



HAWAI'I  
EARLY  
CHILDHOOD  
STATE PLAN  
2019–2024

OUR KEIKI  
OUR FUTURE

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

## THE FIRST EIGHT YEARS OF LIFE ARE THE FOUNDATION FOR A CHILD'S FUTURE—AND FOR HAWAII'S FUTURE

In Hawai'i, our remote geography and community values emphasize the importance of relying upon and caring for each other. Our host culture and local culture have long established the importance of taking care of keiki and 'ohana. A growing body of international research and scientific findings about brain development back up these longstanding values, showing the importance of the earliest years of a child's life to their long-term success, and also to the long-term success of society.

Too many of the children who can most benefit from high-quality health, safety, and early care and education services lack access to these resources. Children and their families are facing challenges that include homelessness, language barriers, scarce resources in remote and rural areas, or other factors. By looking first at the populations and geographic areas that most need our support, we can invest wisely in ways that result in a stronger future for Hawai'i. We can change the course of a child's life and our islands' future by working together to ensure that all who live here have an equitable chance to learn, grow, and thrive.

This State Plan is the community's plan, and we look forward to bringing partners and constituencies together to create a stronger future for our children and our state. By focusing on this State Plan's five-year goals and strategies, and collectively carrying out its priority actions, we will support our children, families, and communities in reaching their full potential. Through this State Plan, we aim to:

- **Demonstrate Hawai'i's long-standing values of caring for keiki and 'ohana through our investment in our children and the individuals who support them.**
- **Apply what research and science tell us are best practices for supporting children, families, and our early childhood professionals.**
- **Increase support for, and better coordination of, the full range of resources available to children, prenatal to age eight, and their families.**

The Early Learning Board and Executive Office on Early Learning thank the hundreds of individuals who contributed to this State Plan. If you are new to our collective efforts, we welcome you. We are grateful to learn from and with the many individuals and organizations that dedicate their time and expertise to the children of Hawai'i.

**Dr. Robert G. Peters**  
Chair, Early Learning Board

**Lauren Moriguchi**  
Director, Executive Office on Early Learning

# ABOUT THE EARLY LEARNING BOARD AND EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING

The State of Hawai'i established the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) in 2012. The vision of EOEL is that every child in Hawai'i has access to high-quality early childhood development and learning experiences that lay the foundation for lifelong wellbeing.

EOEL's work to bring entities together in support of young children is reflected in its mission: Through collaboration and partnerships, we work to establish a system that ensures a solid foundation of early childhood development and learning for Hawai'i's young children (from prenatal care to kindergarten entry), meaningful engagement and supports for their families, and a stable, competent, and supported early childhood workforce.

In 2017, Act 202 transitioned the State's Early Learning Advisory Board (ELAB) from its advisory capacity to a governing board. The resulting Early Learning Board (ELB) has the broadened scope of coordinating the State's early childhood development and education system, making policy recommendations to improve that system, and overseeing EOEL. The cross-agency and cross-sector membership of the ELB provides a unique opportunity to holistically address the developmental and educational needs of Hawai'i's young children.

ELB members include State agencies and entities that work with or on behalf of Hawai'i's young children and families. ELB also includes a range of appointed stakeholders, such as parents, charitable foundations, private schools, Hawai'i's four recognized early childhood settings, and Hawaiian language and culture medium providers.

Together, the State's ELB and EOEL make it possible to sustain a coordinated, statewide approach to strengthening the early childhood system in Hawai'i.

## EARLY LEARNING BOARD CONSTITUENCIES

Center-Based Program Providers	Hawai'i State Department of Health
Family Child Care Program Providers	Hawai'i State Department of Human Services
Family-Child Interaction Learning Program Providers	Hawaiian Medium Early Learning Providers
Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools	Head Start Provider Agencies
Hawai'i Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics	Home-Visiting Program Providers
Hawai'i Council of Mayors	Kamehameha Schools
Hawai'i Early Intervention Coordinating Council	Parents
Hawai'i State Department of Education	Philanthropic Organizations
	University of Hawai'i

# ABOUT THIS EARLY CHILDHOOD STATE PLAN

This State Plan focuses on children from their prenatal care through their eighth year. Focusing on children in this age range, their families, and expecting parents is an important part of strengthening future generations. It is also an important approach for strengthening our statewide early childhood system so that we better support children, families, and the early childhood workforce. Our collaborations in this age range will enable us to improve alignment between programs and services, and address transition points where children are at risk of “falling through the cracks.”

There are approximately 154,000 children under the age of eight in Hawai‘i.<sup>1</sup> Working alone, no family, agency or organization can provide all the supports needed for positive early childhood outcomes. This Early Childhood State Plan identifies areas where a broad range of stakeholders can coordinate resources and share information to collectively support Hawai‘i’s young children.

THE STATE PLAN IS ORGANIZED AROUND A SHARED VISION, CORE VALUE, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, AND COMPREHENSIVE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT.

Five-year strategies and priorities for collective action within these building blocks provide a roadmap for working together to reach our desired outcomes for young children. The five-year framework for collective action in this State Plan is a first step to promoting shared endeavors and new partnerships.

An Early Childhood State Plan Steering Committee helped to spearhead the large-scale collaboration between key State agencies, nonprofit organizations, private sector providers, philanthropic partners, and community stakeholders to create the process for, and develop, this State Plan. This included an Environmental Scan, and input from more than 100 early childhood stakeholders to inform the building blocks, strategies, and priorities found in this State Plan.



The ELB includes State and County government agencies, philanthropic organizations, and community-based nonprofit and private programs that have their own strategic plans, including work that falls outside the range of early childhood. The EOEL and ELB can, and will, coordinate and convene key entities to help develop specific early childhood action plans and initiatives based on this State Plan framework.

The ELB and EOEL will report annually on State Plan achievements and lessons learned, and discuss unanticipated challenges and emerging opportunities. EOEL will publicly share State Plan updates and early childhood data with State department heads and the community through various channels, including the EOEL website: [EARLYLEARNING.HAWAII.GOV](http://EARLYLEARNING.HAWAII.GOV)

### EARLY CHILDHOOD STATE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE: PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

‘Aha Pūnana Leo (representing Hawaiian medium early learning providers and neighbor islands)

Early Childhood Action Strategy

Early Learning Board

Hawai‘i Children’s Action Network (representing community advocates)

Hawai‘i P-20 Partnerships for Education

Hawai‘i State Department of Education

Hawai‘i State Department of Health

Hawai‘i State Department of Human Services

Hawai‘i State Executive Office on Early Learning (Convener)

Kamehameha Schools

KCAA Preschools of Hawai‘i (representing center-based program providers)

Maui Economic Opportunity Inc./Head Start (representing Head Start grantees and neighbor islands)

Partners in Development Foundation (representing family-child interaction learning programs)

University of Hawai‘i Early Childhood Education Programs

## STRONG EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIONS SUPPORT STRONG CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

This State Plan calls for increased collaboration around and investment in the earliest years in a child's life because it is the right thing to do—and the right way to help secure our state's future. The achievement of Hawai'i's long-term statewide health, human services, education, and workforce goals are dependent upon investments in early childhood development and education.

Based on a child's environment, the gap in opportunities begins early, when a child is less than a year old. When that gap is ignored, it continues to widen, and addressing it later in life becomes more difficult and costly to our community in dollar terms. Early screening and intervention, health and developmental supports, and high-quality early care and education programs are an extraordinarily wise investment. Each dollar spent on early childhood programs yields a three- to eight-fold return in long-term economic benefits to society.<sup>2</sup>



- 90% of brain development occurs before the age of five, and is influenced by positive adult-child relationships and learning experiences, nutrition, and healthcare.<sup>3</sup>



- High-quality early childhood programs enhance school readiness for all children and are of particular benefit to children living in poverty or facing other risk factors.<sup>4</sup>



- Children of low-income households who participate in high-quality early education are more likely to finish high school and twice as likely to attend college.<sup>5</sup>

# SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

As we coordinate our work on behalf of Hawai'i's children, we need first to celebrate the strengths and resilience of our families, communities, and the early childhood providers who care for our children. We also need to recognize that children and families are facing unprecedented challenges and rapid changes in our islands. We need to address gaps and expand our work, building upon our strengths and addressing our vulnerabilities.

## BUILDING UPON OUR STRENGTHS:

- **Existing efforts in statewide systems for collaboration:** Over the past five years, Hawai'i State statutes established the Executive Office on Early Learning and expanded the purview of the Early Learning Board to create a comprehensive, sustainable early childhood system that includes health and wellbeing, child development, and early childhood education.
- **Diverse providers and settings:** Before the age of five, children are cared for in a number of settings, including center-based programs, home visitation programs, family child care homes (including informal family, friend, and neighbor care), and family-child interaction learning programs. The unique variety in child development and education programs supports diverse family preferences and needs, and can be built upon when working to increase access and options for families of all income levels and circumstances throughout the state.
- **Subsidies and financial support for child care settings:** Hawai'i has an established private early care and education infrastructure, and history of State, Federal, and private child care subsidies to increase access to private early childhood services.
- **Collaborations for public prekindergarten:** The EOEL, DOE, and State Public Charter School Commission have collectively developed prekindergarten programs for 4-year-olds, with priority given to children who may be at risk for delays due to biological or social factors. For programs and/or classrooms on both regular DOE and public charter school sites, school administrators and personnel have taken leadership roles in implementing prekindergarten partnerships, including sharing facilities and coordinating on professional learning opportunities.
- **Healthcare coverage:** Hawai'i is one of the highest-performing states in the nation with respect to health insurance coverage for children.
- **Data collaborations:** Collaborative partners are working to address the need to connect information from early childhood health and education programs and existing statewide data to promote informed decision-making at all program levels.

## COLLECTIVELY ADDRESSING OUR CHALLENGES:

- **High level of risk factors:** 61% of children from birth to age three in Hawai'i have at least one risk factor known to increase the chance of poor developmental outcomes.<sup>6</sup>
- **Hawai'i families are increasingly struggling to meet basic needs:**
  - Aloha United Way has calculated a “survival wage” for households in Hawai'i, and 48.5% of families have income below this survival threshold.<sup>7</sup>
  - 21% of families with children age 0-5 often find it very hard to get by on their income for basic needs (e.g., food or housing).<sup>8</sup>
  - 13% of children age 0-5 have health insurance coverage that is inadequate to meet their needs.<sup>9</sup>
- **Homeless Children and Families:** In 2017, 1,622 children below the age of five received transitional and outreach services due to homelessness.<sup>10</sup>
- **Access and equity:** Access to early childhood programs, health programs, and other social services can be difficult for vulnerable populations that stand to benefit the most, such as families experiencing trauma from poverty, domestic violence, homelessness, and the effects of natural disasters, and families with children who have special needs.
- **Shortages of child care options disproportionately impact certain regions:** According to a University of Hawai'i Center on the Family study, “licensed infant-toddler center seats... serve only one out of every 37 children under age three.”<sup>11</sup> Child care is less available in rural areas: Kaua'i, Moloka'i, and Lāna'i “have no infant-toddler centers.”<sup>12</sup> In addition, current public prekindergarten and private preschools serve less than 60% of eligible children.
- **Limited infrastructure for collecting and sharing early childhood data:** Hawai'i currently lacks sufficient infrastructure to gather and share information that can help early childhood services, initiatives, and programs improve.
- **Workforce development and training supports in professions that impact early childhood:** There are critical workforce shortages in health and early childhood care and education areas. Coordinated workforce development and ongoing professional development opportunities are needed to positively impact children's long-term developmental outcomes.
- **Insufficient overall funding:** Current levels of funding need to be increased substantially to shore up and expand upon existing investments in maternal and child health, family supports, child care and education options, for example, to truly reflect Hawai'i's enduring core values of caring for our keiki and families.

Our State Plan vision, core value, guiding principles, strategies, and priorities for collective action enable us to build upon existing strengths and address these key challenges.

**VISION:** Hawai'i's children have the best possible foundation for the future because they are healthy, safe, and ready for lifelong learning. Hawai'i's communities have a solid foundation for the future because of our early and sustained investment in children. Families, caregivers, educators, healthcare professionals, community members, and leaders from the public and private sectors work together to ensure children can thrive.

**CORE VALUE:** Every child in Hawai'i is our child, and deserves our commitment to their care, learning, and wellbeing.<sup>13</sup>

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES:** Given our core value that every child is our child, we are committed to comprehensive supports that reflect the strengths, realities, and needs of Hawai'i's children and their families. This Early Childhood State Plan is the launching of a sustained effort to come together around the following guiding principles as we build a positive future for our children and our state.

- a. **Diversity & multilingualism:** A strong Hawai'i weaves families' home language and culture into our collective work on behalf of children. Hawai'i has two official State languages – English and Hawaiian – and provides opportunities and supports through both languages. Hawai'i's immigrant languages are also respected and embraced.
- b. **Multigenerational approaches:** Hawai'i's early childhood system recognizes that multi-generational approaches honor and empower family structures and have a lasting impact on educational, economic, social, and health outcomes for children, families, and communities.
- c. **Equity:** Quality programs and services must be accessible to all children. We need to work together to overcome economic, geographic, linguistic, and other barriers that result in families' inequitable access to needed resources.
- d. **Integration of health, wellbeing, and education:** Children's health begins with their parents' health before conception, and is reliant upon the family and community environment that surrounds them before and after birth. In the early years of a child's development and growth, an integrated approach to the health, wellbeing, and education of children and their caregivers is critical.
- e. **A well-supported early childhood workforce:** Quality programs and services require a well-trained, highly qualified, skilled and stable workforce that is adequately compensated for their professional competencies and the importance of their roles.
- f. **Partnerships with families and communities:** Trusting relationships with and within families and communities are nurtured to support families in the development and attainment of their goals.

**g. Choice, continuous improvement and positive transitions:** The growth and development of Hawai'i's children takes place in a diverse range of settings. In all cases, positive interactions between young children and adults, and between settings, will help children thrive. This includes commitment to quality, continuous improvement, and information exchange for smooth transitions between settings. This is particularly important as children transition from early care and prekindergarten to kindergarten settings.

**h. Effective collaborations:** Collaborations are essential to achieve our collective goals; they are key to the effective and efficient systems that our children and their families deserve. Transparency, accountability, and a commitment to positive results at all levels of the early childhood system will benefit Hawai'i's children and future generations.

## BUILDING BLOCKS OF A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD

This State Plan identifies five interrelated building blocks crucial to creating a solid foundation for every child, beginning with our most vulnerable populations and regions.

- 1** CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLBEING
- 2** FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT
- 3** FOUNDATIONS FOR EARLY LEARNING
- 4** A WELL-PREPARED, WELL-SUPPORTED WORKFORCE
- 5** COORDINATION OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

This State Plan identifies key five-year strategies and priorities for collective action within each building block, as well as “vital signs,” that give us key data to review as we collaboratively support children and families. Vital signs are currently available data about young children and families that can help inform our collective efforts. As part of our work together over the coming years, we will support the identification and gathering of additional data that can strengthen our support for keiki and families.

# 1

## BUILDING BLOCK 1: CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLBEING

**Access to resources for optimal health, safety, and wellbeing is essential for children and families to learn, grow, and thrive.**

Overall wellbeing and the foundations for early learning begin with access to quality healthcare, starting with prenatal care, and are particularly important as children grow and develop through the first eight years of life. Our five-year goal for child and family health and safety includes universal home visitation for newborn children and their families, as this is a key window of opportunity to lay the foundation for a child’s brain development. It is also a key time for parents and caregivers to learn and grow. The Department of Health (DOH) has a comprehensive plan for child health and safety, and our five-year goal builds from this work, focusing our collective efforts on our most vulnerable populations first. While DOH provides important resources and a statewide approach, we recognize that the health and wellness of children and families is a responsibility that extends beyond DOH; it is a key component of a comprehensive early childhood system. To achieve a community-wide “culture of health,” we must work together and incorporate health and wellness into policies and practices affecting children and families.

Optimizing resources for child and family health and safety statewide also means that medical insurance is available to all of our children. While Hawai‘i is particularly strong in the percentage of children who have health insurance, we must work together with providers to expand coverage to all children. The availability of insurance is one piece of the puzzle, but so is having accessible, high-quality health resources or “medical homes” available to all. This State Plan encourages a focus on remote and rural areas to ensure that resources are available, affordable, and accessible by families in every county. Most islands face challenges in ensuring every child and current or expectant parent has a medical home, and access to the full spectrum of resources and services that support healthy development. Support and expansion for current collaborations between State Departments and providers are needed to improve access for families living in rural and remote regions.

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

## ASPIRATIONAL GOAL

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

## 5-YEAR KEY STRATEGIES

A. Optimize family and child wellbeing through a statewide delivery of strong family supports during the crucial “First 1,000 Days” of development (conception through the child’s 2nd birthday).

B. Collaborate on policy and program initiatives that enable families and children, with particular attention to children with special health needs, to have equitable access to healthcare and services in their communities, including reproductive health, pediatric care, dental care, environmental health, and mental health supports.

C. Ensure communication and cross-sector collaboration to bring evidence-based child development and behavioral health information into all settings, including the medical home, early care and education programs, K-3 programs, and family support programs within the community.

D. Ensure public information and social supports are available to address injury and abuse prevention and promote the safety and wellbeing of families and children.

## 5-YR PRIORITIES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

i. Screen expectant families/pregnant women for risk factors and provide them with needed services and supports in their communities.

ii. Ensure every child has a medical home and is screened at recommended ages for health, wellbeing, and developmental milestones, and is connected to services as needed.

iii. Engage healthcare system partners in advocating for and securing adequate healthcare services statewide, especially in remote and rural areas.

iv. Promote environmental health through policy development and program practices to reduce exposure to environmental hazards and to prepare for emergencies.

v. Establish formal and informal information-sharing agreements between child-serving settings for timely and coordinated service delivery.

vi. Explore universal home visitation for parents of newborns to support the safety and wellbeing of families and children, with frequency and duration of visits based on need.

## VITAL SIGNS AVAILABLE AS OF 2018

Increased percentage of pregnant women receiving prenatal care in the first three months of pregnancy.

Increased percentage of children 9-35 months who receive developmental screening.

Increased percentage of families who had a home visitor visit one or more times when a new baby was born.

# 2

## BUILDING BLOCK 2: FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT

**Engaging families as partners, and providing families with seamless access to comprehensive information, resources, and services to improve children’s ability to thrive.**

During the early childhood period and beyond, helping young children to thrive requires partnerships with families that will support their children’s developmental and educational growth. Research shows that the birth of a child can be a window of opportunity for learning and growth for the parents, as well as the newborn child. Existing trusted relationships with families, and informal and formal resources and programs are important to recognize and strengthen.

In Hawai‘i, part of creating and growing trusted relationships involves cultural responsiveness and affirming diverse cultural viewpoints about what “family” means. This includes extended family and hānai family structures (e.g. adoptive and foster families), and single-parent and same-sex parent families. An important aspect of advancing family wellness in our communities is supporting the diverse cultural, social, and linguistic approaches that are needed for true partnerships with families.

Programs for young children and their families that are based in indigenous language and culture have grown over the past decades through the hard work of Native Hawaiian educators, community leaders, families, and advocates. The international recognition of Hawaiian medium early learning programs is an affirmation of the importance of a thriving language and culture to the overall wellbeing of children and families. It is important to recognize this as an area of strength to learn from and build upon when focusing on diverse definitions of wellbeing and the types of support that help children and families to thrive.

The Department of Human Services, Department of Health, and community partners are piloting collaborations under a multigenerational framework, ‘Ohana Nui. Foster youth chose the name ‘Ohana Nui, which means “extended family” in Hawaiian. This endeavor builds on and complements established community-based multigenerational programs and approaches that engage two or more generations at a time (child, parent, and other close relatives or grandparents) to increase the potential for positive outcomes. For Hawai‘i State agencies, shifting to a multigenerational framework can streamline and integrate programs, policies, divisions, and partnerships around what is best for children and families. Breaking down silos that impede good intentions and quality services is a needed step toward providing comprehensive services that bolster existing family and community supports.

## 2. FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT

ASPIRATIONAL GOAL	5-YEAR KEY STRATEGIES	5-YR PRIORITIES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION	VITAL SIGNS AVAILABLE AS OF 2018
<p>As their children’s first caregivers and teachers, families are able to access and utilize resources and supports to nurture their children’s physical, social-emotional, and intellectual growth.</p>	<p>A. Increase opportunities for families to learn and practice positive, engaged child development strategies that best position children for optimal education and life outcomes.</p> <p>B. Foster and expand family networks and leadership development opportunities in early childhood.</p> <p>C. Collaboratively address key factors that support health and wellbeing (including education, healthcare, employment, social networks, environment, transportation) to support families’ interrelated needs.</p> <p>D. Implement a shared vision of child and family safety and address the complex issues of trauma and violence by providing intervention and support services to vulnerable families.</p>	<p>i. Ensure parenting resources, support programs, and parenting classes are available in all communities, are culturally responsive for diverse families, and are accessible in our State’s two official languages, as well as predominant immigrant languages.</p> <p>ii. Provide families with opportunities to develop leadership and advocacy skills to support their children’s development.</p> <p>iii. Increase collaboration among families, community networks, and service providers to provide accessible, comprehensive supports to families that reduce barriers and ease transitions between providers and programs.</p> <p>iv. 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.</p> <p>v. Develop and implement a framework of trauma-informed care that includes training and technical assistance to service providers in all communities.</p> <p>vi. Provide evidence-based, targeted interventions for vulnerable and at-risk children.</p>	<p>Decreased rate of child abuse and neglect among children 0-8 years of age.</p> <p>Increased ratio of eligible families accessing public supports such as TANF, WIC, and SNAP.</p>

# 3

## BUILDING BLOCK 3: FOUNDATIONS FOR EARLY LEARNING

**A continuum of early care and education opportunities from birth through third grade provides strong foundations for lifelong success.**

Early learning opportunities lay the foundation for long-term success in school and life. High-quality early childhood programs reduce achievement gaps, increase high school graduation rates, and reduce the need for costly social and educational remediation efforts. Prior to kindergarten age, the early care and education of Hawai'i's children takes place in diverse settings, including center-based care, family child care homes, family-child interaction programs, and home visitation programs.

**Center-based care:** Group child care centers, including infant-toddler programs, private preschools, and public preschools.

**Family child care homes:** Diverse range of providers serving families from their homes, including both registered and licensed home-based providers, and informal family, friend, and neighbor care.

**Family-child interaction learning programs:** Programs attended by children together with an adult family member, offering a dual focus on child development and family strengthening.

**Home visitation programs:** Home visitors work with adults and children in the child's home, with a focus on enhancing parenting skills and parent-child interactions.

In order to create a comprehensive system that ensures all families have access to early care and learning resources – and achieve universal access to early care and education – we must work together to rapidly strengthen, expand upon, and connect our current child care and early learning settings.

Hawai'i is one of the top 10 least affordable states for center-based child care in the nation,<sup>14</sup> and we have island communities with few or no center-based care options. For example, there are no licensed infant-toddler child care centers available on Kaua'i, Moloka'i, or Lāna'i. This disparity does not reflect our values, and we need increased funding and stronger partnerships to create immediate solutions. Many have worked tirelessly to ensure valuable child care and tuition subsidies are available to help local families access private center-based programs and family child care homes. It is important to build on the supply and variety of child care subsidies available to families, and to create a more equitable system of care so that families have a range of child care openings available to them within their communities.

# 3

Expanding publicly funded prekindergarten programs – whether State-funded or Federally funded – is one essential component of achieving universal access to early learning opportunities in Hawai‘i. The most recent data show that more than 40% of Hawai‘i’s preschool-age children are not enrolled in any programs. In collaboration with the Hawai‘i Department of Education (DOE), EOEL has enabled the opening of 26 EOEL Public Prekindergarten Program classrooms on DOE campuses across the state. The State Public Charter School Commission has opened 18 prekindergarten classrooms in charter schools statewide. Moreover, the DOE currently administers Federally funded special education and Title I prekindergarten classrooms, as well as State-funded prekindergarten classrooms using Weighted Student Formula funds. It is part of the DOE’s Strategic Plan and current 2017–2020 implementation plan to empower school Principals and Complex Area Superintendents to include prekindergarten programs in their School Design efforts.

When all of these early care and education program offerings are available and working together, families can make informed choices based on diverse family and community preferences and needs. Initial bridges have been built between existing programs and increased collaboration and coordination can create a comprehensive, integrated system for families with young children. Part of this collaborative effort includes sharing information between diverse settings so that transition plans and action plans can support children and families as they move between settings and transition into K-3 schools. Collaborations with public and private K-12 institutions require a P-3 approach (“provisions for early learning” through 3rd grade) to help address gaps and improve alignment and transitions. This will ensure providers are working together across early childhood programs and settings to support children’s long-term educational success.

### 3. FOUNDATIONS FOR EARLY LEARNING

#### ASPIRATIONAL GOAL

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

#### 5-YEAR KEY STRATEGIES

- A. Increase public understanding of the importance of children’s growth and development between birth and age eight.
- B. Incentivize growth in the availability and quality of providers and services, with particular attention to those serving vulnerable populations and under-resourced communities, including remote and rural areas.
- C. Focus on equitable, affordable access to programs, services, and supports that lead to children’s school readiness.
- D. Improve alignment and transitions between infant-toddler care, preschool, and kindergarten through third grade education, with particular attention to vulnerable communities, and through a child- and family-centered approach.

#### 5-YR PRIORITIES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

- i. Engage the community in advocacy for universal access to early childhood services delivered through public and private programs.
- ii. Increase public and private support to broaden access to early care and education through funding to families for diverse programs and settings, including multigenerational, Hawaiian medium, home visitation, family child care, center-based, and family-child interaction learning programs.
- iii. Increase media outreach focused on the importance of early childhood, birth to age eight.
- iv. Employ intentional recruitment strategies and supports for early childhood practitioners for small business start-ups of child care centers and family child care homes in vulnerable communities.
- v. Incentivize creation and maintenance of settings and services in remote and rural areas statewide.
- vi. Promote early childhood evidence-based and developmental best practices from the science of early childhood development in all prekindergarten settings and connect it to practices in early elementary settings.
- vii. Engage in planning and coordination among entities that serve children as they progress from birth through age eight (and transition to the next level or setting) to ensure all children appropriately receive the services and resources they need for optimal growth and development.

#### VITAL SIGNS AVAILABLE AS OF 2018

- Increased number of publicly funded childcare and prekindergarten seats.
- Increased utilization of publicly funded childcare and preschool subsidies (0-5) by eligible families.
- Increased percentage of early care settings that are accredited or Head Start programs.

# 4

## BUILDING BLOCK 4: A WELL-PREPARED, WELL-SUPPORTED WORKFORCE

**A supported and supportive early childhood workforce is essential to a healthy future for children, families, and Hawai'i.**

Building a solid foundation for all children requires strong investments in the early childhood professionals who support our children from infancy through grade three. In Hawai'i, low wages and a high cost of living have contributed to a critical shortage of qualified early childhood professionals and a high turnover rate. Because of the importance of early childhood development and education to long-term outcomes for children and our state, we need to focus on recruitment and support for the future workforce, increased access to continuing education and professional development for the current workforce, and increased compensation or financial support across the board.

Hawai'i's early childhood workforce and professional development initiatives include early care and education, health care, and social service-related programs. The proposed strategies and priorities for collective action in this area of work include coordinating professional development and continuing education opportunities for training in high-priority topic areas, such as safety, abuse prevention, and resources for children and families experiencing trauma. Hawai'i must support the early childhood workforce, including preparing professionals to work with vulnerable populations, such as those facing homelessness, poverty, and adverse childhood experiences.

National data shows that early childhood educators in particular earn 40% less than workers with similar qualifications.<sup>15</sup> One of the best ways to increase the quality of early learning experiences is to invest in additional education for care providers. However, the costs for higher education and professional development are high, and the resulting wages are not substantial enough to provide an incentive. It is a challenge to increase the quality of early childhood care and development programs, while also ensuring affordability and access for families. This "trilemma" of needing to simultaneously increase quality, affordability, and access affects all children in Hawai'i.

# 4

It is not feasible to increase the costs of programs and services in order to support and sustain a high-quality workforce. Hawai'i already has one of the highest center-based care costs in the nation, and increasing the cost to families in order to cover the cost of improved compensation and professional development would put child care even further out of reach for families. In addition, families living in Hawai'i's "child care deserts" are not able to utilize State-funded child care subsidies for their children if spaces are insufficient or nonexistent. It is crucial to make options available in these regions, and doing so is dependent upon accessible, affordable training, licensure, and credentialing programs for the potential workforce, as well as adequate compensation for providers.

The State's work to expand public preschool will consider larger strategies for developing and supporting the early childhood workforce overall. EOEL has secured a support and technical assistance grant from the National Governors Association to bring key players together to build upon and elevate the local work that has been done to strengthen the early childhood education workforce. Dedicated practitioners and leaders in the field, such as Hawai'i Careers with Young Children (HCYC), University of Hawai'i, the Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation, Hawai'i Association for the Education of Young Children (HIAEYC), and many more, have prepared the way for our continued work together.

Early childhood professionals in health, child care, and education are a critical and overlooked component of Hawai'i's long-term health, education, and workforce goals, including helping children build skills for the jobs of the future. Hawai'i needs to come together to support a robust, highly qualified early childhood workforce, so all children can succeed in their future career, college, and community aspirations.

## 4. A WELL-PREPARED, WELL-SUPPORTED WORKFORCE

### ASPIRATIONAL GOAL

The professional workforce serving children and families from prenatal care through age eight is robust, well supported, adequately compensated, and highly qualified to serve in the diverse settings involved in child development and education.

### 5-YEAR KEY STRATEGIES

- A. Create updated and accessible career entry and advancement pathways for Hawai'i's current and prospective early childhood workforce, with special attention to available pathways in rural and underserved areas.
- B. Ensure that education, licensure, and professional development programs lead to a well-prepared, highly qualified workforce with the child development knowledge and skills most needed by early childhood educators and program administrators (including center administrators and school principals).
- C. Introduce policies, programs, and coordinated incentives to address the barriers to recruitment and retention of a well-prepared early childhood workforce.
- D. Develop community-level and cross-sector advocacy for well-supported early childhood.

### 5-YR PRIORITIES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

- i. Support local and national efforts to create clear early childhood professional roles, competencies, and professional development goals across diverse program models and settings.
- ii. Work with higher education institutions and State agencies to clarify and simplify care and education career pathways from high school through continued education, and improve access to higher education offerings.
- iii. Finalize a shared trainer and training registry system that ensures best practices in professional development offerings, and ensures a wide array of public and private sector professional development opportunities are available statewide.
- iv. Establish apprenticeship, mentorship, coaching, and mental health consultation programs in early care and education settings.
- v. Develop strategies and funding sources for wage supplements, incentives, and tuition support that incentivize additional educational attainment for the early childhood workforce.
- vi. Implement an outreach and engagement plan to involve cross-sector leaders and champions in advocating for policies, practices, and incentives that increase compensation and support for the early childhood workforce.

### VITAL SIGNS AVAILABLE AS OF 2018

Decreased average case load of child welfare case managers within the Department of Human Services.

Increased number of students completing certificates or degrees from Hawai'i's accredited early childhood higher education programs.

# 5

## BUILDING BLOCK 5: COORDINATION OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

**A robust, coordinated early childhood system informed by rich data will ensure we can best serve children and their families from prenatal to age eight.**

The establishment of ELB and EOEL provides a venue for all State agencies that work with children and families to come together with key stakeholders and coordinate efforts in order to best serve children, families, and communities. Without coordination, families face increased barriers to accessing and transitioning between crucial programs and services. These barriers are especially difficult for families that are under strain and face challenging situations—and these families can most benefit from support. Aligning early childhood efforts will help reduce barriers, and maximize resources. When we align early childhood efforts, and support simplified entry points and transitions for children and families, we build strong foundations for our community’s long-term wellbeing.

We know that we best serve children and families when we align efforts and work collaboratively, but sometimes funding sources and organizational structures make it challenging to do what we know is right. ELB members and EOEL staff will bring leaders and stakeholders together around this unifying plan and the priorities for collective action. Providing a space for collective action also allows leaders across sectors to review local and national trends and how they might apply to improve efforts in Hawai‘i. However, stronger investment in tools and support for effective collaboration are needed so that early childhood stakeholders can partner more effectively with one another.

A more robust statewide infrastructure will also allow stakeholders to collect, analyze, and share comprehensive data on children’s health, wellbeing, and school readiness. Our joint efforts require funding and resources to compile and review the data that will help us understand the progress of our efforts to improve our early childhood system. The ability to collect and share statewide data will also provide a clearer picture of the readiness of schools and programs to support best practices in early childhood development. Statewide data can inform recommendations and supports for continuous program improvement, and the development of effective transition plans and action plans for families and children.

Our kuleana (responsibility) to develop the tools and practices to bolster our systems and improve collaboration require us to broaden our base and engage new champions and leaders in innovative partnerships on behalf of young children and their families. Bringing together Hawai‘i’s public, private, and nonprofit sectors, along with diverse families and community members, will help to ensure that early childhood initiatives are well-supported and well-funded so that Hawai‘i is a place where all children are cared for and able to thrive at home, at school, and in life.

## 5. COORDINATION OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

ASPIRATIONAL GOAL	5-YEAR KEY STRATEGIES	5-YR PRIORITIES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION	KEY MILESTONES
<p>Children and families can access the supports they need because a coordinated, collaborative system of public and private early childhood partners is working to ensure services are aligned and accessible, and that data is available to inform program quality, good policy decisions, and smooth transitions for children.</p>	<p><b>A.</b> Promote shared leadership and community commitment for early childhood and encourage innovative partnerships at State, County, and community levels in support of early childhood policies and initiatives.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Establish a system to gather, analyze, and share data on program quality and child outcomes to support programs with their efforts toward continuous improvement and to inform effective policymaking.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Coordinate between agencies and programs to promote easy access, navigation, and smooth transitions within the early childhood system for children and families.</p> <p><b>D.</b> Secure funding to support system infrastructure needs and enhanced service delivery.</p>	<p><b>i.</b> Develop champions and spokespersons for early childhood among public and private leaders, policymakers, and the community.</p> <p><b>ii.</b> Leverage ELB members: ensure decision-makers are participating on the ELB and sharing information back with their constituencies.</p> <p><b>iii.</b> Pilot a decentralized model of data sharing to answer early childhood policy-related questions, and link to existing P-20 longitudinal data system for cross-sector data sharing on key early childhood milestones and indicators.</p> <p><b>iv.</b> Gather stakeholder input on which child, health, and school data would be most helpful for statewide kindergarten entry assessments.</p> <p><b>v.</b> In partnership with public and private leaders, the State, and local communities, develop a process to ensure continuous system and program improvement for early childhood care and education providers.</p> <p><b>vi.</b> Drawing on successful models at the national level and partnering with community members and leaders at the local level, identify ways to make services more accessible and convenient for families that are navigating through multiple State systems.</p> <p><b>vii.</b> Coordinate support and advocate for aligned and seamless transition practices between programs and services (especially for children transitioning from preschool to kindergarten).</p> <p><b>viii.</b> Identify and secure resources and funding for best-practice services and for coordinating the collaborations between public and private early childhood partners, including innovative ways to leverage and share existing funding across agencies.</p>	<p>ELB constituent entities have reached agreement about key data to share in the best interest of supporting the wellbeing of children and families.</p> <p>ELB constituent entities have obtained resources to initiate data compilation and sharing.</p> <p>ELB constituent entities have recommended common measures to assess children's readiness when they enter kindergarten.</p> <p>ELB constituent entities have recommended common measures to assess schools' readiness to support transitions.</p> <p>ELB constituent entities have spearheaded and established a plan to support continuous system and program improvements in early childhood.</p> <p>ELB and community partners are monitoring the Early Childhood State Plan annually.</p> <p>A fiscal map has been created with measures we can track over time to determine our investment in early childhood programs and services.</p>

THE ELB, EOEL, AND PARTNER CONSTITUENTS EACH HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN IMPLEMENTING THIS STATE PLAN:

**The Early Learning Board will oversee and advocate for the Early Childhood State Plan by:**

- Leveraging members' active engagement in support of the State Plan
- Setting annual milestones from within the five-year priorities for collective action
- Identifying funding and advocacy needs
- Working with partners to establish and review key indicators of improvement in early childhood
- Working with partners on community and legislative actions

**The Executive Office on Early Learning will coordinate, advocate for, and inform this State Plan by:**

- Staffing ELB efforts
- Building collaborative relationships leading to shared endeavors
- Stewarding, coordinating, and supporting, as appropriate, priority activities of the State Plan, including communications, data collection, analysis, and reporting
- Coordinating and advocating for transitions between early care and education settings, and from preschool to kindergarten
- Coordinating and leading, when appropriate, collective efforts to secure increased funding for early childhood, at a statewide/sector-wide level

**The ELB and EOEL jointly ask individuals and organizations to engage with us to support this State Plan framework by:**

- Joining in community-based efforts aligned to the five-year priorities for collective action
- Joining in statewide and county advocacy efforts
- Participating in data-sharing for ongoing growth, learning, and the creation of responsive policies and programs
- Continuing to deliver services to the best of their abilities

For more information and to get involved, please visit the Executive Office on Early Learning website: <http://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/>

- <sup>1,2</sup> University of Hawai'i, Center on the Family, "Population by Age and Gender," retrieved from [http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/cof\\_data/population/popbyagegender.aspx](http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/cof_data/population/popbyagegender.aspx)
- <sup>3</sup> Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, "Five Numbers to Remember about Early Childhood Development," retrieved from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/five-numbers-to-remember-about-early-childhood-development/>
- <sup>4</sup> B. D. DeBaryshe, O. Bird, I. Stern, and D. Zysman, *Hawai'i Early Learning Needs Assessment* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Center on the Family, 2017), retrieved from [http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/publications/brochures/e8998\\_HawaiiEarlyLearningAssessment-Web.pdf](http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/publications/brochures/e8998_HawaiiEarlyLearningAssessment-Web.pdf).
- <sup>5</sup> Alison Friedman-Krauss, W. Steven Barnett, and Milagros Nores, *How Much Can High-Quality Universal Pre-K Reduce Achievement Gaps?* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2016), retrieved from <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/01115656/NIEER-AchievementGaps-report.pdf>.
- <sup>6</sup> Lori Connors-Tadros, Torey Silloway, Jennifer Mayman, and Melissa Dahlin, *Moving Toward a Comprehensive Early Childhood System in Hawaii: An Analysis of the Fiscal Resources Supporting Young Children, Prenatal to Age Five and Their Families, in Fiscal Year 2011* (Washington, DC: The Finance Project, 2012).
- <sup>7</sup> Stephanie Hoopes, "ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Hawai'i," (Honolulu: Aloha United Way, 2017), retrieved from [https://www.auw.org/sites/default/files/pictures/AlohaUnitedWayALICE%20Report\\_HIFINAL.pdf](https://www.auw.org/sites/default/files/pictures/AlohaUnitedWayALICE%20Report_HIFINAL.pdf).
- <sup>8,9</sup> Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, 2016-2017 *National Survey of Children's Health* (NSCH) data query, Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by Cooperative Agreement U59MC27866 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau, retrieved from <http://www.childhealthdata.org>. CAHMI: <http://www.cahmi.org>.
- <sup>10</sup> S. Yuan and K. T. Gauci, *Homeless Service Utilization Report: Hawai'i 2017* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Center on the Family, 2018), retrieved from [http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/publications/brochures/3f3d5\\_HomelessServiceUtilization2017.pdf](http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/publications/brochures/3f3d5_HomelessServiceUtilization2017.pdf).
- <sup>11,12</sup> B. D. DeBaryshe, O. Bird, I. Stern, and D. Zysman, *Hawai'i Early Learning Needs Assessment* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Center on the Family, 2017), retrieved from [http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/publications/brochures/e8998\\_HawaiiEarlyLearningAssessment-Web.pdf](http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/publications/brochures/e8998_HawaiiEarlyLearningAssessment-Web.pdf).
- <sup>13</sup> The phrase "every child is our child" was used by the late Keoana Hanchett, co-founder of Nā Kamalei – Ko'olauloa Early Education Program (K.E.E.P.). In K.E.E.P. programs, every adult cares for all children, regardless of *ohana* origins. In this protected environment, all adults are parents. It puts the facilitation, learning, and caring for children before ourselves, without diminishing the importance of kūpuna (elders).
- <sup>14</sup> Lynette M. Fraga, Dionne R. Dobbins, Fitzgerald Draper, and Michelle McCready, *Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2017 Report* (Arlington, VA: Child Care Aware of America, 2017), retrieved from [http://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017\\_CCA\\_High\\_Cost\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017_CCA_High_Cost_Report_FINAL.pdf).
- <sup>15</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children, "Power to the Profession: The Work of Early Childhood Educators is Valuable, Complex – and Chronically Underfunded," retrieved from [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/initiatives/afee\\_worthywage\\_infographic-2.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/initiatives/afee_worthywage_infographic-2.pdf)

