

REPORT TO THE THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE

**STATE OF HAWAI'I
2024**

**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 2023

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES DIVISION HOSPITAL & COMMUNITY DENTAL SERVICES BRANCH

Executive Summary:

The Hospital & Community Dental Services Branch (HCDSB) is the only state-operated public health program in Hawai'i that provides direct dental treatment services. The HCDSB provides dental treatment services primarily for individuals with disabilities and other special needs who lack or have limited access to private sector services. The HCDSB is organizationally placed in the Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD).

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

Program Objective:

The HCDSB provides comprehensive community safety-net dental care services to vulnerable and underserved populations in Hawai'i that have limited or no access to dental treatment, including patients who are aged, blind, and disabled. These populations include persons with severe chronic mental illness, frail elderly persons who are medically fragile, and individuals with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). They would otherwise not receive dental treatment through private dental providers or community health centers.

Program Activities:

Direct Dental Services

Dental services are provided by HCDSB personnel to patients who reside at Hawai'i State institutions, including the Hawai'i State Hospital, Leahi Hospital, and Kalaupapa Settlement, as well as to patients who reside in the community. The 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 2023, the HCDSB provided clinical services for 1,057 individuals. The HCDSB dental clinics completed 9,952 dental procedures in the past year. Patients seen by the HCDSB clinics included:

35%	Persons with a mental health disability
53%	Persons with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability
18%	Persons aged 65 years and older
13%	Hawai'i State Hospital patients

COVID-19 Pandemic

The dental clinics continued to operate and provide comprehensive dental treatment for patients without interruption in services throughout the year. No state- or county-issued emergency proclamations/orders that instructed providers to limit or restrict elective dental services were issued.

In response to the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, the HCDSB implemented and continued to review/revise the following mitigation activities. These activities were implemented to address the health and safety of patients, staff, and visitors.

- Dental Infection Control Policies and Procedures addressing the health and safety of patients/staff related to COVID-19.
- Utilization of 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.
- Utilization of supplemental infection control equipment to clean and disinfect the dental clinics to mitigate COVID-19 exposures. Example: Foggers and hypochlorous acid systems.

The described activities are continuously reviewed and revised to comply with the recommended guidelines by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Dental Association as the pandemic continued into this fiscal year. Infection control mitigation activities are revised and implemented based on the state's COVID-19 safety levels.

The Department of Health and Human Services ended the Federal Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 on May 11, 2023.

Community Collaboration

Legislation

In the 2023 legislative session, the Department of Health provided testimony in support of Senate Bill 162 to address dental workforce shortages in the public health sector. This measure allows dental and dental hygiene college graduates recognized by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (ADA CODA) to apply for temporary and/or community service licenses in Hawai'i. The measure also expanded the list of permitted authorized entities that may employ dentists/dental hygienists with a community service license, including community health centers, rural health clinics, and mobile dental outreach programs. This bill helps address the workforce shortage of public oral health providers that serve the most underserved and vulnerable populations, including Medicaid recipients. This bill passed into law (Act 100, LS 2023) this past July.

Community Activities

The HCDSB collaborated and worked with other state, nonprofit, and educational institutions to improve access to dental care and address the oral health disparities in Hawai'i. There was a coordination of programs designed to enhance the community dental infrastructure for access to dental treatment, such as the virtual dental home, dental sealant programs, and improving oral health education via outreach programs.

The HCDSB collaborated with various programs including, but not limited to:

- Queen's Medical Center, Dental Clinic and General Practice Dental Residency Program
- University of Hawai'i, School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene at Mānoa
- Kapi'olani Community College, Dental Assisting Program
- California Northstate University, School of Dentistry
- Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition
- Hawai'i Dental Service Foundation
- Dental Lifeline Network
- Women Infant Children Programs
- Head Start Programs
- Papa Ola Lōkahi
- Na Lei Wili AHEC

During FY 2023, the HCDSB community oral health activities have been deferred or reduced as programs redirected resources to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic recovery. Community collaborations and outreach will increase in FY 2024 as the state and community opens up to additional in-person activities and trainings.

Teledentistry (Virtual Dental Home) Pilot Project

The Kaua'i Virtual Dental Home (VDH) pilot project was extended for a second year. This pilot project continues to provide dental care and education for children aged zero (0) to five (5) years old at community sites such as Head Start and Women Infant Children (WIC) program locations throughout the island of Kaua'i. This pilot project will evaluate the sustainability and feasibility of a private dental practice implementing a VDH program in Hawai'i.

Oral Health Trainings

In FY 2023, the HCDSB utilized in-person and virtual meeting/presentation platforms to conduct and continue oral health education and awareness presentations/trainings. The current presentation/training entails didactic and hands-on training (in-person) elements and was updated this year to incorporate the most recent oral health research/evidence-based practices. Approximately 500 individuals participated in the HCDSB oral health trainings and presentations.

This year's presentations were completed with the following organizations:

- University of Hawai'i, Mānoa
 - School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene
 - John A. Burns, School of Medicine
 - Speech Language Pathologists
 - Interprofessional Education Seminar Panel

- University of Hawai'i, Maui College
 - School of Dental Hygiene

- Kapi'olani Community College
 - Dental Assisting Program
 - Nursing Program

- Hawai'i Self-Advocacy Advisory Council (SAAC)

- Nursing Homes (Collaboration with Hawai'i Dental Foundation through Kupuna Smiles Program)
 - Caring Manoa
 - Hale Mohala Nursing Home
 - Kalaupapa Home Care Center
 - Legacy Hilo Nursing Home
 - Oahu Care Facility
 - Hawai'i and Maui Islands

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 the HCDSB by other state public health and social service agencies and private sector healthcare providers for dental treatment. Presently, the 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 care at these community health centers.

The HCDSB continues to encounter challenges filling its vacancies due to the staffing shortage of oral health auxiliary workers. In Hawai'i, there is a dental assistant shortage, and the marketplace is competitive. This staffing shortage has directly impacted the clinics by reducing operational capacity to treat patients. The HCDSB has been using its community and personal contacts to attract and encourage dental assistants to apply for the vacant positions.

Program Recommendations:

The 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 challenges and issues faced by the uninsured and underinsured population in accessing dental treatment services. The HCDSB will also further evaluate the various oral health care models implemented by other states to address access to care challenges in Hawai'i. We will continue to advocate support for those who need but do not have access to dental care and address oral health disparities in Hawai'i.

Total HCDSB Budget for FY2023:

Position Count: 12.00 FTE*

Personnel Services: \$ 968,785

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

Other Current Expenses: \$112,075

Total \$1,280,860

FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

The Hawai'i State Department of Health, Family Health Services Division is responsible for carrying out the activities and performing the functions provided in Hawai'i Revised Statutes Title 19, Chapter 321, Part V §321-61 to §321-63. Since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Oral Health Disease Prevention five-year grant ended on August 31, 2018, key dental health programs activities ended.

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 underinsured 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)

Position Count: 0 FTE

Total: \$0.00

Means of Funding: N/A