



# Hawai'i KIDS COUNT E-Bulletin

## April 2016 Issue

Center on the Family | University of Hawai'i at Mānoa-CTAHR

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## A SHARED SENTENCE: THE DEVASTATING TOLL OF PARENTAL INCARCERATION ON KIDS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

In its new report, the Annie E. Casey Foundation provides the recommendation that state and local policymakers should adopt to help children who struggle with the emotional and financial instability resulting from having an incarcerated parent.

More than 5 million children across the nation have had a parent incarcerated at some point in their lives, including about 16,000 children in Hawai'i (approximately 5 percent of the population under 18). Having a parent in prison creates an unstable environment for a child that can have lasting effects on his or her development and well-being. Parental incarceration can be a traumatic experience of the same magnitude as abuse or domestic violence.

Losing a parent, especially a breadwinner, to incarceration can also leave a family scrambling to cover basic needs. About two-thirds of families with a member in prison cannot meet basic needs and when fathers are incarcerated, the average family income drops by 22 percent. Additionally, parents who have spent time in prison often face barriers to employment, public assistance and housing. The needs of children must be prioritized in order to minimize the impact of incarceration on their lives and give them a fair chance for a bright future.

In Hawai'i, Act 16, which was signed into law in 2015, is a step in that direction. Local advocates and service providers identified the need for data that would inform program funding and the development of targeted services for these children. The Act calls on the Department of Public Safety to begin collecting data from incarcerated parents on their children starting in 2016. While the legislation may appear to be a very minor



change in state policy, it will have major implications for Hawai'i, particularly for those who advocate for and serve children affected by parental incarceration.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's policy recommendations focus on:

1. Ensuring that children are supported while parents are incarcerated and after they return;
2. Connecting parents who have returned to the community with pathways to employment; and
3. Strengthening communities, particularly those disproportionately affected by incarceration and reentry, to promote family stability and opportunity.

The full report can be found at the Annie E. Casey Foundation website at:

<http://www.aecf.org/resources/a-shared-sentence/>.

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## SCHOOL BREAKFAST SCORECARD: 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) recently released its *School Breakfast Score Card 2014-2015 School Year*. The report measures the school breakfast program's reach, access to the program for low-income students, and lost federal dollars in states that do not meet participation goals. Studies have shown that program participation leads to improved dietary intake, reduced food insecurity, better test performance, and fewer classroom disruptions in the morning.

Nationally, during the period examined, 4% more students eligible for free- and reduced-price meals participated in the breakfast program than in the previous school year. Fifty-four low-income children participated in school breakfast for every 100 participating in school lunch, up slightly from 53.2 in the previous year. However, this ratio is still well-under FRAC's goal of reaching 70 low-income students with school breakfast for every 100 participating in school lunch.

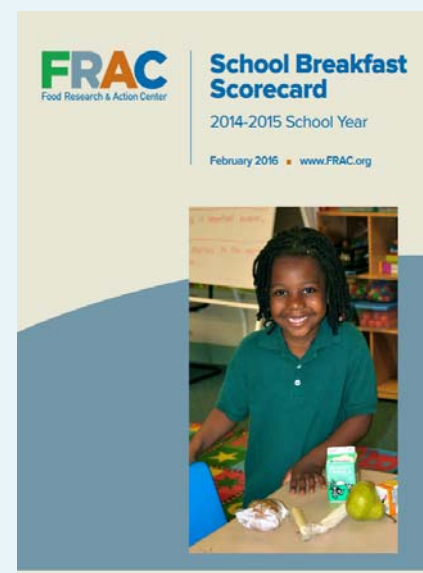
State-specific findings for Hawai'i include the following:

- With 43 low-income students participating in school breakfast for every 100 participating in school lunch (a slight increase from 41 in the prior year), Hawai'i was ranked among the bottom 10 states still struggling to reach low-income children with school breakfast.
- Nevertheless, Hawai'i is among the top five states that offer the school breakfast program in almost all schools that operate the National School Lunch program.

While more low-income children across the country are starting their day with a nutritious meal to support their learning, there is still a lot of work to be done. The report urges federal and state agencies, school districts, educators, and advocates to continue to build on the momentum gained in recent years to ensure that more low-income children start their day off with a healthy breakfast.

The School Breakfast Score Card may be viewed at

[http://frac.org/pdf/School Breakfast Scorecard SY 2014 2015.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/School_Breakfast_Scorecard_SY_2014_2015.pdf).



## 2015 HEAD START NATIONAL AND HAWAI'I FACT SHEETS

The National Head Start Association recently released fact sheets that provide an at-a-glance look at the program at the national and state levels.

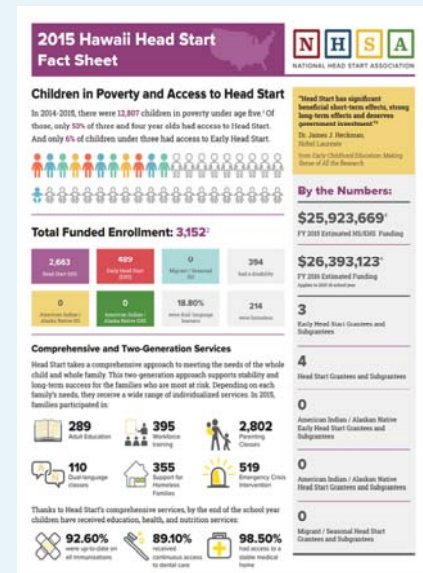
During the 2014-2015 school year, there were more than 4.7 million children under the age of five living in poverty. Approximately 41% of those three to four year olds had access to Head Start and only 4% of those under the age of three had access to Early Head Start.

Locally, there were nearly 13,000 children under five living in poverty. A little over half (53%) of three and four year olds had access to Head Start, and 6% of children under age three had access to Early Head Start.

Head Start addresses the needs of the whole child, including the child's family. Parents are provided with services that include, but are not limited to, adult education, workforce training and parenting classes. The comprehensive education, health and nutrition services provide by Head Start has a positive impact on the children's health and safety as well. In Hawai'i:

- Almost 93% of children were up-to-date on their immunizations, compared to 89% of participants in the U.S.
- 89% received continuous access to dental care, similar to the U.S. average of 90.6%.
- Nearly 99% had access to a stable medical home, compared to 96.6 % in the U.S.

The national and state Head Start Fact Sheets may be accessed at <http://www.nhsa.org/facts>.



## CHILDCARE AND PARENTING SUPPORT STATEWIDE SURVEY

The Early Childhood Action Strategy collaborative (a state-level public-private systems-building collaborative) has commissioned a market research survey to identify childcare and parenting support needs statewide. The research aims to inform policies and programming related to infant and toddler care, family childcare, preschools, and parenting support services. By increasing access to childcare and parenting support programs, more children will have early learning opportunities in group settings, families will be able to secure employment or attend school, and families will feel confident in their parenting skills.



Electronic surveys will be conducted in the spring and summer of 2016, followed by focus interviews in the fall of 2016, if needed. The Early Childhood Action Strategy collaborative encourages that the link to the survey be shared with employees, friends, families and others who might be interested in providing feedback. Survey results will be completely confidential. Findings are expected to be shared in January 2017.

To learn more about the Early Childhood Action Strategy collaborative visit: <http://hawaiiactionstrategy.org/>

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