



# End-Of-Year Update 2023

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS)  
Action Highlights Jan – Dec 2023



# Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS)

## Mission

To bring together governmental and non-governmental organizations to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, and to strengthen and integrate the early childhood system by streamlining services, maximizing resources, and improving programs to support Hawai'i's youngest keiki and families.

## Images, left to right:

1. Participants in the early childhood Systems Learning mapping project
2. The Lactation Access Transforming Communities in Hawai'i (LATCH) Smallify team
3. Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke and Child Care Aware of America CEO Susan Perry at the Hawai'i Island Early Childhood Conference - Huliau "A time of change"
4. Hiking partners at the Fall ECAS All Network meeting
5. Healthy Keiki, Healthy Future Statewide convening of stakeholders
6. Representative Lisa Marten and Alice Luck of the Kaua'i Planning and Action Alliance at the Waimanalo Early Education 'Upena summit
7. Artist Solomon Enos guiding partners for mural painting in the new ECAS offices

## Table of Contents

Greetings	3
Key Efforts using Systems Change Methodology	4
Highlights By Content Teams	10
Team 1; Healthy & Welcomed Births	11
Team 2; Safe & Nurturing Families	11
Team 3; On-track Health & Development	11
Team 4; Equitable Access to Programs & Services	12
Team 5; High-quality Early Learning Programs	12
Team 6; Successful Early Childhood Transitions	13
IECBH Team; Infant and Early Childhood Behavioral Health	13
Stories from the Network	14
Lactation Access Transforming Communities in Hawai'i (LATCH)	14
Healthy Keiki, Healthy Future	16
Family Hui Hawai'i and Read to Me International Efforts	18
Engaging Inquiry; Systems Mapping Journey	20

Since it was launched within the Governor’s Office in 2012, the Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) has brought together governmental and non-governmental organizations from across the State of Hawai`i to improve the systems of care for our youngest keiki and their ‘ohana. Today, over 300 ECAS network partners are working together to increase the number of young children in Hawai`i who are born healthy, develop on track, are ready for kindergarten, and are proficient learners by third grade.

In 2023, the ECAS network continued to focus on key needs of young children and families, including infant, early childhood and maternal physical and mental health; family safety and economic security; access to needed programs and services including quality early child care and education; and a strong and stable early childhood workforce.

These priorities were advanced by the Hawai`i Legislature and Executive branch in 2023, resulting in significant increases in tax relief for working families, expanded support for early learning and child care, and efforts to strengthen the early childhood workforce. All told, some \$1.2 billion in expanded supports for families with young children came from the state this year, and many millions more dollars were invested in early childhood supports by County governments.

In September 2023, the ECAS network pivoted to respond to the devastating fires on Maui. ECAS network partners rallied together to draft a broad vision of relief and recovery for young children and families in Maui County. Additionally, ECAS network partners and Maui County literacy partners worked to develop a strategy to expand early childhood literacy efforts to reach all young children, their families and caregivers.

2023 also saw the release of the results of the Department of Education’s new statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment, which affirmed what we have long suspected: too many young children across the state lack key school-readiness skills. Across the state, 29.6% of new kindergartners demonstrated age-appropriate levels of readiness, and rates of readiness are lower for children from lower-income families, families with limited English proficiency, and families in particular communities. These disparities affirm the commitment of the ECAS network to centering equity in all of our efforts to support young children and families.

**With all best wishes for a peaceful and joy-filled holiday season, and looking forward to a new year where our work together results in significant gains for youngest keiki and their ‘ohana.**

***The Early Childhood Action Strategy backbone staff***

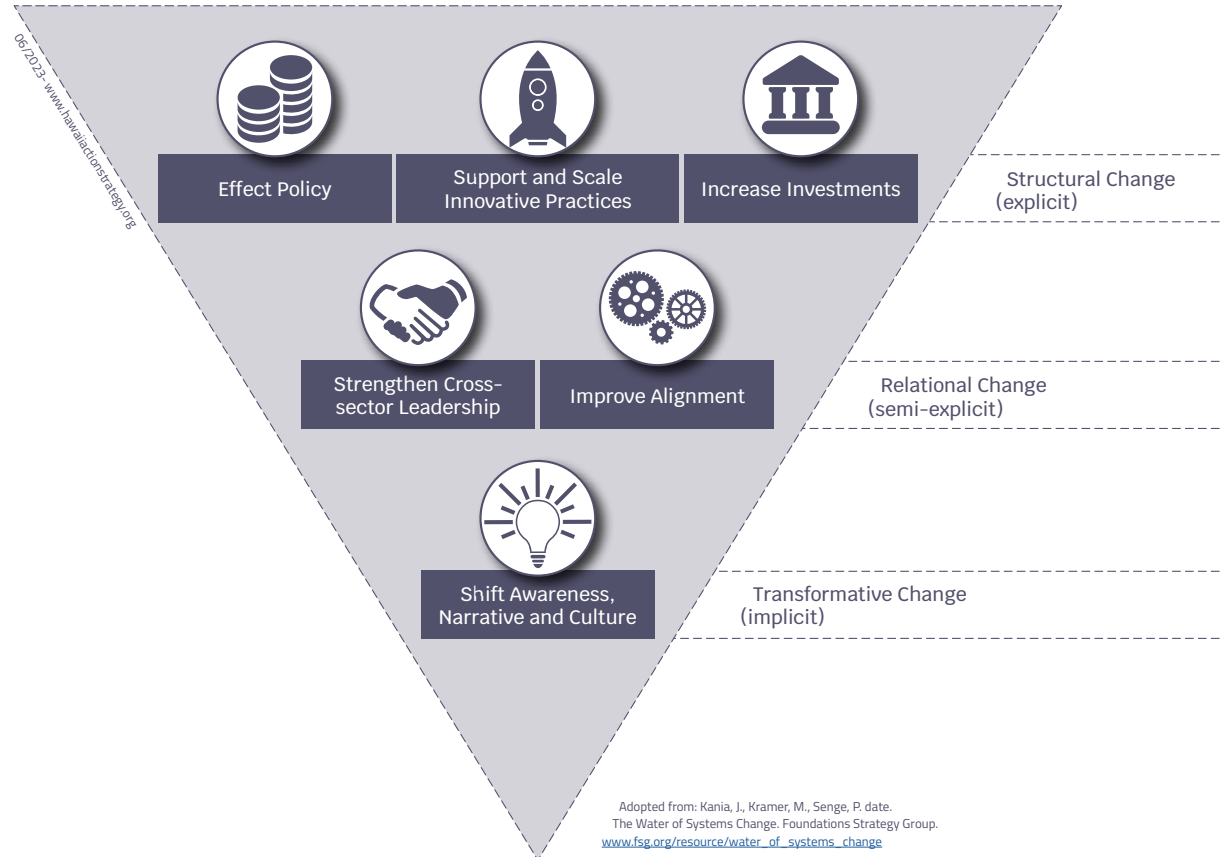
*Jonathan Alexander, Jennifer Elia, Vivian Eto, Doug Imig, Krista Olson, Juliane Richter, Christina Simmons, Kerrie Urosevich, and Hide Wu*

# Key Efforts using Systems Change Methodology

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) works to influence the core conditions that enable or impede Systems Change.

ECAS efforts and related outcomes are the result of ongoing partnerships between governmental and non-governmental actors who participate in the ECAS network.

## Six Conditions of Systems Change





## Support and Scale Innovative Practices

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ECAS teams initiate innovations and incubate them until they are ready to move to a permanent organization and/or agency. [Makua Allies](#), [Ka `Upena Shared Services](#), [Words Matter LENA](#), and [Aloha at Home](#) are recent examples of efforts that were initiated within ECAS teams in preparation for transitioning to new organizational homes.

#### **Makua Allies**

[Epic 'Ohana's Makua Allies](#) program offers pregnant and parenting women suffering with substance use disorder a trusted partner to help them access needed community supports and services. Providing peer-support increases parents' hope and sense of self efficacy and helps to keep parents and their children together, avoiding separation.

- \* The Makua Allies program recently received a three-year commitment of support from the Hawai'i Department of Health to continue and expand their activities

### Healthy, Safe and Thriving: Early Childhood Continuums

The [early childhood continuum](#) effort brings together health care providers, family support services, public, public charter, and independent school pre-k - 12 education leaders, early childhood educators, and families from a specific Hawai'i community around the shared goal of strengthening the developmental pathway of all keiki from before birth through school entry.

- The continuum initiative is currently underway in the communities of Waimānalo, O'ahu and Pāhoā, Hawai'i.
- Each community celebrated the conclusion of their first year of efforts with an in-person summit where action commitments focused on improvements to be made in the coming year.



## Effect Policy

### Effect Policy

Through both the [Commit to Keiki](#) effort and the [ECAS policy engagement process](#), the ECAS network continues to play an active role in helping to shape the direction and focus of public policy concerning early childhood in Hawai'i.

In 2023, Summer Keli'ipio of [`A`ali`i Alliance](#) talked with key stakeholders about how ECAS might best support network partners through policy work and, in turn, how a new Policy Lead might best support those efforts. Findings from those conversations will help to inform the hiring of an ECAS policy lead (expected Q1, 2024).

#### **Legislative Session 2023**

The 2023 Legislative Session led to significant increases in support for young children and their families. Measures were passed that will reduce the economic burden on families (through increases in the earned income tax credit, the food and excise tax credit, and the child and dependent care tax credit). Additionally, almost \$700 million was appropriated to address homelessness and expand affordable housing.

The legislature also committed more than \$235 million to advance the goal of enabling all 3- and 4-year-olds in Hawai'i to access preschool by 2032 and enhance child care capacity.

The new teacher housing program and early childhood educator stipend program will help to recruit and retain teachers.

The Child Care Accreditation program will help additional child care providers obtain accreditation and ensure that quality child care is available for families.

In order to ensure that our youngest children can access necessary health care services, \$146.23 million was appropriated to increase Medicaid rates. In addition, the Legislature appropriated additional funds to support the Child Wellness Incentive Pilot Program which pays \$50 to each Medicaid recipient for completion of well-child examinations and funding for the Hawai'i State Loan Repayment Program for Healthcare Professionals.

To help reduce levels of child abuse and neglect, additional funding was provided for Family Resource Centers, foster boarding, and Child Protective Services contracts, and the Governor's Office of Wellness and Resilience which is supporting Trauma Informed Care.

#### **Looking Forward: ECAS Policy Efforts in 2024**

In 2024, ECAS network and backbone members will continue to strive to be trusted partners in policy discussions across early childhood issues. Meanwhile, during the 2024 Legislative session, ECAS will provide testimony in support of legislative proposals that align with the focus and goals of our network and partners, including: maternal and infant health supports, family safety and economic security, early childhood workforce development efforts, and expanded, affordable, and high-quality early care and learning opportunities.



## Increase Investments

### Increase Investments

#### Statewide Preschool Expansion

Efforts to expand early care and education opportunities continue to expand statewide. Key efforts include the commitment to provide access to ECE to all 3 & 4 year olds by 2032 (reaching 50% of currently unserved children by 2027); providing funds for a publicly-funded Early Childhood Educator Stipend Program; Expansion of Preschool Open Doors and inclusion of 3-year-olds in EOEL Public Prekindergarten, and support for accreditation efforts.

#### Early Childhood Funders' Hui

The EC Funders' Hui is comprised of philanthropic funders who support work in early childhood health, safety and learning. It is designed to support funder collaboration, strengthen strategy development across funders and provide one of many pathways for ECAS teams to receive catalytic funding for emerging innovations. In August, the Funders' Hui pivoted to respond to relief and recovery efforts following the Maui fires.

In 2024, the EC Funders' Hui intends to continue to identify opportunities to align funding efforts, and to consider opportunities to braid together philanthropic and public sector funding streams.

#### Community Centered Partnerships (CCP)

Early Childhood Action Strategy, The Omidyar Group, the Stupski Foundation, and Hawai'i Leadership Forum have entered into a collaboration designed to support the health, safety and learning of the youngest keiki in communities traditionally marginalized

by geographic isolation, poverty, and little political voice. The CPP effort is designed to respond to these constraints by centering the wisdom and knowledge of community members, compensating community members for their time, and using community perspectives to inform ECAS network strategies, potential state and county priorities and philanthropic decisions. Building on successes and lessons learned from many other entities operating through CCP efforts around the world, the [ECAS CCP](#) initiative will provide another lens and set of tools for supporting Hawai'i's youngest keiki health, safety and learning.

The Community-centered Partnership Project has five shared values:

- \* Reduce the distance between those most impacted, proposed solutions and funding
- \* Give voice and power to communities and families with the least amount of agency
- \* Strengthen and support community leadership
- \* Support effective public and philanthropic investments
- \* Promote social justice and equity

Goals for the first two years of the initiative include using data to identify communities in which to establish partnerships, hiring and training community facilitators and panel members, identifying and prioritizing needs of families with young children, identifying gaps in programs and services, and establishing relationships with nonprofits and government agencies best positioned to address those needs and gaps in services.





## Strengthen Cross-sector Leadership and Improve Alignment

### Strengthen Cross-sector Leadership and Improve Alignment

ECAS is working to expand the leadership capacity of the network through several new hires in the coming months:

- \* A Policy Lead will help to shepherd ECAS network policy priorities
- \* A CCP (Community-Centered Partnerships) Lead will be hired to design and implement processes for intentionally engaging families with young children and recentering funding and strategy decision making in rural communities on neighbor islands

### State Integrated Infant and Early Childhood Behavioral Health (IECBH) Plan

[The IECBH Plan](#) integrates child and family mental health and trauma-informed care into our health and early care and learning systems throughout Hawai'i. The plan is designed to shift services to a trauma-informed care model emphasizing prevention and intervention in an equitable system of care thus reducing racial and socioeconomic disparities, saving money and ultimately, ensuring children succeed in school and life.

The moving parts necessary to build protections for our most vulnerable families and keiki must be nimble, multi-pronged and take deep commitment in a variety of fields. Hawai'i's commitment to improving systems of care around infant and early childhood mental health is moving forward

with technical assistance from Zero To Three, professional development through the Promising Minds Initiative, and efforts taking place in social service, childcare and primary healthcare settings across the state. These many initiatives are coordinated through the IECBH Plan to create a strong system of support for infant and early childhood mental health, centered on a commitment to equity.

### All Network Meetings (ANM)

ECAS hosted two [All Network Meetings](#) in 2023. Both were well attended and evaluations were strong. Planning for the Fall ANM was well underway when the Maui fires broke out. ECAS quickly pivoted to focus the ANM around wellness and respite for the early childhood workforce.

- \* The redesigned meeting focused on relief and recovery for the network of providers working so hard to respond to the plight of communities affected by the fires. Puni Jackson from Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services' Ho'oulu `Āina Program delivered a plenary session on KKV's healing framework Lana Ka Mana`o - reserving hope in community navigation, drawing on stories of ho'olako; and sharing insights into how to provision the vessel to serve sustainably.
- \* Afternoon sessions included a variety of wellness opportunities supporting mental health, massage, forest bathing (shinrin-yoku), `aina accountability, and malama Maui activities.





## Shift Awareness, Narrative, and Culture

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#### Early Childhood Community Profiles

- \* The first two [Early Childhood County Level Community Profiles](#) (for Maui & Hawai'i Counties) were released in 2023, and have informed workshops and listening sessions with county and state-level elected officials and other stakeholders. The profiles have been used to support grant proposals, and were presented at the ECAS All Network meeting in November, 2023.
- \* The Honolulu and Kauai'i profiles should be completed early in 2024.

#### Systems Learning Efforts

Working with partners at [Engaging Inquiry](#) and [A'ali'i Alliance](#), the ECAS network worked throughout 2023 to build a map to help tell the many stories that characterize the ecosystem in which the ECAS network operates. In the fourth quarter of 2023, the mapping effort was expanded to identify levers for positive action identified through the process. [Follow our systems-mapping journey on our blog.](#)

Key levers include:

- \* Impactful collaboration
- \* Data for Action
- \* Innovations to Scale
- \* Supported Workforce.

The systems-learning journey also suggests that effective strategies need to reflect local values, include lived expertise, and emerge through trusting relationships.

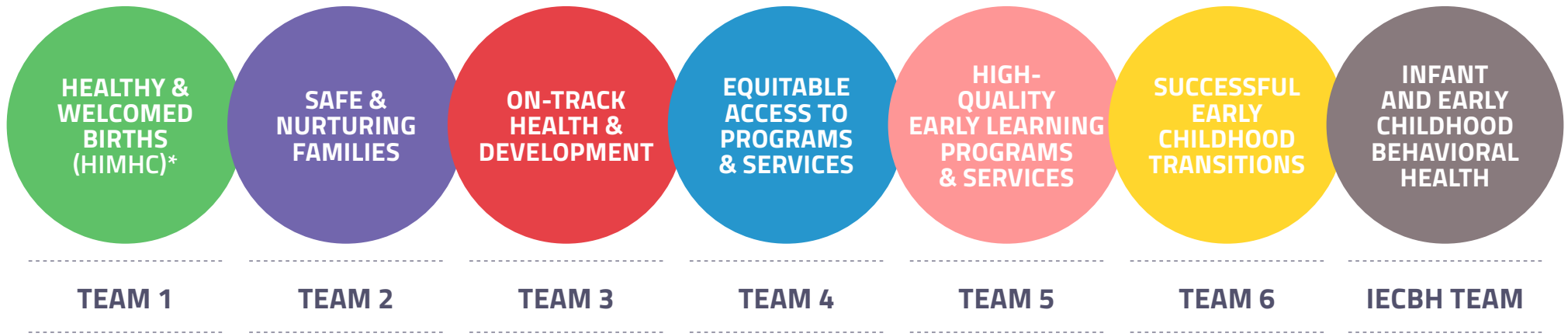
In 2024, the map will be socialized with groups across Hawai'i. The systems-mapping work provides a framework that will help strengthen the ways that we use what we learn through our collective efforts to inform our strategic decisions, develop our portfolio of responses, and evaluate our progress.

Also Read  
"Stories from the Network"

**Page 20**

# Action Highlights By Content Teams

Teams are co-convened by governmental and non-governmental partners. Each [ECAS team](#) identifies goals, objectives, strategies and members around a shared focus area.



\*HAWAII MATERNAL & INFANT HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

## Healthy & Welcomed Births

(Hawai'i Maternal and Infant Health Collaborative)

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### Perinatal Substance Use Disorder (PSUD) *Developing a web-based interdisciplinary training system for Hawai'i*

- ✓ First module of PSUD training ("Caring for Pregnant and Postpartum People with Substance Use Disorder - Online Module 1") completed and [available online](#)
  - Includes speakers/perspectives of lived experience/peer support, medicine, social work
  - CE/CME credit available

### Breastfeeding-related Assessments

- ✓ Completed statewide needs assessment of community organizations' breastfeeding policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) interventions
- ✓ Completed hospital assessment of Hawai'i's 12 maternity care hospitals' practices supportive of breastfeeding
- ✓ Hosting meetings on the co-development of a hospital support and recognition program for maternity care hospitals
- ✓ Convened eight focus groups with providers and community members statewide to identify barriers to families achieving their breastfeeding goals

### Maternal Health and Maternal Morbidity/Mortality

- ✓ Holding space for alignment of various grant funded initiatives coming into Hawai'i
- ✓ Maternal Health Mini-Summit and follow-up meetings had rich discussion with partners

## Sexual and Reproductive Health Services

- ✓ Facilitating discussion of insurance confidentiality and minor consent for sexual and reproductive health services
- ✓ Informed changes to proposed legislation for 2024 session, in partnership with DOH, based on interest-holder feedback

### SMALLIFY Accelerator Lab

- ✓ Gathered public and private partners to prototype an equity-driven package of lactation benefits
- ✓ Team includes community members, insurance, and lactation providers

2

## Safe & Nurturing Families

### Aloha at Home / Nurture Daily Framework

- ✓ Continued to refine content and framework
- ✓ Completed Aloha at Home GIA evaluation activities and year/grant-end reporting

### Outreach and Distribution

- ✓ With Honolulu GIA funds, distributed 'Ohana toolkits via partner organizations and participated in community events
- ✓ Developed extensive social media content
- ✓ Made all Aloha at Home Toolkit resources available on webpage for service providers to use with the families, including Aloha Values and Serve & Return guides

## On-track Health & Development

3

### Healthy Keiki Healthy Future

- ✓ Closed out 18-months statewide initiative
- ✓ Established and strengthened partnerships amongst ECE stakeholders to help our youngest keiki build lifelong healthy habits
- ✓ Implemented 8 key Early Childhood projects to increase food access for vulnerable populations and promote active play
- ✓ Documented efforts in a summary presentation
- ✓ Created [webpage](#) to share all resources created and inspire continued collaboration
- ✓ A Nemours springboard award will support equity-related training and technical assistance, and expanded gardening and outdoor learning training by DOH partners

Also Read "Stories from the Network"

Page 16

### Promoting the Social and Emotional Health of Infants and Toddlers

- Designed and created 100 Malama Resiliency toolkits for families on Maui in response to the August Wildfires. Distributed 89 kits to families in October 2023. Held 2 focus groups of families receiving kits and collected feedback on their experience with it.

### Planning for 2024

- ✓ Planning support for Family Child Care (FCC) conference in 2024
- ✓ Identified potential priorities
  - Food insecurity
  - Project Launch
  - Equity training
  - Family engagement
  - Support for Maui families



### Strengthen Supports for Local Child Care Industry

- ✓ Supported DHS efforts to put out emergency subsidy rules providing new and expanded access to Maui families affected by fires and engaged in outreach efforts to support application window and process
- ✓ Supporting DHS-Child Care Program Office (CCPO) efforts to improve child care subsidy services via:
  - Consideration of cost-estimation strategies as a means to strengthen subsidy reimbursement rates
  - Administrative rule-change efforts for POD involving rate increases for providers, increased family income eligibility, and reduced co-payment burden for families
- ✓ Secured funding for Shared Resources, an extension of the Shared Services model
  - To provide expanded resources and benefit options
  - PATCH is continuing to build out FCC admin supports
- ✓ Addressing Infant/Toddler (I/T) teacher shortages
  - Supporting DHS efforts to convene a workgroup to develop strategies

### Keiki Central

- ✓ Completed the [Keiki Central Platform](#), in partnership with AUW211- a virtual one-stop shop for programs and services for Hawai'i's youngest keiki and their families

### Child Homelessness Action Team

- ✓ Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) staff providing intensive on-the-ground support services to displaced families and children on Maui
- ✓ The MV Liaisons have partnered with Aloha Diaper Bank to serve families on the islands of Oahu, Maui, Kauai and Molokai
- ✓ Lisa Martinez, Early Learning Navigator, presented with SchoolHouse Connection, at the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth annual conference
- ✓ Renewal of EHCY/EOEL and EHCY/EHS HS MOU, collaboration to close the gap of enrollments when referrals are made
- ✓ Presented on MVA at the Leadership in Disabilities & Achievement of Hawai'i mini conference in Kona, Molokai and Oahu

### Expansion of County-level Systems

- ✓ Hawai'i County early childhood coordinator established and resourced with \$7M for systems/capacity-building and \$5M in mental health supports, to include early childhood mental health
- ✓ Honolulu County created two early childhood focused positions with public funds and announced the goal of creating an Office of Early Childhood
- ✓ Kauai County Chief of Staff has added a focus on early childhood issues and priorities

### County-level Early Childhood Community Profiles

- ✓ Two community profiles completed and [available online](#)

- ✓ HNL and Kauai profiles in production
- ✓ Updated data tables for all 4 counties anticipated by January 2024

### 2024 Planning

- ✓ Looking at Kindergarten Entrance Assessment (KEA) implications for ECE providers/system

## High-quality Early Learning Programs

### Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) Leadership

- ✓ With blended funds, hired a full-time CSPD Coordinator for Hawai'i: Jonathan Alexander, [jonathan@ecashawaii.org](mailto:jonathan@ecashawaii.org)
- ✓ Increased involvement of ECE representatives on CSPD workgroups
  - New EOEL, P-20, IHE and DOE representatives

### CSPD Workgroups

- ✓ Completed a landscape scan
  - Establishing definitions for certification, licensure & endorsement
  - Identified commonalities and gaps between current state and EI-ECSE standards across disciplines
  - Identified Hawai'i preservice preparation programs
  - Hosted a stakeholder meeting with a focus on understanding and integrating the EI-ECSE standards into respective agencies

### Sustainability Efforts

- ✓ Created a business plan
- ✓ Began securing funds for CSPD implementation
- ✓ Developing evaluation plan

## Successful Early Childhood Transitions

### Early Language and Literacy Programs

- ✓ Expansion of summer and school-year programming offered across Hawai'i
- ✓ [LENA](#) implementation continues statewide through a growing set of partners

Also Read “Stories from the Network”

Page 18

### The Maui Early Childhood Resource Center

- ✓ Working toward a major expansion in early childhood family reading support efforts that will include [Imagination Library](#), [ROAR](#) and an expanded Early Childhood lending library

### Early Childhood Continuums

- ✓ [The Waimānalo Early Education ‘Upena \(Waimānalo, O’ahu\) and the Pāhoā Promise Partnership \(Pāhoā, Hawai’i\)](#) are bringing together health care providers, family support services, public, public charter, and independent school pre-k – 12 education leaders, early childhood educators, and families and community members in order to strengthen the developmental pathway of all keiki from before birth through school entry in their specific community.
- ✓ Each community celebrated the completion of their first year of activities with summits in November. The summits brought together participants from 86 public, nonprofit, and community organizations to:

- Review the progress made over the past year in identifying the key issues facing young keiki in each community, and the infrastructure of support to address those issues
- Form working groups to address key needs in child health, safety, and in early childhood education and enrichment in each community
- Commit to working together to improve a key measure of child wellbeing over the coming year

### Infant and Early Childhood Behavioral Health (IECBH) Plan

#### IECBH Plan Implementation

- ✓ With blended funds, hired a full-time IECBH Coordinator; Christina Simmons [christina@ecashawaii.org](mailto:christina@ecashawaii.org)
- ✓ Tracking tool developed to identify, define and track status of milestones and artifacts in association with the IECBH Plan

#### Development of Promotional Materials

- ✓ Collaboration between Medicaid, and other state and private leadership, to identify and author key content
- ✓ [Completed Primer](#) about IECMH consultation as a handout and flipbook

#### National Convening, Sep 2023

- ✓ Partners participated in the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Financing Policy Project Convening 2023
  - Exploring State Strategies to Finance a Robust Continuum of IECMH Services through braiding and blending funding sources

### Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children’s Health)

- ✓ The Hawai’i Department of Health has been awarded a federal [SAMHSA.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov) grant aiming to promote resilience and emotional health for children, youth, and their families
  - Five years, \$4M federal grant
  - [Project LAUNCH](#) awards will provide local communities resources to disseminate effective and innovative early childhood mental health practices and services.

Learn more online

earlychildhood  
ACTION STRATEGY  
TAKING ACTION FOR HAWAII'S CHILDREN

Children develop on track  
Children are healthy  
Children are ready to learn  
Children are safe

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS)  
Team Action Highlights  
Fall 2023

We thank the many actors working to support early childhood development who share their mana'o through the ECAS network.

[www.hawaiiactionstrategy.org/updates-reports](http://www.hawaiiactionstrategy.org/updates-reports)



# LATCH

Lactation Access Transforming Communities in Hawai'i

Lactation Access Transforming Communities in Hawai'i

## LATCH Hawai'i

*Improved access to lactation consultation reduces inequities in health care access and improves outcomes for children and families*

Across Hawai'i, many individuals and organizations are engaged in the important work of supporting healthy pregnancies, births, and early childhood health. Over the past few years, representatives of many of these groups have come together to find ways to provide more equitable access to key supports for new mothers and families, including lactation consultation.

Today, the need for this support is urgent.



Science confirms what we have long known to be true: human milk is the perfect food for newborns. Breastmilk helps to strengthen children’s immune systems, and breastfeeding strengthens attachment between parents and their newborns. At the same time, breast/chest feeding doesn’t always come naturally to many new parents who may not have the network of support and the family and community infrastructure that might help them not only to initiate breastfeeding, but to continue to feed their babies human milk for the full 24 months recommended by the AAP.

The good news is that lactation consultants can offer new parents the support they need to successfully feed breastmilk to their newborns, and can help to provide access to breast pumps and information about the rights of parents to pump and feed in the workplace that new parents need.

While geography should not determine a family’s access to needed supports, many new parents are navigating the critical period of early childhood development with little or no access to lactation consultation or other perinatal supports. Many families, and especially Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, face additional challenges in accessing support that is familiar and culturally-relevant.

In response, the Hawai‘i LATCH (Lactation Access Transforming Communities) team is working to expand the availability and affordability of vital lactation support services.

The LATCH team has a number of initiatives underway. These include:

- Hosting listening sessions across the state to understand the difficulties faced by many families in accessing lactation support
- Piloting a “Fast Pass” to streamline the process of connecting mothers to perinatal care including lactation support
- Working with MedQUEST and other insurance providers to make sure that lactation consultation is available to all new families, and, critically, to make sure that the cost is covered by insurance.

***“The LATCH partnership is possible because of the commitment of the perinatal community to making sure that every new parent and newborn baby in Hawai‘i has the greatest chance to thrive. LATCH brings together parents, primary care providers, health care system representatives, lactation consultants, and public and private insurers to work together to make sure that all new parents have access to the lactation consultation support they need, regardless of the zip code in which they live or their ability to pay.”***

Krista Olson, MC-MCH, CH, IBCLC,  
LATCH Project Coordinator



## Healthy Keiki, Healthy Future

### *Embedding Physical Activity and Nutrition Supports in Hawai`i's Early Childhood System*

The roots of lifelong health and well-being are planted early in childhood. As a result, when we make careful investments in the healthy development of our youngest children, we make a positive, lifelong difference in the wellbeing of our keiki, support high quality early care and education, and reduce disparities in children's health, nutrition, and overall wellbeing.

With support from Nemours Children’s Health and funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Healthy Keiki, Health Future (HKHF) partnership promotes best practices for healthy eating, physical activity, breastfeeding support, and reduced screen time in ECE (early care and education) systems and settings across Hawai‘i.

Under the banner of HKHF, public and non-profit partners across Hawai‘i have initiated or expanded a wide range of efforts to increase access to physical activity and nutrition engagement in early childhood settings:

- The Hawai‘i Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) GIS Mapping Project
- Garden to Grindz: Kaua‘i Farm to ECE Local Food Incentive Program
- Planting the Profession Community of Practice
- Farm to Keiki 101: Asynchronous Online Training
- Certification Programs: “Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environments” and “Gardening with Young Children”
- Hawai‘i Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS) Professional Learning Community (PLC)
- Developing a Healthy Keiki Healthy Future ECE Recognition Program

Culminating more than a year’s worth of activity, HKHF held the “Healthy Keiki, Healthy Future: Physical Activity and Nutrition in ECE Settings Stakeholder Convening” in May 2023 to achieve four goals:

- Celebrate the reach and impact of HKHF implementing partners
- Establish a shared language
- Strengthen relationships
- Inspire commitment and collaboration

Attendees were guided through a day of learning, talk story, networking, and critical analysis of Hawai‘i’s strengths, opportunities, aspirations, restraints, and equity (SOARE) considerations regarding physical activity and nutrition practices in early childhood.

**A Nemours springboard award will support training and technical assistance on equity-focused efforts, and gardening and outdoor learning trainings for ECE practitioners in 2024.**

[www.hawaiiactionstrategy.org/hkhf](http://www.hawaiiactionstrategy.org/hkhf)



***“Healthy Keiki, Healthy Future has been an incredible opportunity to support and empower ECE providers in their trusted role of caring holistically for our youngest keiki and their families. It’s inspiring to see how dedicated the early childhood field is to working together and overcoming systemic barriers to embed culturally appropriate physical activity and nutrition practices that promote lifelong health and wellbeing. Concurrently, the HKHF story also highlights the detrimental limitations of one-time grant funding when it comes to equitably sustaining and expanding community-informed, evidence-based initiatives of this type in early childhood. We are eager to identify sustainable funding streams and develop meaningful partnerships to continue to embed these practices and support ECE providers in their critical role of nurturing healthy keiki for a healthy future.”***

Jordan Smith, public health consultant and HKHF project coordinator





## Family Hui Hawai'i and Read to Me International Efforts in Wahiawa, O'ahu

### *Early Childhood Educator Professional Development Supports Early Literacy*

Over the past three years, Family Hui Hawai'i (FHH) has guided language and literacy development programming in the Wahiawa community on O'ahu as part of Hawai'i's Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant, in collaboration with Read to Me International and the ECAS network's Words Matter strategy.

Family Hui Hawai'i  
Read to Me International

Through this initiative, Family Hui Hawai'i offers language-development coaching to teachers and families through programs that make use of LENA (Language ENvironmental Analysis) technology. Children served through the LENA program wear small devices one day a week that count the number of adult words and conversational turns throughout the day, both in school and at home.

Young children raised in environments rich in language have the greatest chance to develop strong language and reading readiness. Across Wahiawa, Family Hui Hawai'i is working with both early childhood classroom teachers and family child care providers, and directly with families and parents. In tandem, Read to Me International is offering training in Dialogic Reading to early care and education professionals and families.

These efforts are designed to strengthen early childhood language development, improve child-adult interaction, and support the reading readiness of our youngest keiki. The impact of the program is seen in positive changes in child language and literacy scores, and in the number of adult words and conversational turns that young children experience.

Across families in FHH's LENA Start program, for example, **adult word counts rose from the 9th to the 21st percentile**. Some FHH LENA classrooms have seen a **61% increase in conversational turns**. This is markedly higher than the 9% average gain seen across LENA classrooms nationwide.

These gains are only part of the story.

In addition to supporting teachers' efforts to create rich language environments, FHH coaching also touches on goal-setting, classroom management, lesson planning, and building daily routines. **This broad approach to professional development builds closeness and trust between the teachers and coaches.**

All participating teachers report that they would recommend LENA Grow to other teachers, and **more than 80% of teachers report feeling more confident, increased job satisfaction, and more connected to students' families**. These results affirm the importance of coaching: when promising practices in the classroom are introduced with strong coaching support, interventions are more effective and more likely to be sustained<sup>1</sup>.

As the CLSD grant enters its fourth and final year, another positive outcome is emerging: **many of the teachers involved have chosen to advance their own professional development, and are pursuing further credentials in early childhood education.**

Early childhood education workforce needs are acute in Hawai'i. Fewer people are entering the field, and educators continue to leave the profession due to stress, low wages, and overwhelming workloads.

Against this tide, teachers who have received coaching through the CLSD partnership with Family Hui Hawai'i and Read to Me International **are investing more fully in their careers in early childhood education.**

By providing meaningful, personalized, professional development, Family Hui Hawai'i's early literacy coaches are enriching early childhood language environments, helping literacy programming grow strong roots in early childhood education classrooms, and helping to strengthen the early childhood education workforce in Hawai'i.

(1) Costa, A. L., & Garmston, R. J. (2015). Cognitive coaching: Developing self-directed leaders and learners. Rowman & Littlefield.

## Engaging Inquiry

### Mapping the Early Childhood System in Hawai'i, a Systems Mapping Journey

After more than a decade of working together, ECAS network partners are bringing their collective wisdom and shared experience to the project of understanding the ecosystem of support for keiki and 'ohana across Hawai'i.

At the ECAS All Network Meeting in November 2022 we asked ourselves: *“What factors enable and inhibit our ability to ensure quality outcomes for Hawai'i's youngest keiki?”*





Over the past year, with guidance from Engaging Inquiry and A'ali'i Alliance, more than 150 voices from across the ECAS network have joined together to build an answer to that question. Through small listening sessions, large events, and strategic working groups, we have developed an Early Childhood Systems-Map designed to promote collective understanding and to strengthen our partnerships moving forward. By seeing what factors enable or inhibit our efforts, and by uncovering stories and patterns, we can work to lift up what is working and change what is not in order to achieve better outcomes for our keiki.

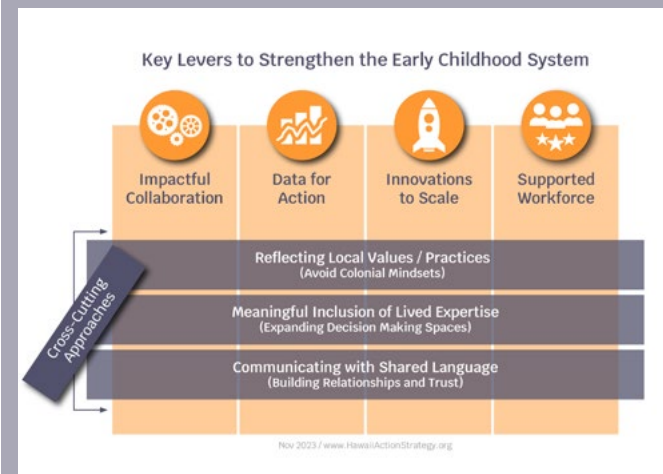
At the heart of the map are a set of deep structures that emerge again and again. These deep structures underlie our complex system, and contribute to both its flaws and virtues. Resting atop these deep structures are the many loops that describe the ways the early childhood system works in practice, as actors housed in organizations across the state interact with available resources, mandates and rules, and with each other in order to do the hard work of strengthening outcomes for keiki and 'ohana. Some of these loops are extremely resistant to change. Others suggest potential "levers" for positive change.

Four potential levers have emerged that offer ways to nudge the early childhood ecosystem in a positive direction:

- Strengthening and supporting the early childhood workforce
- Innovating with the goal of scaling and sustaining innovations
- Increasing our use of data and evidence to guide our practices, and
- Expanding collaborations far beyond the current interest holders in the system.

The systems-learning journey also suggests that the most effective strategies must reflect local values, include lived expertise, and emerge through trusting relationships.

Systems change best when they change themselves, and by working together we can achieve the change we seek.



[www.hawaiiactionstrategy.org/systems-learning-blog/](http://www.hawaiiactionstrategy.org/systems-learning-blog/)

***“Now is when the power and promise of systems-mapping becomes most evident, as we share these findings with stakeholders across the early childhood eco-system, we will continue to refine our understanding of the enablers and inhibitors of our work, and also will strengthen the capacity of the full Early Childhood Action Strategy network and partners to align our efforts in order to accelerate our ability to make positive changes to the system.”***

Kanoe Enos, of the A'ali'i Alliance

## Taking Action for Hawai'i's Youngest Keiki



Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) seeks to be a catalyst for change in the way we support early childhood development by working to improve the connections and alignment between system actors, by strengthening policies, practices and resources available to support this collective work, and, ultimately, by helping to shift our shared understanding of how best to support early childhood development and wellbeing.

We thank the many actors working to support early childhood development who share their mana'o through the Early Childhood Action Strategy network.

### ECAS Network Partners

- \* Aloha United Way
- \* American Academy of Pediatrics, Hawai'i Chapter
- \* American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Hawai'i Section
- \* Association for Infant Mental Health in Hawai'i (AIMHI)
- \* Big Brothers Big Sisters of Kauai
- \* Breastfeeding Hawai'i
- \* Campaign for Grade Level Reading
- \* Child and Family Service
- \* Child Care Advisory Council
- \* Cole Academy
- \* Conscious Communities
- \* Department of Education
  - Homeless Concerns Office
- \* Department of Health
  - Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division
  - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division
  - Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
  - Early Intervention Services
  - Family Health Services Division
  - Maternal and Child Health Branch
  - Office of Planning, Policy and Program Development
  - Public Health Nursing
  - Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- \* Department of Human Services
  - Benefit, Employment and Support Services (BESSD)
  - Child Welfare Services (CWS)
  - Med-QUEST Division
- \* Domestic Violence Action Center (DVAC)
- \* Early Childhood Data Collaborative
- \* Early Learning Board (ELB)
- \* EPIC 'Ohana
- \* Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL)
  - EOEL Early Childhood State Plan Steering Committee
  - Head Start State Collaboration Office
- \* Family Hui Hawai'i
- \* Family Programs Hawai'i
- \* Family Support Hawai'i
- \* FrameWorks Institute
- \* Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- \* Hawai'i Applesed
- \* Hawai'i Association for Education of Young Children (HAEYC)
- \* Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN)
- \* Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF)
- \* Honolulu Community Action Program (HCAP)
- \* Hawai'i Early Intervention Coordination Council (HEICC)
- \* Hawai'i Literacy
- \* Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education
- \* Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Hawai'i
- \* Ho'oiikaika Partnership
- \* Honolulu Community College (HCC)
- \* Hui for Excellence in Education (HE'E)
- \* Imua Maui Family Support Services
- \* INPEACE
- \* Institute for Human Services (IHS)
- \* Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma (IVAT)
- \* Islands of Hope - Maui
- \* Kamehameha Schools
- \* Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women and Children
- \* Kathy's Parenting Services
- \* KCAA Preschools
- \* Keiki O Ka 'Aina (KOKA)
- \* Learning to Grow, Windward Community College
- \* Malama Family Recovery Center
- \* Maui County
  - Early Childhood Resource Center
- \* Mental Health America of Hawai'i
- \* MEO Head Start
- \* Molokai Child Abuse Prevention Pathways
- \* 'Ohana Nui
- \* Papa Ola Lokahi
- \* Parents and Children Together (PACT)
- \* Partners in Development Foundation (PIDF)
- \* People Attentive to Children (PATCH)
- \* PHOCUSED
- \* Prevent Child Abuse Hawai'i
- \* Queen Lili'u'okalani Trust
- \* Read To Me International
- \* Salvation Army Family Treatment Services, Women's Way
- \* Seagull Schools
- \* SMALLIFY
- \* State of Hawai'i Commission on Fatherhood
  - University of Hawai'i (UH)
  - Center on the Family
  - College of Education
  - Office of Public Health Studies
  - School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene
- \* University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine (UH JABSOM)
  - Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, & Women's Health
  - Department of Pediatrics
- \* Waiikiki Health, PATH Clinic
- \* YMCA Honolulu
- \* Zero to Three Court

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## Shared Vision for Hawai'i



- \* Keiki are healthy.
- \* Keiki are safe.
- \* Keiki develop on track.
- \* Keiki are ready for kindergarten.

# We thank the many actors working to support keiki in Hawai'i.

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