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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 20, 2023

23-063

Kaua'i District Health Office releases final report on island-wide emergency preparedness survey

LĪHU'E, HI – The Department of Health's (DOH) Kaua'i District Health Office conducted door-to-door surveys in June at randomly selected households island-wide. Over the course of four days, survey teams completed a total of 180 interviews, collecting valuable data about the health and well-being of the island's residents.

The survey methodology, known as a Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER), is a validated needs assessment methodology developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to rapidly obtain population-based estimates about the health and resource needs of a community pre- and post-disaster. This is the sixth CASPER survey conducted on Kaua'i since 2017.

The 2023 Kaua'i CASPER survey assessed the emergency preparedness and evacuation plans of Kaua'i households, ongoing COVID-19 impacts and vaccination coverage, tobacco use, and general questions about life on Kaua'i.

Although improvements were initially observed across several household emergency preparedness indicators from 2017-2019, many of these increases appear to have been lost over the course of the pandemic. Statistically significant declines in water preparedness were observed between 2019 and 2023 for 3-day, 7-day, and 14-day supplies. As of June 2023, only 13 percent of Kaua'i households have the recommended 14-day supply of both food and water.

"We officially entered hurricane season on June 1st. This is an important time to check your household's emergency kit and to discuss your household's hurricane sheltering plans," said Lauren Guest, Deputy District Health Officer with the Kaua'i District Health Office. "Tracking community progress on indicators, such as emergency supplies and evacuation plans, allows the DOH, Kaua'i Emergency Management Agency, and other emergency management partners

to assess gaps, prioritize limited resources, and continue efforts to achieve an informed and prepared community for all hazards.”

The survey repeated several pandemic-focused questions asked in 2020 and/or 2022. Overall trends showed decreased concern about COVID-19 on Kaua‘i. Compared to 2020 responses, more households reported being not concerned about getting sick with COVID-19 (27 percent in 2020 compared to 44 percent in 2023). This change indicates a strong downward trend. The percentage of households that think it is very important to wear masks indoors in places other than their home declined from 47 percent in 2022 to 18 percent in 2023. This decline was statistically significant. These changes are consistent with the considerable shift in the pandemic landscape from April 2020 to June 2023. Given the release of multiple COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, alongside the decline in COVID-19 infection and hospitalization rates, it is reasonable to expect decreased levels of concern regarding COVID-19.

Over the past six years, CASPERs have been an enormous capacity-building exercise for the DOH and partner agencies, allowing collaboration across programmatic silos while increasing community awareness of agencies and the services they provide to the community.

“Mahalo to our O‘ahu colleagues who joined us for the 2023 Kaua‘i CASPER. It was an amazing opportunity to work together as well as to further build this internal capability within DOH,” said Lauren Guest, Deputy District Health Officer with the Kaua‘i District Health Office.

The 2023 Kaua‘i CASPER Final Report is available here:

<https://health.hawaii.gov/kauai/files/2023/06/Kauai-2023-CASPER-Final-Report.pdf>

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