



Hawai'i KIDS COUNT

E-Bulletin

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

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PAID FAMILY LEAVE FOR HAWAI'I'S FAMILIES

Hawai'i's workforce is better when employees can balance work, family, and life's challenges. Nearly all workers need to take time away from work at some point to care for a new child or to deal with a serious personal or family illness. However, employees in Hawai'i do not have any legal right to paid family leave, and most cannot take unpaid leave and still maintain financial stability given the high cost of living in our state. Low-income and single-parent families may be especially vulnerable when the need for leave arises.

Current policies – such as the federal Family Medical Leave Act and Hawai'i's Family Leave Law – only provide job protection during unpaid leave and, even then, too many in the workforce are excluded from this protection.

The U.S. is the only industrialized country without paid family leave for the working population. Only a handful of states have implemented paid family leave programs. Research shows that paid family leave supports family wellbeing and benefits businesses:

- Paid family leave is associated with increases in birthweight, longer periods of breastfeeding, and reduced infant mortality. New parents are also less likely to lose their jobs or drop out of the labor force when they have paid family leave.
- Employers in states that implemented paid family leave report improved morale, less absenteeism, and better employee retention. By reducing turnover and improving employees' job satisfaction and



productivity, paid family leave programs help businesses thrive with a stable workforce that further contributes to the economy.

Policies that encourage work and provide work support are critical to efforts aimed at helping Hawai'i's families achieve economic security. Families should not have to choose between caring for a new child or sick family member and receiving a paycheck or keeping their job. A paid family leave program that is 100% employee-funded (through a small payroll deduction) and available to everyone, regardless of where they work, can provide families in Hawai'i with job protection and the flexibility to meet their needs without losing pay.

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 share more on how paid family leave can support Hawai'i's families. Data, fact sheets, advocacy tools and other resources will be made available and highlighted in the monthly e-bulletin so that you can learn more and get involved in supporting paid family leave policy. You can also 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.hawaii-can.org/paid_family_leave

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

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FRAC'S NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL INDEX OF FOOD HARDSHIP

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) recently released a report that suggests some progress has been made since the Great Recession in addressing food hardship in the U.S. *How Hungry is America? National, State and Local Index of Food Hardship* examines food hardship in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 109 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). The report finds that in 2015, 16% of surveyed households said they experienced food hardship in the past year. This is the lowest rate in eight years and a three-point drop from a high of nearly 19% in 2013. While the U.S. has made progress to reduce food hardship, millions of Americans are still struggling.



The report indicates that:

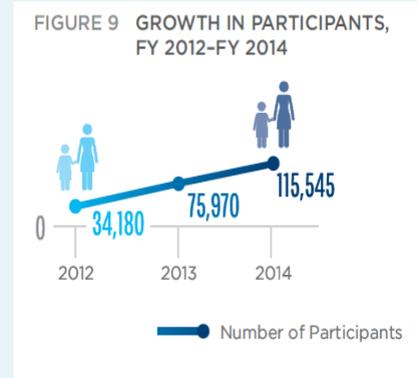
- A little more than 10% of households in Hawai'i experienced food hardship in 2015. Mississippi had the highest food hardship rate at 23%, and North Dakota the lowest at 8.4%.
- Out of the 109 MSAs included in the report, Urban Honolulu was favorably ranked (at 106th), with a food hardship rate of 10.6%. This is an improvement from 2014, when the food hardship rate for Honolulu was 13.5%.¹

The FRAC provides recommendations to reduce food hardship, including: (1) improving government income support programs for struggling families; (2) strengthening SNAP and child nutrition programs, such as the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program; and (3) working with the public and private sector to improve and expand participation in the federal nutrition programs.

Download the food hardship report at <http://frac.org/pdf/food-hardship-2016.pdf>

HOME VISITING PROGRAMS

The Federal Home Visiting Program supports the most vulnerable expectant families and families with young children. Funded through a partnership between the Maternal Child Health Bureau and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the program provides children and their families with the resources and skills aimed at improving child and family outcomes. By supporting children's emotional, physical, and cognitive development, home visits encourage healthy learning environments and teaches parents/caregivers how to create nurturing relationships with their children.



In its 2016 Report to Congress, *Demonstrating Improvement in the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program*, the Federal Home Visiting Program reports that state grantees more than tripled the number of participants served and more than quadrupled the number of home visits provided between the years 2012 and 2014. The report also reveals that over three-fourths of participating families had an income at or below poverty, and over one-third of adult participants had less than a high school education.

In FY 2015, Hawai'i's evidence-based home visiting programs:

- Provided services to more than 600 families statewide;
- Conducted almost 5,500 home visits to more than 1,220 parents and children; and
- Enrolled nearly 500 new parents and children during the fiscal year.²

Furthermore, data from the report shows that children were not the only ones who benefited from home visiting services. In fact, states, territories, and tribal entities use their funding to develop evidence-based home visiting services for pregnant mothers and parents/caregivers of children under the age of 5. The report highlights several areas of improvement, including the following:

- Almost 70% of responding grantees saw increased screening for maternal depressive symptoms;
- More than 60% reported a reduction in maternal emergency department visits from all causes;
- 70% of responding grantees saw a reduction in parent stress level or depression; and
- More than 90% saw an improvement in employment or education of participating adults.

Report findings verify that home visiting programs are immensely beneficial for the well-being of young children and their families. In addition to supporting early childhood development, research shows that high-quality home visiting programs have a return on investment of almost \$6 for every tax dollar spent. The efforts put forth by these home visiting programs truly have the potential to transform the lives and futures of countless families nationwide.

The March 2016 Report to Congress may be read at

<http://mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/MaternalChildHealthInitiatives/HomeVisiting/pdf/reportcongress-homevisiting.pdf>

Fact sheets for each state, the District of Columbia and territories may be accessed at

<http://mchb.hrsa.gov/maternal-child-health-initiatives/home-visiting/home-visiting-program-state-fact-sheets>

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