



## **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**DAVID Y. IGE**  
GOVERNOR

**ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.**  
DIRECTOR

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### **Department of Health to bring health/digital navigators and telehealth support services to underserved communities**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) has partnered with the Hawai'i State Public Library System and the Pacific Basin Telehealth Resource Center at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa to bring COVID-19 health and digital navigators and telehealth services to 15 libraries in underserved and rural areas statewide. The \$3.7 million project is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to address COVID-19 health disparities as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

“This collaboration is a unique opportunity to help Hawai'i families in underserved communities move towards health and digital equity,” said Sylvia Mann, DOH's Genomics Section Supervisor.

The project will train and employ high school and undergraduate students to be health and digital navigators in their local libraries to help individuals and families learn how to use computers and the internet to access information about COVID-19 and other health concerns, find services and support, and use telehealth services. The libraries will also have designated private rooms and equipment to allow telehealth visits. For families that have devices but no connectivity, the library will have cellular hotspot units that can be borrowed for use at home.

The project will start by the end of this year and includes 15 state libraries: Lāna'i, Moloka'i, Hāna, Kīhei, Waimea, Princeville, Hanapēpē, Pāhoa, North Kohala, Hilo, Wai'anae, Kahuku, Waimānalo, Wahiawā, and Waipahu.

To support COVID-19 and other public health activities, mobile clinic vans will be set up in the library parking lots to allow individuals and families to receive in-person and telehealth services, rotating among the libraries on each island. Clinic vans can also be deployed to community sites

or even a patient's home when necessary to provide services. This part of the project will start in 2022 when the customized vans arrive in the state.

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