



# Hawai'i KIDS COUNT E-Bulletin

## Happy Holidays from Hawai'i KIDS COUNT!



## December 2016 Issue

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

### IN THIS ISSUE

Paid Family Leave: Strengthening Hawai'i's Children and Families  
Red Light Green Light: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2016  
Support Policies that Support Hawai'i's Children and Families

## PAID FAMILY LEAVE: STRENGTHENING HAWAI'I'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The latest Hawai'i KIDS COUNT issue brief highlights the importance of paid family leave for Hawai'i's children and families. Since current family leave policies only guarantee *unpaid* leave for a limited pool of eligible workers, many in Hawai'i's workforce are forced to choose between caring for their family and making ends meet. *Paid Family Leave: Strengthening Hawai'i's Children and Families* provides data on Hawai'i's low-income families, who are most economically vulnerable without paid family leave in the face of major life events, such as having a baby or a parent becoming seriously ill. By allowing all workers the option to take time off with wage replacement, paid family leave ensures families' economic stability and improves health outcomes. Paid family leave benefits newborns and children's health by giving parents time to attend pediatric check-ups and to care for sick children. With access to paid family leave, new mothers' have essential time to recover from childbirth and fathers' participation in their children's lives increases.

### PAID FAMILY LEAVE: Strengthening Hawai'i's Children and Families

HAWAI'I KIDS COUNT ISSUE BRIEF

*A store clerk and single-mother of teens just found out that her live-in elderly mother has had a stroke and needs care. A young couple in the early stages of their careers just had their first baby, born a few weeks too early and requiring a longer hospital stay. A restaurant manager and father of two young children was told by his wife's surgeon that she will need more than a few weeks of bed rest and rehabilitation to recover from a serious car accident.*

When family members are sick, hurt or too frail to care for themselves, loved ones step up to provide the needed care. Nearly all employees need time away from the job at some point to care for a new child or seriously ill family member. However, employees in Hawai'i do not have any legal right to paid family leave.

Nationally, only 13 percent of workers have access to paid family leave through their employers.<sup>1</sup> Current policies, such as the federal Family Medical Leave Act and Hawai'i's Family Leave Law, only provide job protection during unpaid leave. Even then, too many in the workforce are excluded from this protection due to eligibility restrictions.

In a state with one of the highest costs of living in the nation,<sup>2</sup> many of Hawai'i's working families already struggle to make ends meet and taking unpaid leave is just not an option. Workers without access to paid family leave sometimes make do by drawing on inadequate short-term alternatives, such as paid sick or vacation time. However, too many in our workforce, especially low-income employees, lack access to these forms of paid leave.

Today's working parents must balance work, family and life's challenges. The majority (70 percent) of Hawai'i's children have either both parents (in married-couple families) or their single parent in the workforce.<sup>3</sup> Without job-protected paid leave that allows parents to take time out of the

#### PAID FAMILY LEAVE

Paid family leave provides job protection and wage replacement for employees who need to take time off to care for a new or sick child or a family member, such as an older parent, with a serious illness or disability.



workforce to care for and bond with a new child, or to care for a sick child or family member, parents face the impossible choice between their family's wellbeing and their job. Paid family leave promotes both work and family economic stability. It also supports the overall health and wellbeing of children and families.

#### Weaknesses of Current Family Leave Policies

The United States remains the world's only advanced economy that does not guarantee job-protected paid leave to all of its workers.<sup>4</sup> While the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 was an important first step in helping workers balance work and family demands, the law only guarantees job-protected unpaid leave for a period of 12 weeks to care for a family member or tend to a personal illness. Furthermore, the law does not

Check out [Paid Family Leave: Strengthening Hawai'i's Children and Families](#) to learn more about the benefits for children and families. In the months ahead, a partnership of the Hawai'i KIDS COUNT project, the Hawai'i Children's Action Network, and the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women will provide more data, issue briefs, fact sheets, advocacy tools and other resources aimed at raising awareness of this important policy. To learn more and get involved in supporting family leave policy, visit our respective websites at the links below.

Hawai'i KIDS COUNT: <http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/projects/kidscount/home.aspx>.

Hawai'i Children's Action Network: [http://www.hawaiican.org/paid\\_family\\_leave](http://www.hawaiican.org/paid_family_leave).

Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women: <http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/hscsw/>.

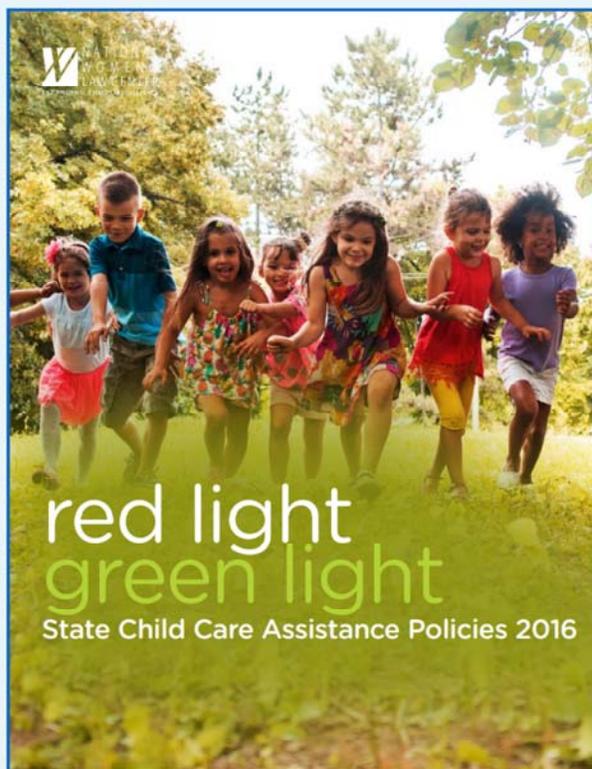
---

---

## RED LIGHT GREEN LIGHT: STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES 2016

For most families with small children, child care is an integral part of everyday life. Supporting working parents and allowing children the chance to learn and develop skills that will prepare them for life, child care is beneficial for the community as a whole. However, finding affordable child care can be challenging, particularly for low-income families. The National Women's Law Center (NWLC) recently published *Red Light Green Light: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2016*, which examines the subsidy programs in each state that help low-income families pay for child care. Each year, the NWLC collects data from state child care administrators throughout the country to track trends in child care assistance policies. The report focused on five key areas of states' policies:

- Income eligibility limits to qualify for child care assistance
- Waiting lists for child care assistance
- Copayments required of parents receiving child care assistance
- Reimbursement rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance
- Eligibility for child care assistance for parents searching for a job



According to the report, in 2016, 20 states had waiting lists for child care assistance or turned away families without adding their names to a waiting list, preventing many low-income families from getting the assistance they needed. In many states, large numbers of low-income families could not qualify for assistance, and only one state set their reimbursement rates for child care providers at the federally recommended level. Hawai'i specific data presented in the report include the following:

- Between 2015 and 2016, about two-thirds of the states increased their income eligibility limits to keep up with or exceed inflation. Hawai'i kept the income eligibility limit the same between 2015 and 2016.
- Hawai'i had the highest parent copayments for families receiving child care assistance. A family of three with an income at 150% of poverty had to pay \$473 for a four year old in center-based care, and a family of three at the poverty level had to pay \$270.
- Federal regulations recommend that reimbursement rates for child care providers be set at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the current market rates. Hawai'i has not updated its reimbursement rates in a number of years. Without regular updates to reimbursement rates to keep pace with increases in the cost of care, the gap between the reimbursement rate and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the current market rate widens.

Examining these policies is essential to determining how families can receive child care assistance and to what extent the assistance can help. While progress has been made with some policies, the report concludes that further improvements can be made if federal and state funding are increased.

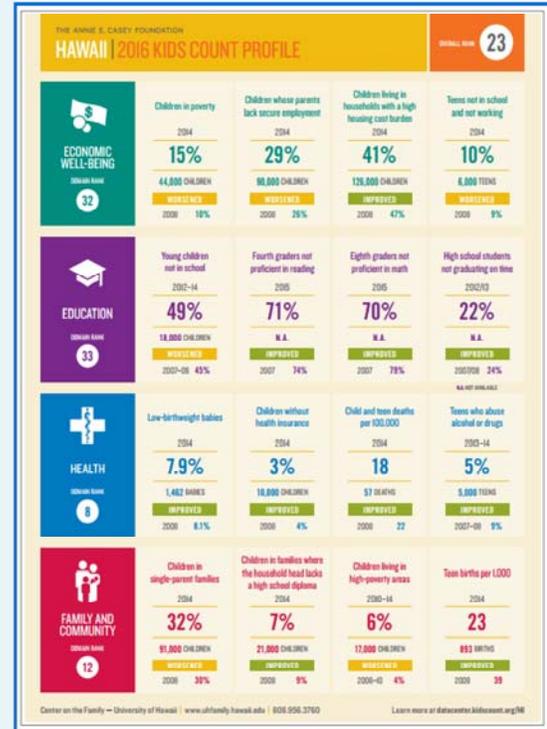
The full report can be accessed at <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NWLC-State-Child-Care-Assistance-Policies-2016-final.pdf>.

## SUPPORT POLICIES THAT SUPPORT HAWAII'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

According to the *2016 KIDS COUNT Data Book* (released in June), Hawai'i ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> in the nation on overall child well-being, a slight improvement from 24<sup>th</sup> last year but still somewhere in the middle and lower than the state's ranking a decade or so ago. The good news is that Hawai'i teens are making progress. The teen birth rate decreased during the period examined in the report, down 41% since 2008, and there was also an improvement in the share of high school students graduating on time. However, despite the economic recovery and rising employment in recent years, too many of Hawai'i's children are growing up in economic hardship.

The *Data Book* outlines policy recommendations that are consistent with efforts gaining momentum in Hawai'i to reduce poverty and inequity and to increase opportunities. Policies such as a state-level earned income tax credit or paid family leave laws promote both work and family economic stability. Policies that expand access to early childhood care and education increase opportunity by promoting school readiness and positive life-long outcomes.

With the 2017 Legislative Session just around the corner, we invite you to get engaged and support policies that improve conditions for Hawai'i's children and families. Reach out to organizations doing advocacy work in these areas, such as the [Hawai'i Children's Action Network](#) or the [Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice](#), to find out how you can support these important policies. Visit the [Hawai'i State Legislature](#) website to learn how you can track bills and submit testimony. And visit the [Hawai'i KIDS COUNT](#) pages and the Hawai'i pages of the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#) to learn more about policies that support child and family well-being and for data to support your advocacy work.



### SUBSCRIBING:

You may subscribe to this newsletter by sending an email to [kadmin@hawaii.edu](mailto:kadmin@hawaii.edu) with the phrase "Subscribe to Hawai'i KIDS COUNT E-Bulletin" in the subject field.

### UNSUBSCRIBING:

If we have reached you in error or if you would prefer not to hear from us in the future, send an email to [kadmin@hawaii.edu](mailto:kadmin@hawaii.edu) with the phrase "Unsubscribe Hawai'i KIDS COUNT E-Bulletin" in the subject field.

### ARCHIVE OF E-BULLETINS:

PDF versions of our monthly e-bulletins are available at: <http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/projects/kidscount/ebulletin.aspx>

Hawai'i KIDS COUNT is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We thank them for their support, and we acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in the E-Bulletin are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Foundation.

CENTER ON THE FAMILY

2515 Campus Road, Miller Hall 103, Honolulu, HI 96822

Phone: (808) 956-4132 | Fax: (808) 956-4147 | Email: [cof@ctahr.hawaii.edu](mailto:cof@ctahr.hawaii.edu)

Facebook Page URL: [www.facebook.com/HawaiiKidsCount](http://www.facebook.com/HawaiiKidsCount)

Twitter Page URL: [www.twitter.com/hikidscount](http://www.twitter.com/hikidscount)

