provided in CAHs by voluntarily reporting measures not required by CMS. The Flex Program also works with CAHs on financial improvement and provides education on improving the revenue cycle, cost reports, and charge masters. States coordinate technical assistance based on the needs of hospitals in their state.

State governments use SHIP funds to support rural hospitals with 49 beds or fewer. SHIP enables small rural hospitals to become or join accountable care organizations (ACOs); participate in shared savings programs; and purchase health information technology (hardware and software), equipment, and/or training to comply with quality improvement activities, such as advancing patient care information, promoting interoperability, and payment bundling. SHIP funds are also used to help small hospitals prepare for ICD-11 implementation.

The SORH Program aims to strengthen the rural healthcare delivery system in Hawai'i and sustain a focal point for rural health across the state. SORH funding supported the Hawai'i Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), a civic engagement training program that increases the number and skill level of parents and community leaders focused on improving childhood outcomes. SORH also leveraged funding to implement a Community Health Worker (CHW) certification and licensing assessment. This project aims to assess the effects of regulation on Hawai'i CHWs if current legislation were to pass. The assessment will determine if CHW certification or licensing is consistent with the Hawai'i Regulatory Licensing Reform Act (Section 26H-2, HRS).

HEALTH SYSTEMS PLANNING AND COLLABORATION

OPCRH, in partnership with HSRHA, has implemented various new programs. The programs are listed below.

- The HSRHA Health Equity ECHO program was designed specifically to address the unique cultural landscape of Hawai'i. It has successfully launched its first cohort of 13 participants in September 2024, bringing together physicians, healthcare providers, and medical school faculty to cultivate culturally responsive healthcare education and practice across the islands. The sessions create a collaborative and safe space for transparent discussions about challenging topics, fostering authentic dialogue that helps current healthcare professionals and academic leaders better understand and serve diverse communities.
- Thanks to Maui Together funding, HSRHA expanded the Barry Taniguchi Health Profession Subsidy program to Maui County, awarding subsidies to four healthcare providers (two on Moloka'i and two on Maui) who commit to serving rural communities for five years. Through this initiative, which offers up to \$100,000 per provider, HSRHA aims to retain locally grown medical providers and address critical healthcare shortages by helping clinicians overcome the financial challenges of returning to practice in the state's underserved communities.
- The Hawai'i State Rural Health Association's Maui Together Project included utilizing social media to communicate information, education, and messages to encourage the well-being of those impacted by the Maui wildfires. The created and shared content included promoting other Maui Together activities, information about programs and services available to those impacted, and mental health information and resources, including telehealth services. Social media messaging was carried out via Instagram, Facebook, and X (Twitter) for nine months, beginning in January 2024. Total content views were over 318,000, with an average of over 14,000 unique accounts reached monthly.
- Maui Community Health Worker Outreach is being promoted by Hui No Ke Ola Pono (HNKOP). HNKOP actively fosters community partnerships to address local health needs. Leveraging assessments from Community Health Workers, HNKOP has delivered essential resources and direct services to families impacted by the Maui wildfires through door-to-door outreach and place-based care. Looking ahead, HNKOP plans to expand its support by establishing services at Ka La'i Ola, a temporary housing development dedicated to wildfire survivors.
- The Maui Together: Maui County Wildfire Assessment Team conducted nine report-sharing sessions with diverse stakeholders, including nonprofits, media outlets, community groups, and government officials. The findings garnered significant media coverage across multiple outlets, including Hawaii News Now, Honolulu Civil Beat, NBC, and Forbes. The assessment's impact reached the national level when Congresswoman Jill Tokuda submitted the data as congressional testimony.
 - Link to recording: <https://vimeo.com/995981628>
 - Link to slide deck and full report: <https://hsrha.org/maui-together/>

- The Maui County Social Service Navigation project had two community events and a Health Fair on November 9, 2024, with 30 organizations attending. All intended to promote healing and love to those directly and indirectly impacted by the wildfires.
 - Both past events were special and targeted different groups/segments of the population. The Maui County Social Service Navigation project worked with HSRHA, a Maui nurse, Aloha Boards, Boards for Buddies, and other individual skateboarders known to some Lānaʻi people. Dr. Jamie Stevens, a pediatric psychiatrist, talked with attendees (mostly kids) on Lānaʻi to discuss the direct and indirect impacts of the wildfires.
 - Children’s Action Network, Maui Aids Foundation, Lānaʻi Police Department, Pūlama Lānaʻi (a local domestic violence task force), and other community members worked together to organize a pride event. The event focused on promoting activity for healing.
- OPCRH partnered with Community First Hawaiʻi to implement the second annual Hawaiʻi Island Healthcare Conference, which brought together leaders from across Hawaiʻi Island and the state to develop plans for more effective healthcare delivery and increased community collaboration. Leaders from Maui were invited to observe the conference to plan a similar event on Maui.

SHORTAGE DESIGNATION

Throughout the U.S., there are geographic areas, populations, and facilities with too few primary care, dental, and behavioral health providers and services. In conjunction with State Primary Care Offices, HRSA determines which of these should be "shortage designations" and are therefore eligible to receive certain federal resources. These federal resources include scholarships and loan repayment programs that recruit and retain licensed healthcare professionals in rural and underserved areas and populations. In addition, Medicare pays a 10% quarterly bonus to certain healthcare providers who furnish services in the health professional shortage areas, which is one type of shortage designation.

The Maternity Care Target Area (MCTA) is the newest shortage designation. MCTAs are areas within existing Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) experiencing a shortage of maternity healthcare professionals. The licensed obstetrician-gynecologists (OB/GYN) and certified nurse midwives are counted to measure the provider-to-population ratio within the MCTA. MCTAs are allocated federal funding to address the shortage of licensed maternity care providers.

OPCRH partnered with the Hawaiʻi Health Data Warehouse to develop the Hawaiʻi Primary Care Needs Assessment Data Tracker on their Hawaiʻi Health Matters website. This convenient online tool allows users to compare common health statistics across the state. It includes 49 indicators of population characteristics and health status to monitor an area’s social determinants of health. Unless otherwise noted, all data values come from the American Community Survey, 2014-2018. It uses the latest public health information from various sources to present health data at the community level. The digital format allows users to track trends and view interactive maps and charts, which can be downloaded for use in other documents. Source data is continuously being updated to the tracker, allowing users to get an overview of data on demographics and access to health services and identify barriers and populations of highest need to bring awareness to health disparities.

TELEHEALTH / TELEMEDICINE / TELE-EDUCATION

Project ECHO Hawai'i is a multi-organizational partnership between the Hawai'i State Rural Health Association, University of Hawai'i, and Hawai'i State Department of Health. This telehealth program serves Hawai'i residents' needs across the state by expanding access to care while reducing specialist referrals and lowering overall medical costs. Project ECHO Hawai'i currently manages five clinical series, including behavioral health, geriatric care, pediatric care, health equity, and care home.

From January 1, 2024, to October 31, 2024, Project ECHO Hawai'i continuing medical education and trainings were offered through 84 teleclinics. The average attendance was 67.6 participants per teleclinic session, with 551 individual (unduplicated) attendees and a total attendance of 6,214 (duplicated) participants. Please note: 1) There is no data for the Care Home and Geriatric ECHOs, and 2) Unduplicated participants attend multiple sessions but are only counted once, and the duplicated participants represent the total attendance for all sessions.

OPCRH has funded the Health Equity ECHO for Project ECHO Hawai'i. The Health Equity ECHO implements Health Equity Training to address persistent health disparities. Virtual trainings are offered to healthcare professionals from multidisciplinary fields of primary care, public health, and social service who provide care to vulnerable and medically underserved rural communities, including racial and ethnic minority groups and individuals living in areas of high social vulnerability.

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

OPCRH provides training and technical assistance to organizations and individuals on diverse topics such as scholarship and loan repayment applications, health facility applications, health system expansion, shortage designation, needs assessment, data sharing, and more.

The Hawai'i Performance Improvement Collaborative (HPIC) trains the state's critical access hospitals (CAHs) on clinical quality improvement, financial improvement, operational improvement, and transitioning to population health. There are three quarterly meetings and one annual conference each year. The meetings and conference are in-person events. CAH staff from all islands are invited and provided financial assistance to attend.

A Rural Health Clinic (RHC) Technical Assistance conference trained the state's rural health clinics. Training topics at the in-person event included regulation, compliance, quality and measurement, program evaluation, emergency preparedness, RHC billing best practices, RHC cost report basics, scheduling and staffing, and other related topics. Four online webinars were scheduled after the conference to provide additional training requested by the conference attendees.

Meetings and consultations were conducted during the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) open application cycle. NHSC offers three loan repayment programs and two scholarship programs that provide funding to medical students and healthcare providers to support their educational goals and achievements in exchange for service obligations in rural and underserved areas.

WORKFORCE

There are various federally funded and state-funded workforce recruitment and retention programs. OPCRH promotes the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and Nurse Corps scholarship and loan repayment programs to recruit and retain licensed health professionals in rural and underserved areas. The NHSC and Nurse Corps are federally funded by HRSA. OPCRH also administers the Conrad 30 J-1 waivers, which address the shortage of qualified doctors in medically underserved areas.

In 2024, the NHSC increased the loan repayment award for primary care providers. The eligible primary care providers are physicians, nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and physician assistants who provide primary care services in high-need communities in primary care HPSAs. The loan repayment award amount was increased from \$50,000 to \$75,000 for a full-time, two-year service commitment. The loan repayment award amount was increased from \$35,000 to \$37,500 for a half-time, two-year service commitment. Also, there is a one-time enhancement award of \$5,000 for new loan repayment awardees who speak Spanish. More Spanish-speaking awardees will address language access barriers to healthcare.

In FY24, 121 NHSC health professionals served at multiple sites statewide, including FQHCs, RHCs, substance use disorder facilities, correctional facilities, and school-based clinics. The dental practitioners include 17 dentists and 1 registered dental hygienist. The mental health professionals include 16 health service psychologists; 2 licensed clinical social workers; 2 licensed professional counselors; 1 nurse practitioner; 2 pharmacists; 1 physician; 1 physician assistant; 1 psychiatric nurse specialist; 2 registered nurses; and 1 substance use disorder counselor. The primary care professionals include 1 certified nurse midwife; 32 nurse practitioners; 1 pharmacist; 29 physicians; 9 physician assistants; and 2 registered nurses.

OPCRH continues to be an active 3RNet member site. OPCRH shares this online network with organizations providing healthcare to rural and medically underserved communities and routinely promotes utilization at events such as the Hawai'i Health Workforce Summit. This is the second year OPCRH has contracted with 3RNet to implement Provider Retention and Information System Management (PRISM). PRISM provides a standardized and state-of-the-art way to gather real-time data from clinicians as they serve in state and federal loan repayment, scholarship, and other incentive programs, including and the NHSC.

Clinicians in the NHSC Loan Repayment Program in Hawai'i: End of Year and End of Contract Questionnaire Data (Note: 35 clinicians responded to the survey)

Clinicians plan to apply to extend their current service contract				
Definitely not	Unlikely	50-50; Unsure	Probably	Definitely
7 (21%)	8 (24%)	5 (15%)	3 (9%)	11 (32%)

In FY24, 11 Nurse Corps professionals are serving at multiple sites statewide. Nurse Corps eligible critical shortage facilities cover primary care settings, which include the FQHCs; community mental health centers; RHCs; state or local health departments; small rural hospitals; outpatient facilities; American Indian health facilities; home health agencies; school-based clinics; nurse-managed health clinics/centers; Native Hawaiian health centers; and free and charitable clinics. Other eligible critical shortage facilities include disproportionate share hospitals; public hospitals; private hospitals; urgent care centers; ambulatory surgical centers; end-stage renal disease dialysis centers; hospice programs; and residential nursing homes. Of the 11 Nurse Corps professionals, 3 are nurse practitioners and 8 are registered nurses.

The State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) is administered by the Hawai'i/Pacific Basin Area Health Education Center (AHEC) and is funded by HRSA and the State of Hawai'i. Over the past year, 51 SLRP awards were made throughout the state. Hawai'i County received 14 awards; Maui received 11; Lāna'i received two; City and County of Honolulu received 18; and Kaua'i County received 6.

Hawai'i/Pacific Basin AHEC administers the Hawai'i Healthcare Education Loan Repayment Program (HELP) and is fully funded by the State of Hawai'i. Over two years, HELP has received \$30 million from the state legislature to award and distribute to healthcare-licensed professionals. Approximately 862 individuals received a HELP award, with many more are expected to follow.

The Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program (NHHSP) is administered by Papa Ola Lōkahi and funded by HRSA. Established in 1988 within the Native Hawaiian Health Care Act, the NHHSP provides awards to Native Hawaiian students seeking degrees in the healthcare professions. The purpose is to increase the number of Native Hawaiians in health and allied health professions, thereby increasing access to acceptable healthcare delivery for those who seek it.

HRSA has reported in FY23, Hawai'i received \$4,207,981 for loan repayment and scholarship programs. The FY24 report is not available. The breakdown is listed in the table.

Program	FY23 Funding
National Health Service Corps	\$3,096,663
Nurse Corps	\$ 672,380
Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program	\$ 438,938
Total	\$4,207,981