

# ECAS Network Snapshot

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) takes action for Hawai'i's children by bringing together diverse stakeholders to implement systems-level strategies. All efforts involve multiple government and non-government partners across the network.

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

## Key Efforts using Systems Change Methodology

Systems Change efforts respond to the shifting social, economic and political landscape in Hawai'i.

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.

2023 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 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 communities with fewer resources. These disparities affirm the shared commitment of the ECAS network to centering equity in all of our efforts to support young children and families.

### 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.

### Support Innovation and Scale Promising Practices



#### EPIC 'OHANA'S MAKUA ALLIES

[Makua Allies](#) offers pregnant and parenting women suffering with substance use disorder a peer support specialist 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.

### COMMUNITY-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD CONTINUUMS

The [early childhood continuum](#) effort brings together health care providers, family support services, public, public charter, and independent school education leaders, early childhood educators, and families living in specific Hawai'i communities around the shared goal of strengthening the developmental pathway of all keiki from before birth through school entry. Two community continuums are underway: the Waimānalo Early Education 'Upena and the Pāhoā Promise Partnership.



### Increase Investment

#### 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 needs surrounding the Maui wildfires.

### Strengthen Cross-sector Leadership



#### SYSTEMS LEARNING EFFORTS

Working with partners at Engaging Inquiry and A'ali'i Alliance, the ECAS network worked throughout 2023 to build a story map that identifies patterns that are working in the system of care for our youngest keiki and patterns that are not.

Key levers identified through the mapping process include:

- » Impactful Collaboration
- » Data for Action
- » Innovations to Scale
- » Supported Workforce

The [systems learning journey](#) also suggests that, to be effective, strategies must 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 our strategic efforts and evaluate our progress.

### Improve Alignment



#### MAUI RESPONSE

In September 2023, the ECAS network pivoted to respond to the devastating fires on Maui. ECAS network partners came 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.

#### INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (IECBH)

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: reducing racial and socioeconomic disparities, saving money and ultimately, ensuring children succeed in school and life. The plan was developed by multiple government and nongovernment partners and guides early childhood mental health strategies across the state.

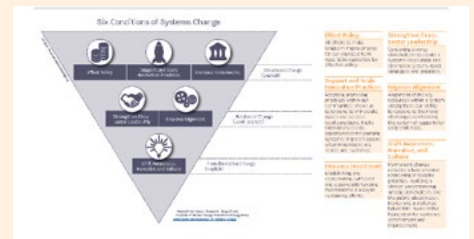
### Shift Awareness, Narrative, and Culture



#### 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 funding, policy and program-level decisions by county and state-level elected officials, nonprofit partners, and service providers. Honolulu and Kauai'i profiles will be completed in 2024.

[Learn more](#) about the 6 conditions of Systems Change ECAS adopted from "The Water of Systems Change" framework.



# 2024 Priorities of ECAS Core Teams

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is organized into seven cross-disciplinary [Core Teams](#), working together to improve the systems of care for Hawai'i's youngest keiki.

## Shared Vision for Hawai'i



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

### Healthy & Welcomed Births

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Hawai'i Maternal and Infant Health Collaborative (HMIHC)

**Team 1** / HMIHC is working to improve maternal and infant health outcomes while advancing health equity and reproductive justice.

- \* Improve systems of care and support for perinatal people with substance use disorder and their infants
- \* Increase access to contraception and promote reproductive planning
- \* Promote and support breast/chest feeding
- \* Improve quality of care and community resources and supports for perinatal people

### Safe & Nurturing Families

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**Team 2** is working to support safe and nurturing families and improve the community-wide response to family violence.

- \* Implement and promote the [Aloha at Home](#) framework through a messaging campaign and distribution of family-strengthening toolkits, implemented through partnerships with a network of service providers

### On-track Health & Development

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**Team 3** is working to ensure all children are supported to reach their optimal development by working with early childhood and healthcare providers and families.

- \* Support child development screening and referral efforts
- \* Promote family engagement in child development
- \* Promote the social and emotional health of infants and toddlers
- \* Embed physical activity and nutrition best practices into the early childhood system

### Equitable Access To Programs & Services

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**Team 4** is working to increase access to early childhood programs and services throughout the state and to resolve program and service gaps.

- \* Build capacity in child care and early learning and increase access to ECE services for infants and toddlers and children in unstable housing
- \* Create a comprehensive, virtual early childhood resource and referral service
- \* Strengthen and integrate county and island-level early childhood systems and networks

### High Quality Early Learning Programs

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**Team 5** is working to improve the quality of early childhood programs across settings.

- \* Develop and implement a comprehensive system of personnel development ([CSPD](#)) to strengthen and sustain an early childhood workforce that provides meaningful outcomes for children (0-5) with Significant Support Needs (SSNs)

### Successful Early Childhood Transitions

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**Team 6** is working to increase access to early literacy supports and to increase the share of kindergartners who reach school ready to become early readers.

- \* Grow a community of practice around early literacy in order to nurture the development of an accessible, affordable statewide network of high-quality programs
- \* Support [community-based early childhood continuums](#) to make sure all young keiki have the support they need to develop to their full capacity and reach kindergarten ready to thrive

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

The [IECBH Team](#) is Investing in state-wide mental health supports from birth forward in order to improve outcomes for our youngest children, their families and our communities.

- \* Incorporate IECMH principles and practices across health, childcare and social service settings
- \* Identify and implement long-term financial sustainability strategies for IECMH work across field
- \* Identify and support policy and legislative opportunities to strengthen the IECMH workforce



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