



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.  
DIRECTOR

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### **Department of Health receives \$2.2 million federal grant to address pediatric mental health in Hawai'i**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is one of 30 states to receive a \$2.2 million federal Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA) grant, providing the state \$445,000 a year for the next five years, \$2.2 million total, to address pediatric mental health care for children and youth ages 3 to 21 years.

The purpose of the PMHCA program is to promote behavioral health integration into pediatric primary care using telehealth, which has drastically increased during the COVID-19 pandemic to curb spreading the disease and to lessen the burden on hospitals and doctors' offices.

"During this critical time, children and youth continue to struggle with mental health issues under the unusual circumstances of COVID-19," said Danette Wong Tomiyasu, deputy director of DOH's Health Resources Administration. "This grant will help our state to directly address some of the barriers to pediatric mental health care that Hawai'i families are facing."

According to the [2020 University of Hawai'i Annual Report](#), the pandemic exacerbated the state's shortage of primary care physicians and psychiatrists. Telehealth is one solution to help fill the healthcare provider gap and achieve health equity related to racial, ethnic, and geographic disparities in access to care.

DOH's Family Health Services Division, where the grant will be housed, is exploring the best way to implement the PMHCA program at the state and community levels. This may include pediatric mental health care teams that will provide teleconsultation, training, technical assistance, and care coordination for pediatric primary care providers to diagnose, treat, and refer children with behavioral health conditions.

The PMHCA grant is part of the American Rescue Plan Act from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Learn more about HRSA's [Pediatric Mental Health Care Access](#) program.

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