



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CAMPAIGN WARNS PARENTS ABOUT  
BEVERAGE INDUSTRY'S "SWEET LIES"**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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HONOLULU — Nearly one in three school-aged children in Hawai'i is either overweight or obese according to a national study, prompting the Hawai'i Department of Health to relaunch a public service announcement campaign to help protect Hawai'i keiki from further harm. The "Sweet Lies" campaign raises awareness about how sweetened fruit drinks are marketed to keiki and the health risks associated with those beverages.

Images of fruit and labels such as "juice," "natural" and "100% vitamin C," can give the impression that these beverages are healthy choices. In fact, sweetened fruit drinks can contain as much sugar as soda and may lead to tooth decay, early weight gain and an increased risk of diet-related diseases, including diabetes, beginning in childhood.

Health experts recommend that keiki avoid sweetened fruit drinks and other sugary beverages. Parents are encouraged to serve their children water or unflavored milk instead.

### **A Campaign for Hawai'i**

“It was evident during our focus groups that parents and grandparents are trying to make healthy decisions for their keiki,” said Lola Irvin, administrator of the Department of Health Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division. “However, pictures of fruit on packaging and products labeled ‘natural’ and ‘100% vitamin C’ are deceiving families into thinking sweetened fruit drinks are healthy, when in fact, they are filled with sugar.”

The [Sweet Lies!](#) campaign was developed with insights and feedback from focus groups consisting of parents and grandparents of Hawai'i keiki. While most participants recognized that soda is too sugary for children, many were surprised to learn that sweetened fruit drinks can contain just as much added sugar. This confusion highlights how product packaging and labeling can influence purchasing decisions.

### **Childhood Overweight and Obesity in Hawai'i**

Beverages can make up a large portion of a child's daily calorie and sugar intake. The drinks parents and caregivers choose for their children can have a lasting impact. According to the Hawai'i's Young Children Health Survey, more than 75% of keiki in Hawai'i consume at least one sweetened fruit drink, sports drink, energy drink, or sweetened tea each day, often beginning at a very young age.

Recent statewide data from the United Health Foundation show that **nearly 1 in 3 school-age children in Hawai'i are either overweight or obese**, reflecting a significant public health concern about youth across the state. These findings indicate that many children are experiencing the effects of excess sugar intake early in life, underscoring the importance of prevention efforts that begin in early childhood.

### **Initiatives for a Healthier Hawai'i**

DOH is taking a multi-pronged approach to combat childhood obesity. In addition to the *Sweet Lies!* campaign, DOH supports initiatives that increase access to healthy foods and beverages for keiki and 'ohana. The Women Infant Children (WIC) at Farmers Markets program makes it possible for families to use their WIC benefits at Farmers Markets and Food Hubs. The Farm to Keiki program educates families about local food, nutrition and gardening, through on-site “āina-based” learning.

The Sweet Lies! campaign focuses on increasing awareness of misleading beverage marketing and supporting families in making informed choices. The campaign will run through May 15, 2026, across television, radio, digital platforms, social media and in shopping malls statewide.

**A Resource for Parents and Caregivers**

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to visit [SweetLies.hawaii.gov](http://SweetLies.hawaii.gov) to learn how to identify added sugars and make healthier drink choices for keiki.

**Media Resources:**

Video of an interview with Lola Irvin, Administrator of the DOH Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division can be [downloaded here](#).

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