



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

ELIZABETH A. CHAR, MD
DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 2, 2022

22-047

Department of Health encourages move from awareness to acceptance for National Children’s Mental Health Month

HONOLULU – May is celebrated as National Children’s Mental Health Month. The Hawai’i Department of Health (DOH) and the Children’s Mental Health Acceptance (CMHA) Planning Group encourage Hawai’i residents to foster acceptance and support access to mental health services for keiki.

“The Surgeon General issued an [advisory](#) in December 2021 highlighting the youth mental health crisis, which was heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic”, said Dr. Scott Shimabukuro, acting administrator for the DOH Child & Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD). “National Children’s Mental Health Month serves as a timely reminder of the importance of moving beyond awareness to acceptance of the challenges individuals and their loved ones experience.”

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged the social, emotional, and mental well-being of youth globally. It is estimated that the prevalence of depression and anxiety have doubled during the pandemic.

2020 data estimates that 11,000 of Hawai’i’s youth experienced at least one major depressive episode in the prior year. Of those who experienced a major depressive episode, approximately 6,000 did not receive mental health services in the prior year.

Nationwide, Children’s Mental Health Month organizers encourage individuals:

1. To **accept** that 1 in 5 youth experiences a mental health challenge;
2. To **accept** that mental health challenges must be met with understanding and support;
3. To **accept** that bias and discrimination toward individuals who experience mental health challenges creates a barrier to seeking treatment - and it must be eliminated;
4. To **accept** that youth are facing serious challenges ahead that need to be addressed;
5. To **accept** that the future wellbeing of our country depends on how we support and invest in the next generation.

Children and adolescents are more likely to seek help and access resources when accessing mental health resources is destigmatized. Youth benefit when access to resources is timely and services are family-driven, youth-guided, and culturally appropriate.

Individuals are encouraged to wear green in a show of support and recognition of [Children's Mental Health Acceptance Month](#). Green is the national color of mental health acceptance, representing hope, strength, support, and encouragement for people who suffer from mental illness.

- **Throughout the month of May:** Participants are encouraged to wear green and share on their social media accounts how they take care of their mental health as part of CAMHD's social media campaign. Posts and entries submitted each week will enter the participants into prize drawings. For more information about the social media challenge and to view the calendar of statewide events visit health.hawaii.gov/camhd/cmha22.

The following buildings on O'ahu will display green lights in support of children's mental health:

- **The month of May:** Aloha Tower
- **May 1-26:** Hawaiki Tower
- **May 2-6:** Honolulu Hale
- **May 2-8:** Hawai'i State Capitol
- **May 23-27:** IBM Building

Free mental health resources are available to Hawaii's children, youth, and families through [Help Your Keiki](#) and [Mental Health America of Hawai'i](#). [The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health](#) also offers [resources](#) and [activities](#) to help families get involved throughout May.

The CMHA Planning Group is led by the DOH CAMHD and Effective Planning and Innovative Communication (EPIC) 'Ohana [Youth Partners](#). Participating organizations include [DOH-Adult Mental Health Division](#), [CAMHD Safe Spaces Committee](#), [Center for Cognitive Behavior Therapy University of Hawai'i at Mānoa](#), [Child and Family Service](#), [Community Children's Councils](#), [Hawai'i State Department of Education](#), [Hawai'i Women in Filmmaking](#), [Hawai'i Families as Allies](#), [Help Your Keiki](#), [Mental Health America of Hawai'i](#), and [Sutter Health Kāhi Mōhala](#). Support is also being provided by the Show Aloha Challenge.

Individuals in need of crisis or mental health support services can call [Hawai'i CARES](#) for free 24/7 support at 1-800-753-6879 or contact the [Crisis Text Line](#) by texting ALOHA to 741741. For more information about children's mental health services, visit <https://health.hawaii.gov/camhd/>.

#