

REPORT TO THE THIRTY- FIRST LEGISLATURE

**STATE OF HAWAI'I
2021**

**PURSUANT TO SECTION 321-63
HAWAI'I REVISED STATUTES**

**REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
TO SUBMIT AN ANNUAL REPORT ON DENTAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES,
EXPENDITURES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



PREPARED BY:

**STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

December 2020

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES DIVISION
HOSPITAL & COMMUNITY DENTAL SERVICES BRANCH

Executive Summary:

The Hospital & Community Dental Services Branch (HCDSB) is the only dental public health agency in the state that provides direct dental treatment services. HCDSB primarily provides dental treatment service for individuals with disabilities and other special needs persons who lack access to private sector services. HCDSB is organizationally placed in the Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD).

As required by HRS §321-63(5), the Department’s Annual Report on dental activities, plans, measures, and expenditures is being submitted to the Legislature.

Program Objective:

HCDSB’s objective is to help ensure access to basic dental care services for persons who are aged, blind, and disabled, which limits their access to dental treatment. These include persons with severe chronic mental illness, frail elderly persons who are medically fragile, and individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Program Activities:

Direct Dental Services

Dental care services are provided by the HCDSB personnel to patients who reside at Hawai’i State institutions, including Hawai’i State Hospital, Leahi Hospital, and Kalaupapa Settlement, as well as to patients who reside in the community. HCDSB has five (5) dental clinics located at the Department’s Health Centers on O’ahu: Diamond Head, Lanakila, Leeward, Windward, and the Hawai’i State Hospital. Currently, there are no dental clinics located on the Neighbor Islands.

During fiscal year 2020, HCDSB provided clinical services for 1,201 individuals who otherwise do not have access to private sector dental services. The dental clinics completed a total of 10,203 dental procedures in the past year. Patients seen by HCDSB clinics include:

- 36% Persons with a mental health disability
- 41% Persons with I/DD
- 22% Persons aged 65 years and older
- 13% Hawai’i State Hospital patients

COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor's Stay-At-Home Orders, and recommendations by the American Dental Association and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the dental clinics were open for only emergency/urgent dental treatment from March 17 to July 3, 2020. During this timeframe, no elective dental procedures were provided to patients. On July 6, 2020, the clinics reopened for all elective dental procedures.

As a result of the Honolulu County Mayor's Stay-At-Home/Work-From-Home Order, the dental clinics deferred all elective dental procedures and were open for only emergency/urgent dental treatment from August 27 to September 23, 2020. On September 24, 2020, the clinics reopened for all elective dental procedures.

As of July 6, 2020, the dental clinics began working at full capacity to continue to provide comprehensive dental treatment for patients.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, HCDSB completed the following:

- Adopted and implemented revised Dental Infection Control Policies and Procedures for the health and safety of patients/staff related to COVID-19.
- Conducted dental site evaluations and completed recommended clinic reconfigurations and modifications to mitigate against the transmission of COVID-19.
- Purchased the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff to safely treat patients and ensure clinics are operational. This includes securing N95 respirators or equivalent respirators for dental staff to use when providing aerosol-generating dental procedures.
- Purchased supplemental infection control equipment to clean and disinfect the dental clinics to mitigate COVID-19 exposures. Example: Foggers and hypochlorous acid systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected dental clinic operations and dental care for patients. In fiscal year 2020, elective dental procedures for patients were deferred for over three (3) months. There was a 30% decrease in the total number of dental procedures completed, and a 15% decrease in the number of patients (unique) served compared to fiscal year 2019. The dental clinics are continuing to provide comprehensive dental care to the most vulnerable and underserved during this pandemic.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, each dentist treated between five (5) to six (6) patients per clinic day. Post COVID-19, each dentist treats between four (4) to five (5) patients per clinic day. The supplemental infection control measures implemented to address COVID-19 are labor-intensive and time-consuming, which reduces available operatory time to treat patients.

Community Collaboration

HCDSB staff collaborates and works with State and private agency personnel in the coordination of programs designed to enhance the community dental infrastructure for access to dental treatment in the state. The collaborative focus is primarily on the Neighbor Islands where the geography of Hawai'i exacerbates problems in accessing dental health services and there is an uneven distribution of oral health resources.

HCDSB collaborates with the following programs including but not limited to:

- University of Hawai'i, School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene at Manoa;
- University of Hawai'i, Maui College, Dental Hygiene Program;
- California Northstate University, School of Dentistry;
- Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition;
- West Hawai'i Community Health Center;
- Hui No Ke Ola Pono, Community Health Center;
- Women Infant Children Programs;
- Early Head Start and Head Start Programs;
- Hale Makua Health Services;
- Kula Hospital;
- Queen's Medical Center, General Practice Dental Residency Program;
- Hawai'i Dental Association;
- Hawai'i Dental Hygiene Association;
- Hawai'i Special Olympics;
- Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs;
- Department of Human Services;
- Hawai'i Primary Care Association; and
- Dental Lifeline Network.

Over the past year, HCDSB staff collaborated with oral health stakeholders to address the following dental areas:

- 1) State oral health disparities (especially the Neighbor Islands);
- 2) Teledentistry Pilot Project;
- 3) Statewide oral health trainings related to persons with I/DD and the elderly; and
- 4) Contract with The Queen's Medical Center Dental Residency Program for the provision of care for patients with disabilities or conditions that are medically fragile, or both.

Since mid-March 2020, most community oral health activities have been deferred or minimized as programs redirect resources to address the COVID-19 pandemic. We are hopeful to continue our community collaborations and outreach in 2021.

Teledentistry Pilot Project

HCDSB has identified significant disparities in access to oral health services, which have been well-documented in Hawai'i. While these disparities are common in many states, they are magnified in Hawai'i by the following areas of concern:

- 1) The geography of Hawai'i exacerbates access problems and there is an uneven distribution of oral health resources;
- 2) General dentists, dental specialists, and resources for sedation and anesthesia for dental care are concentrated on O'ahu;
- 3) The community water supply in Hawai'i does not contain fluoride; and
- 4) There are a limited number of dentists who participate and accept patients eligible for the State Medicaid Dental Program.

Because of these and other factors, Hawai'i has a history of ranking among the worst states for dental health in the country for many groups, including children and adults with complex medical problems and disabilities.

Since 2015, HCDSB has been providing technical and administrative support for the Hawai'i Teledentistry Pilot Project. HCDSB concluded that this system can be an effective way to address oral health disparities for the underserved and vulnerable populations of Hawai'i.

In the past year, the Hawai'i Dental Service Foundation funding for the West Hawai'i Community Health Center's (WHCHC) Virtual Dental Home (VDH) grant has ended. This officially concludes the four (4) year VDH pilot project.

The Hawai'i Island VDH pilot project focused on providing dental education and dental care for children age zero (0) to five (5) years old at community sites, such as Head Start and Women, Infant and Children (WIC) programs. Since September 2016, early preventive dental services and oral health education have been provided at the West Hawai'i Head Start Program, WIC programs, Tutu & Me Traveling Preschool, and Uluwini transitional housing. Over 1,000 children have received dental services via this pilot project.

WHCHC's cost analysis has found that the VDH program is financially sustainable without grant funding while billing Med-QUEST as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). Although dental procedures completed via teledentistry are covered by Med-QUEST for the prospective payment system (PPS), WHCHC and Med-QUEST are addressing PPS billing issues that still need to be resolved. WHCHC plans are to continue the VDH program and expand services to public and charter elementary schools once the PPS billing issues are resolved.

Based upon the success of the Big Island VDH pilot project, the Hui No Ke Ola Pono Community Health Center (HNKOP) was awarded a grant from the Hawai'i Dental Service Foundation to expand the VDH pilot project to the Island of Maui. The Maui

VDH pilot project is in the third and last year of the pilot project, which ends December 31, 2020.

The Maui VDH pilot project focuses on not only providing dental care and education for children age zero (0) to five (5) years old at community sites such as Early Head Start, Head Start, and WIC programs, but also provides dental care to the elderly at the Hale Makua Health Services facilities and Kula Hospital. Over 450 young children and the elderly have received dental services via this pilot project.

HNKOP is collaborating with the California Northstate University, School of Dental Medicine and HCDSB on providing dental care to the programs described above. In addition, the University of Hawai'i, Maui College, Dental Hygiene Program has implemented a rotation for dental hygiene students at VDH sites.

The goals of the VDH pilot project are to:

- Demonstrate the effectiveness of the VDH given the unique needs of Hawai'i;
- Reach out to and provide diagnostic and preventive dental services to underserved populations that traditionally postpone dental care;
- Connect dentists virtually with dental hygienists in public health sites; and
- Provide services at a far lower cost than the traditional dental office.

Since mid-March 2020, the VDH programs have been deferred due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the community sites have been open on a restrictive and limited basis. In August 2020, Kula Hospital reopened their VDH program on Maui. We are hopeful to restart our VDH programs by the start of 2021.

Oral Health Trainings

HCDSB is aware of the need for oral health training for families, caregivers, and oral health professionals who provide care and treat persons with I/DD and the elderly. HCDSB developed two training presentations addressing the following areas: 1) oral health awareness and oral hygiene practices for care providers and families of persons with I/DD and the elderly; and 2) dental treatment considerations for oral health professionals when treating persons with I/DD and the elderly.

HCDSB conducted its fifth annual oral health training presentations statewide. In the past year, training presentations were conducted on the islands of Maui and O'ahu. Training was conducted at nursing homes, residential adult living facilities, community centers, and with DDD care providers. Approximately 200 individuals attended these presentations.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, trainings on the islands of Hawai'i and Kaua'i were deferred until a later date. HCDSB is exploring the utilization of virtual meeting/presentation platforms to continue oral health trainings. We are hopeful to continue the training and outreach training in 2021.

Problems and Issues Encountered by the Program:

Oral health disparities continue to be a significant health issue for our Hawai'i residents. Medicaid recipients, other low-income residents, and medically compromised individuals have limited access to dental care from private sector dental care providers and even community dental clinics. Patients are referred to HCDSB by other state public health and social service agencies and private sector healthcare providers for dental treatment. Presently, HCDSB does not operate dental clinics on the Neighbor Islands where access to essential emergency dental care (to relieve pain and infection) is limited. The capacity of the State's system of community health center dental clinics is limited and individuals with I/DD have limited access to this care.

The COVID-19 pandemic had significant impacts on the clinic operations and dental care for patients this year. Due to the clinics deferring elective dental procedures and providing only emergency/urgent treatment for four (4) months, essential dental care was postponed for our underserved and vulnerable adult populations. Timely dental treatment for our patients is a significant concern this has affected not only their oral health, but also their overall health. As of November 10, 2020, the clinics are operating at full capacity and addressing our patient schedule backlog by prioritizing patients who are high-risk or need urgent dental care.

Program Recommendations:

HCDSB will continue to provide dental treatment and collaborate with private sector providers, community health centers, and other oral health stakeholders by making them aware of the problems faced by the uninsured and under-insured population in accessing dental treatment services. HCDSB will also further evaluate the various oral health care models implemented by other states to address access of care challenges in Hawai'i. We will continue to advocate support for those who need but do not have access to dental care.

Total HCDSB Budgeted for FY2020:

Position Count: 11.00 FTE*

Personnel Services: \$ 945,053

Contract: \$200,000, The Queen's Medical Center Dental Residency Program

Other Current Expenses: \$112,075

Total: \$1,257,128

* Due to the State's budgetary challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, one (1) FTE, Dental Assistant II position was eliminated.

FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Oral Health Disease Prevention five-year grant ended on August 31, 2018. Key programs activities were suspended.

Personnel:

- All three temporary/exempt/federally funded positions expired at the end of the grant on August 31, 2018.

Ongoing Oral Health Assurance Activities of Other FHSD Programs:

- Contract with 16 health service programs (including the Federally Qualified Health Centers) to provide primary care services for the uninsured and under-insured that includes dental treatment services (Office of Primary Care and Rural Health)
- Monitor workforce shortages (including dental services) and establish federal designations for health professional shortage areas (Office of Primary Care and Rural Health)
- Align Maternal Child Health five-year plan with oral health program activities to include oral health evidence-based strategies targeting an improvement in access and utilization of preventive dental visits for children and pregnant women (Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant)

Position Count: 0 FTE

Total: \$0.00

Means of Funding: N/A