KIDS COUNT IN HAWAI‘I 2007
OVERVIEW

This publication is a collaborative effort of Hawai‘i Kids Count, part of the Center on the Family at the University of Hawai‘i, and the Aloha United Way (AUW). To improve the quality of life in our state, AUW is focusing public attention on four areas: early childhood development, homelessness, family and individual self-sufficiency, and crime and drugs. The goal of Hawai‘i Kids Count is to improve the well-being of Hawai‘i’s children and families by raising public awareness of their condition and serving as a catalyst for positive actions on their behalf. One way to attain this goal is by highlighting the needs of Hawai‘i’s vulnerable children and offering suggestions as to what families and caring people can do to help these children have a brighter, more successful future.

The goal of Hawai‘i Kids Count is to improve the well-being of Hawai‘i’s children and families by raising public awareness of their condition.

Some children experience living conditions that hurt their chances for healthy development. The risk factors in their environments make it difficult for these children to achieve positive relationships with others, attain good physical and mental health, be successful in school, and acquire good jobs as adults. In this publication we present data on Hawai‘i’s children and youth in three key areas—economic security, health, and education—and focus on data indicators for which there is substantial room for improvement. Our goals are to ensure that all of Hawai‘i’s children and youth: (1) Live in economically secure environments, (2) Are safe and healthy, and (3) Are educated and prepared for adulthood.

Caring people, even those who are not part of the biological family, can make a positive difference in children’s lives. We hope the information provided will move you to take action toward improving and enriching the lives of the children and youth of Hawai‘i.
GOAL 1
HAWAI’I’S CHILDREN AND YOUTH LIVE IN ECONOMICALLY SECURE ENVIRONMENTS

Children are more likely to thrive when they live in economically secure environments. Living in poverty or in low-income families places children at a higher risk for experiencing health problems, poor school performance, repeating a grade, engaging in risky or delinquent behaviors, and dropping out of school compared to children living in economically secure situations. Poor children are also more likely to be poor as adults.

AS A FAMILY MEMBER:
• Plan ahead by budgeting for the most important and necessary items for your family.
• Learn money management skills.
• Maintain family rules and routines (such as eating together, reading bedtime stories to children); this consistency will help provide stability and reassurance to children during financial crises.
• Share food, transportation, and child care responsibilities with other extended family members or friends.
• Help unemployed family members find education, training, and employment assistance available through AUW’s 211 system. Call 211, or visit www.auw211.org.

AS A CARING CITIZEN:
• Contribute to food drives, banks, and pantries.
• Volunteer with or donate to Hawaii Habitat for Humanity to help build homes for disadvantaged families. Call (808) 538-7070 or visit www.honoluluhabitat.org.
• Urge your legislators to establish a refundable state earned income tax credit (EITC), and a refundable low-income (food/medical) tax credit.
• Learn about Hawai’i’s economic self-sufficiency standards as a basis for advocating for policies that aid in asset building and income growth. Visit www.auw.org or www.uhfamilys.hawaii.edu.
• Ask legislators to continue addressing the issue of affordable housing in Hawai’i.
• Donate money, supplies or volunteer time to homeless shelters. For more information by island, please contact:
  a. O‘ahu – Institute for Human Services (IHS) at (808) 845-7150 or visit www.ihs-hawaii.org and Holo Loa’a – Weinberg Village Waimānalo at (808) 259-6658.
  c. Maui – Maui Economic Concerns of the Community at (808) 242-7600.
  d. Big Island – East Hawaii Coalition for the Homeless at (808) 961-2559.

• 1 in 8 children (13%) under age 18 is living in poverty.¹
• 1 in 3 children (34%) under age 18 is living in a family in which no parent has full-time, year-round employment.²
• 1 in 4 children (66,397) ages 0-14 lives in a household that lacks the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.³*
• Approximately 1,800 children ages 17 and under live in homeless shelters in a given year, and another 1,000 are homeless and live unsheltered.⁴**

¹ This is an undercount, as it does not include homeless households.
² This is an undercount, as it only includes those homeless children who receive shelter or outreach services from agencies reporting data to the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
Injury is one of the leading causes of death and disability for Hawai’i’s children, with traffic-related injuries being the most frequent cause of death. Preventing unnecessary accidents, injuries, and deaths is crucial to keeping our children safe.

The investments we make in children’s health have long-term implications. Children function best when they receive good health care and nutrition, get plenty of sleep, and exercise regularly. Healthy children have energy, alert minds, and the concentration required for learning and optimal school performance. Children who engage in healthy behaviors are more likely to be healthy as adults.

HAWAI’I’S CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE SAFE AND HEALTHY

AS A FAMILY MEMBER:
- Place your infant on his/her back for sleeping, and keep pillows, blankets, and toys away from his/her face while sleeping so as not to block breathing.
- Always pay close attention to your child’s activities and whereabouts to prevent accidents.
- Use proper safety seats and restraints for children in vehicles, and set a good example by always wearing your seat belt and not exceeding speed limits.
- Limit television, computer, video, and electronic game time and engage your children in activities that will enhance their physical health such as paddling, volleyball, basketball, and swimming.
- Make sports and other fun forms of exercise a family event.
- Be a role model for your children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews by engaging in healthy behaviors such as eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and refraining from smoking and using drugs.
- Keep portion sizes small at mealtimes, serve plenty of fruits and vegetables, limit foods that are high in sugar and fat, and keep healthy snacks in your home.
- Eat dinner together regularly as a family.
- Talk to your children about peer pressure and avoiding risky behaviors.
- Keep your home smoke and drug free.

AS A CARING CITIZEN:
- Encourage friends who are pregnant to get early prenatal care.
- Anonymously report suspected child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services by calling (808) 832-5300.
- Ask your legislators, school board, and the Department of Education to increase mandatory physical education in schools.
- Write a letter to your legislators asking for laws to improve air quality.
- Support anti-smoking, anti-drug, and anti-alcohol campaigns.
- Visit www.volunteerhawaii.org to learn about the many ways you can volunteer to help Hawai’i’s children and families.

- Approximately 1 in 5 babies (18%) is born to a woman who did not receive early prenatal care.5
- 19% of 2-year-olds have not been immunized.6
- An average of 11 infants (under age 1) die each month due to accidents, neglect, maltreatment, or other causes.7
- An average of 3 children (ages 1-14) die each month due to accidents, neglect, maltreatment, or other causes.8
- An average of 4 teens (ages 15-19) die each month due to traffic accidents, suicide, and other causes.9
- 1 in 4 children (27%) ages 10-17 is overweight or obese.10
- Half (51%) of children ages 6-17 do not exercise regularly.11
- 10% of children under 18 have asthma problems.12
- 11% of youth ages 12-17 and 44% of young adults ages 18-25 report binge alcohol drinking in the past month.13
- 9% of youth ages 12-17 and 36% of young adults ages 18-25 report cigarette use in the past month.14
- 10% of youth ages 12-17 and 17% of young adults ages 18-25 report marijuana use in the past month.15
- 6% of youth ages 12-17 and 6% of young adults ages 18-25 report illicit drug use other than marijuana in the past month.16
A quality education is key to achieving economic security, attaining necessary skills, building social capital, and establishing social support networks. Without a good education, young adults may have difficulty finding employment to support themselves.

**AS A FAMILY MEMBER:**
- Read to your children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.
- Provide a quiet place at home for children to study and do homework.
- Volunteer at a school that your children, grandchildren, nieces, or nephews attend.
- Communicate with your children’s teachers about their school progress and find out what you can do to support their learning at home.

**AS A CARING CITIZEN:**
- Urge policymakers to increase funding for school readiness programs that serve children in all settings, from home-based to center-based child care.
- Volunteer with Born Learning to raise caregiver awareness of how to help children be ready for school. For more information about Born Learning call 536-1951 or go to www.bornlearning.org.
- Volunteer with Hawai’i Literacy or Hawai’i Adult Education Literacy programs statewide to help individuals of all ages learn to read. For a list of programs and contact information by island, call 808-537-6706 or visit www.hawaiiliteracy.org/programs.html or www.literacynet.org/hawaii/programsacts.html.

In only 11% of kindergarten classes do at least three quarters of children begin with the basic skills needed to succeed in school.17

Almost half of 4th-grade public school students score below basic reading levels (47%) and basic science levels (43%), and over a quarter (27%) score below basic math levels.18

42% of 8th-grade public school students score below basic reading levels, 44% score below basic math levels, and over half (56%) score below basic science levels.19

13% of young adults ages 18-24 are not attending school, not working, and have no degree beyond a high school diploma or GED.20

Approximately 130 youth under age 21 are incarcerated on any given day.21

HAWAII’S CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE EDUCATED AND PREPARED FOR ADULTHOOD

Importance

Hawaii data

What you can do
References


8. ibid

9. ibid


11. ibid

12. ibid


14. ibid

15. ibid

16. ibid


19. ibid


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