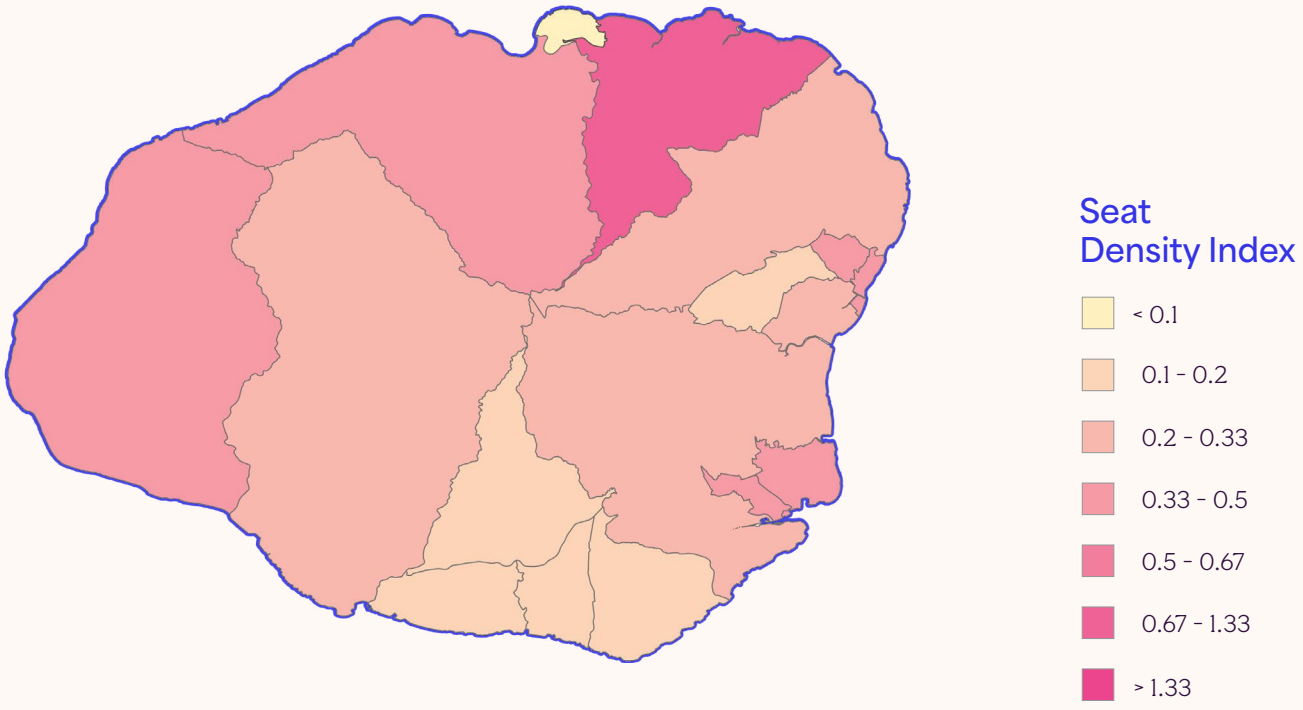
Access to Early Childhood Care and Education:

Kaua‘i County



Introduction

Access to affordable, conveniently located, and high-quality early care and education (ECE) supports the well-being of Hawai‘i’s youngest keiki and helps their families and our local communities thrive. High-quality ECE programs set the stage for lifelong learning, health, and well-being.[1] ECE is also essential to working parents and promotes women’s workforce participation, pay equity, and career advancement.[2] Additionally, economists estimate that the benefits realized for workforce productivity, family self-sufficiency, and long-term child outcomes make ECE one of the best-known returns on the public dollar.[3]

Hawai‘i’s current ECE supply is insufficient–especially for infants and toddlers–and expensive, with access depending on where a family lives. [4] Fortunately, the state is taking steps to expand affordable, high-quality ECE. However, as Hawai‘i moves toward universal access for 3- and 4-year-olds by 2032,[5] the needs of children under age 3 must also be addressed.

The equitable allocation of ECE resources requires data on which communities and populations are underserved. With this need in mind, the *Access to Early Childhood Education and Care in Hawai‘i* web tool was created to inform Hawai‘i’s expansion planning. The interactive maps posted there show (a) the supply of nearby ECE seats, (b) the average cost as a percentage of family income, and (c) whether these seats are high quality. Using data from the web tool, this snapshot provides a profile of how the Kaua‘i County fares on these measures of ECE access. We highlight two communities with high needs, one with low ECE access and another with more favorable access. We also offer recommendations for improving equitable access in Kaua‘i County

ECE Access Indexes

This project provides a new method for measuring the availability, affordability, and quality of ECE within a set distance of each home in the state. For every house, condominium, and apartment building, we took into account the number and characteristics of ECE seats as well as the number of young children living nearby. The resulting indexes provide a highly localized measure of the ECE resources available to families within their neighborhoods.

The ***seat density*** index represents the number of ECE seats per child within a five-mile radius of a family’s home. It indicates whether capacity is sufficient to serve the number of children who live nearby. Scores lower than .33 (i.e., more than three children per seat) are often considered to indicate a shortage of ECE seats.

The ***cost burden*** index expresses the average cost of a nearby seat as a percentage of that area’s median family income. The federal government defines affordable costs as no more than 7% of family income and has set this level as the copayment cap for families receiving child care subsidies. [6]

The ***quality*** index measures the likelihood that a nearby seat is in a center with a national ECE accreditation (NAEYC, NECPA, NAFCC), a public pre-K classroom, or a Head Start/ Early Head Start program.[7] Because these programs meet standards beyond those required for state licensing, they are likely to provide developmentally appropriate, responsive, and thoughtfully planned care; this does not mean that other programs cannot also be of high quality. High-quality ECE is associated with better child outcomes and is especially important for children facing challenges such as poverty, homelessness, or developmental delays.

Note that the ECE data included in this snapshot were collected July-October 2022 and do not reflect subsequent changes that may have occurred. We present this profile as a baseline for setting goals and measuring future progress.

Kaua‘i County ECE Access Profile

An estimated 4,300 children under the age of 5 live in Kaua‘i County, less than 5% of the state's population of young children. The median family income is $93,873, only slightly less than the state average of $97,813. Almost three in 10 children under age 18 (27.9%) are from poor or low-income households.[8]

Kaua‘i County has a total of 1,193 ECE seats. The good majority of these (82.6%) are in licensed child care centers serving preschool-aged children. Another 13.7% of seats are in family or group child care homes, while public pre-K represents the smallest share of seats at 3.6%. Of all the counties, Kaua‘i has the smallest share of seats in Head Start (7.0%) or nationally accredited programs (17.4%); furthermore, Kaua‘i has no licensed infant-toddler centers.[a] The average cost of ECE is $783, well below the state average of $1,063.

Table 1: ECE Program Characteristics and Cost[9]

Variable	Kaua‘i County		State	
Seats by Provider Type	***Count***	***%***	***Count***	***%***
Family or Group Child Care Home	164	13.7	1,622	6.6
Licensed Infant-Toddler Center	0	0.0	1,528	6.2
Licensed Preschool Center	986	82.6	20,538	84.1
Public Pre-K*	43	3.6	742	3.0
Total	**1,193**	**100.0**	**24,430**	**100.0**
Seats by Other Provider Characteristics	***Count***	***%***	***Count***	***%***
Early Head Start or Head Start	84	7.0	2,411	9.9
Accredited Private Providers	208	17.4	9,313	38.1
Cost				
All Providers**	$783	---	$1,063	---
Fee-based Providers	$876	---	$1,215	---

*Includes Executive Office on Early Learning and Public Charter School classrooms
**Includes public pre-K, Head Start, and Early Head Start at $0 tuition

[a] As of June 10, 2024, Kaua‘i has one licensed infant-toddler center. Early Head Start offers early learning support through home-based programming, but does not offer center-based care

Kaua‘i County ECE Access Profile

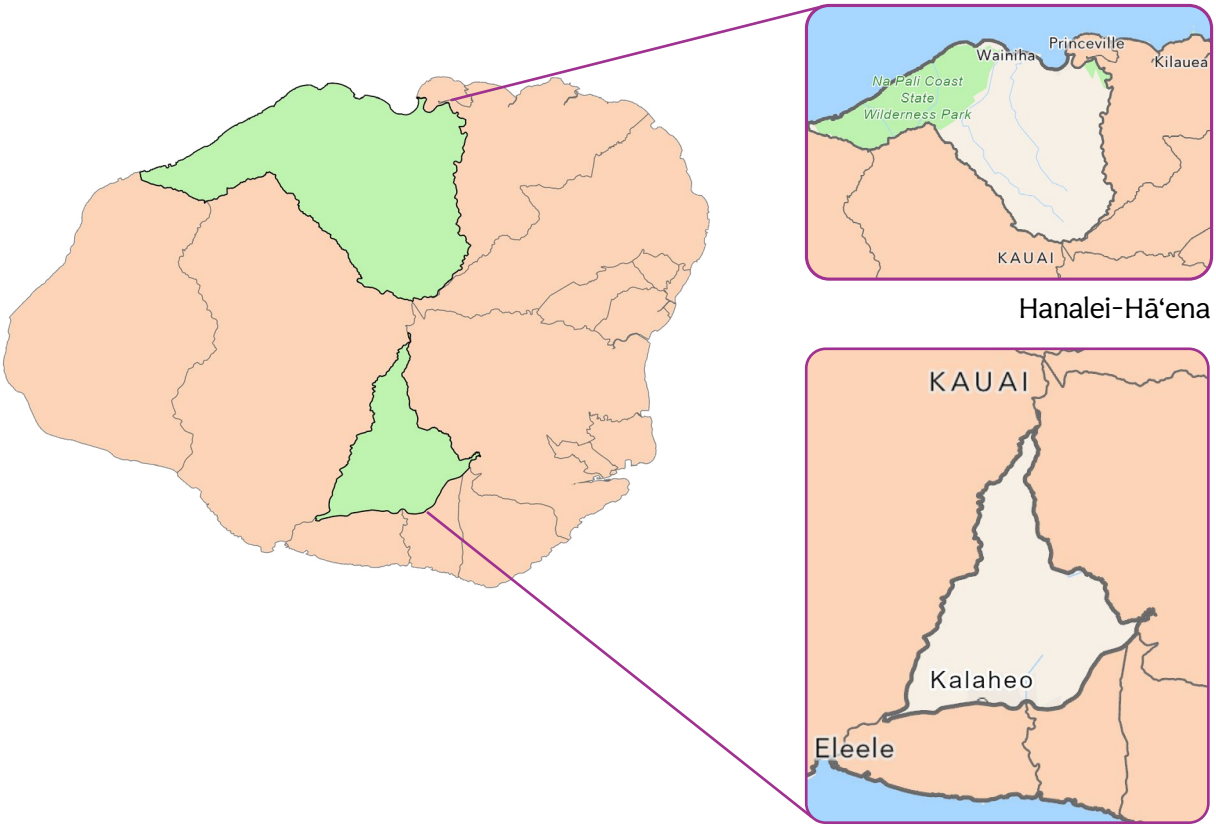
Kaua‘i has the state’s most affordable ECE, but the county has limited access to high-quality programs and an insufficient supply of infant-toddler care (see Table 2). On average, the county has .28 nearby seats per young child, a little lower than the state average of .31 seats. Seat density varies by age group, with the supply of nearby seats being much greater for children 3 to 4 years of age than for infants and toddlers (.59 vs. .05 seats per child, respectively). A nearby seat costs 10% of the median area family income, the lowest cost burden in the state, with little variation in cost burden by age group (10.1% vs. 9.6% of median family income for 3- to 4-year-olds and infants and toddlers, respectively). Kaua‘i is distinctive in having much lower quality access than each of the other three counties. Only 28.7% of seats for 3- and 4-year-olds are in programs likely to be of high quality (i.e., accredited programs, public pre-K, and Head Start), compared to 51.2% for the state overall. Notably, the quality access score of zero for infants and toddlers reflects the lack of accredited infant-toddler providers and center-based Early Head Start.

Table 2: ECE Access Within 5 Miles[10]

ECE Access Index	Kaua‘i County	State
Seat Density (overall)	.28	.31
Seat Density (ages 0-2)	.05	.09
Seat Density (ages 3-4)	.59	.63
Cost Burden (overall)	10.0	13.6
Cost Burden (ages 0-2)	9.6	14.9
Cost Burden (ages 3-4)	10.0	13.2
Quality (overall)	25.7	51.1
Quality (ages 0-2)	0.0	46.3
Quality (ages 3-4)	28.4	51.2

A Closer Look: North Kalaheo and Hanalei-Hā'ena

Below we highlight two Kaua'i communities that differ on ECE access.



Hanalei-Hā'ena

North Kalaheo

Table 3: Community Profiles[11]

Indicator	North Kalaheo	Hanalei-Hā'ena
Children under age 5	349	84
Median family income	$83,068	$66,667
% of low-income children	3.1%	18.8%
% of children in poverty	14.9	16.1
Seat density ages 0-4	.12	.49
Cost burden ages 0-4	9.7	16.2
Quality ages 0-4	14.2	82.6

A Closer Look: Continued

North Kalaheo

With an estimated 349 children under the age of five, North Kalaheo (census tract 15007040701, mauka of Highway 50) represents a community with relatively high needs and low ECE access (see Table 3). Although this area's median family income is not especially low ($83,068), 18% of its children are from low-income or poverty-level households. This area also has a high share of residents who are Native Hawaiian or part Hawaiian (30.2%). North Kalaheo is in the lowest 20% of the county for overall ECE access. The seat density index of .12 nearby seats per young child indicates that slightly more than 1 in 10 children can be accommodated. On average, these seats cost 9.7% of the community's median family income, and only 14.2% are in high-quality programs. While there are family child care providers in North Kalaheo, the nearest public pre-K or Head Start sites are in ʻEleʻele and Koloa. This community would benefit from increased ECE resources, including more no-cost, high-quality programs.

Hanalei–Hāʻena

The Hanalei–Hāʻena area (census tract 15007040104) represents a community with high needs but good ECE access (see Table 3). This area is in the top 10% in Kauaʻi County for economic risk, but the top 20% for overall ECE access. This small community has an estimated 84 children under age five. The area's median family income is $66,667, and 34.9% of its children are from poor or low-income households. Hanalei–Hāʻena has .49 nearby seats per child age 0–4, well above the state and county averages. Cost burden is high in the area, as a nearby seat costs 16.2% of the median family income; however, 82.6% of seats are in high-quality programs. Access to public pre-K or Head Start centers as well as outreach to ensure that eligible families receive child care subsidies would reduce the high cost burden for families in the Hanalei–Hāʻena community.

Recommendations for Kaua‘i County

The provisions of Act 46 require statewide planning for the rapid and equitable expansion of public and private preschool access, increased support for providers to attain accreditation and demonstrate high-quality care, and constraining out-of-pocket costs to families. While working towards these goals, the need for infant-toddler care cannot be overlooked, along with the challenges of staffing and inflation. Program quality and access to infant-toddler care are areas in which Kaua‘i County differs from the rest of the state. Suggestions to inform ECE expansion in Kaua‘i County are given below.

- With a preschool seat density index of .59 seats per child age 0-2, Kaua‘i’s ECE providers can accommodate almost 6 out of every 10 preschool-age children. However, this still falls short of the goal of having sufficient seats to serve 80% of preschoolers set for the Lieutenant Governor’s Ready Keiki initiative.[12] The ECE access web tool along with site location data on recently planned or opened public pre-K sites can identify underserved, low-income communities to prioritize, followed by middle-income, then high-income areas.

- With an infant-toddler seat density of .05 seats per child age 0-2, only one of every 20 very young children can be served in infant-toddler centers or family child care homes. The county should develop a strategic plan to increase infant-toddler seats and address the issues of pay equity, the shortage of qualified infant-toddler staff, and the very high cost to providers of serving our youngest keiki.

- Only one-quarter of ECE seats in Kaua‘i County are in programs likely to be of high quality; this is by far the lowest share in the state. Offer supports such as coaching, technical assistance, and financial incentives to raise overall quality, and encourage more private providers to seek accreditation.

- While Kaua‘i currently enjoys the state’s lowest-cost ECE, this does not mean that costs are affordable to all families. As policies to reduce family copayments are enacted, monitor progress to ensure widespread awareness and enrollment of eligible children in subsidy programs.

- Collect data on the needs and preferences of commuting parents and those working nontraditional schedules to address the availability of ECE options close to employment centers and providers offering evening and weekend care.

For ECE access data in other parts of the state or specific communities within Kaua‘i County, please visit *Access to Early Childhood Care and Education in Hawai‘i*.

Endnotes

[1] National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2007). *The timing and quality of early experiences combine to shape brain architecture: Working paper No. 5*. https://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2007/05/Timing_Quality_Early_Experiences-1.pdf; Phillips, D., Lipsey, M., Dodge, K. A., Haskins, R., Bassok, D., Burchinal, M., & Weiland, C. (2017). *The current state of scientific knowledge on pre-kindergarten effects*. New York: Brookings Institution and Duke Center for Child and Family Policy; Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2016). When does preschool matter? *The Future of Children*, *26*(2), 21–35.

[2] Malik, R. (2018). *The effects of universal preschool in Washington, DC: Children's learning and mothers' earnings*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress; Morrissey, T. W. (2017). Child care and parent labor force participation: A review of the research literature. *Review of Economics of the Household*, *15*, 1-24; OECD (2019). *Education at a glance 2019: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

[3] Council of Economic Advisors (2015). *The economics of early childhood investments*. Washington, DC: Author. https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=Council+of+Economic+Advisors+%282015%29.+The+economics+of+early+childhood+investments; Karoly, L.A. (2016). The economic returns to early childhood education. *The Future of Children, 26*(2), 37– 56.

[4] DeBaryshe, B., Stern, I., Nguyen, M., Azuma, J., & Chen, Q. (2023). *Hawaii's critical shortage of infant-toddler care*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Center on the Family. https://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/publications; Center on the Family (2024). *Access to early childhood education and care in Hawai'i*. [Website] https://ecemaps.uhfamily.hawaii.edu

[5] Relating to access to learning, Act 46 (2020). https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2020/bills/GM1151_.PDF.

[6] Improving child care access, affordability, and stability in the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF (Final rule). *Federal Register*, 89:42 (March 1, 2024) pp 15366-15415. https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/03/01/2024-04139/improving-child-care-access-affordability-and-stability-in-the-child-care-and-development-fund-ccdf

[7] National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Early Childhood Program Accreditation, National Association for Family Child Care.

[8] U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B01001: Sex by age;* U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B19125: Median family income in the past 12 months by presence of own children under 18 years*; U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B17024: Age by ratio of income to poverty level in the past 12 months.*

[9] Data sources: State of Hawai'i Executive Office on Early Learning, People Attentive to Children (PATCH), Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission, State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services Child Care Office.

[10] Data source: Center on the Family (2024). *Access to early childhood care and education in Hawai'i*. [Website] https://ecemaps.uhfamily.hawaii.edu. For age-specific indexes, seat counts were based on license type and reported enrollment of children 0-2 vs. 3-4

[11] Data sources: Center on the Family (2024). *Access to early childhood care and education in Hawai'i*. [Website] https://ecemaps.uhfamily.hawaii.edu; U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B01001: Sex by age;* U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B19125: Median family income in the past 12 months by presence of own children under 18 years;* U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B17024: Age by ratio of income to poverty level in the past 12 months*;

[12] Office of the Lieutenant Governor (2023). *Ready Keiki*. [Website] https://www.readykeiki.org/

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