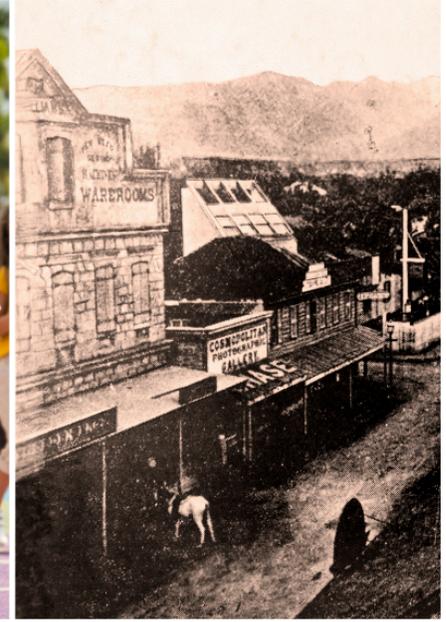




OLAKINO MAIKA'I

To Improve Your Health and Well-Being



West Coast Health Alliance
Hawai'i joins West Coast states to strengthen vaccine protection.

School Vaccine Report
Kindergartners' vaccine coverage is climbing, but thousands of students remain unprotected.

Communication and Health
From telegraph lines to text alerts, how rapid communication plays a key role in public health.

Hawai'i Joins West Coast Health Alliance for Respiratory Virus Guidance



Hawai'i has joined the newly formed West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA), a partnership with health leaders from California, Oregon, Washington and Hawai'i. The Alliance was created to safeguard scientific expertise and ensure residents across the region receive consistent, evidence-based guidance grounded in safety, transparency, and public trust.

For the 2025-2026 respiratory virus season, DOH and its WCHA partners emphasize that vaccines remain the best protection against serious illness from COVID-19, influenza, and RSV. Recommendations highlight groups at highest risk for complications - such as young children, older adults, people who are pregnant, and those living in congregate settings - while also affirming that vaccination is available to anyone who desires protection.

DOH Director Dr. Kenneth Fink noted that seasonal immunization reduces community transmission and strain on the health care system. The department also strongly encourages health insurers to maintain coverage of vaccines at no cost to patients and commends those already providing this protection.

By joining WCHA, Hawai'i reinforces its commitment to protecting families and communities with trusted, science-based recommendations.

Age/Condition	COVID-19	Influenza	RSV
Children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 6-23 months All 2-18 years with risk factors or never vaccinated against COVID-19 All who are in close contact with others with risk factors¹ All who choose protection¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 6 months and older 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All younger than 8 months² All 8-19 months with risk factors
Pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All who are planning pregnancy, pregnant, postpartum or lactating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All who are planning pregnancy, pregnant, postpartum or lactating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 32-36 weeks gestational age²
Adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 65 years and older All younger than 65 years with risk factors All who are in close contact with others with risk factors All who choose protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 75 years and older All 50-74 years with risk factors

1. COVID-19 vaccine is available for persons 6 months and older.

2. Protect infants with either prenatal RSV vaccine or infant dose of nirsevimab or clesrovimab.

VACCINE GUIDANCE

RESPIRATORY VIRUSES

Health Literacy Empowers Hawai'i's Communities



October is Health Literacy Month: a time to recognize the importance of accessing, understanding, and using health information to make informed health care decisions. Cultural and language differences can sometimes make getting the healthcare needed to prevent illness and manage chronic conditions challenging.

By improving health literacy, we can eliminate health disparities and achieve improved health for all.

The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) promotes health literacy through its Bilingual Health Aide Services, where aides serve as both community health workers and cultural liaisons. They advocate for community needs and ensure health information provided by DOH is appropriate and accessible to immigrants, migrants, Compact of Free Association groups, Native Hawaiians, and individuals with non-English language preference.

Bilingual Health Aides connect families and individuals with community resources, and coordinate with other DOH programs to conduct in home visits and assessments when needed. For more information about the Bilingual Health Aide Services, visit <https://health.hawaii.gov/bilingual-services/>.

Improving health literacy means residents can better understand prevention tips, access vaccines and health screenings, and manage their health. This October, DOH encourages everyone to explore reliable health resources and take steps toward informed, empowered health choices.

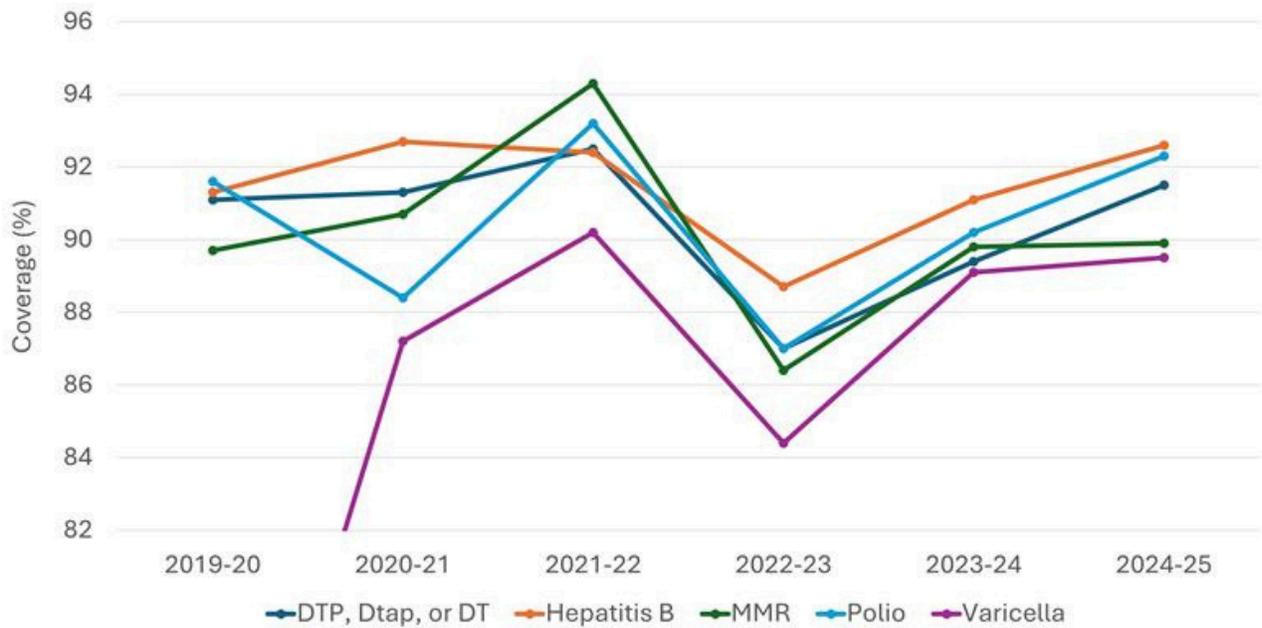
CDC HEALTH LITERACY

Hawai'i Kindergartner Vaccination Rates on the Rise, But Gaps Remain



Vaccination rates among Hawai'i kindergartners improved again this year, according to new data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This marks steady progress, but rates remain below national averages and below the 95% level needed for herd immunity.

Vaccination Coverage among Kindergartners, by School Year



VACCINE	COVERAGE 2022-23		COVERAGE 2023-24		COVERAGE 2024-25	
	Hawai'i	National	Hawai'i	National	Hawai'i	National
DTP, DTaP or DT	87.0%	92.7%	89.4%	92.3%	91.5%	92.1%
Hepatitis B	88.7%	94.3%	91.1%	93.9%	92.6%	94.0%
MMR	86.4%	93.1%	89.8%	92.7%	89.9%	92.5%
Polio	87.0%	93.1%	90.2%	92.7%	92.3%	92.5%
Varicella	84.4%	92.9%	89.1%	92.4%	89.5%	92.3%

Challenges remain across grade levels. Nearly 40,000 students statewide (20.7%) were not up to date with school-required immunizations at the start of the school year. Among kindergarteners, 15.6% were behind, while more than half of seventh graders (51.6%) were not current, largely due to additional requirements that took effect in 2020. Religious exemptions also rose slightly, contributing to gaps in protection.

Especially concerning is MMR coverage, which remains below 90% amid record measles outbreaks nationally and worldwide, as well as recent cases and wastewater detections in Hawai'i. Low coverage for pertussis vaccines is also tied to the current surge of cases in the islands.

To help families, the Department of Health is expanding its Healthy Hawai'i Partners Program (HHPP). This year, more than 350 school-based wellness clinics are planned in partnership with schools, providers, and community groups, offering immunizations, TB screenings, physical exams, and wellness checks for students, staff, and families.

DOH urges families to review their children's vaccination records and work with their healthcare providers to ensure they are fully protected against serious diseases like measles, mumps, and pertussis.

SCHOOL-BY-SCHOOL IMMUNIZATION REPORT

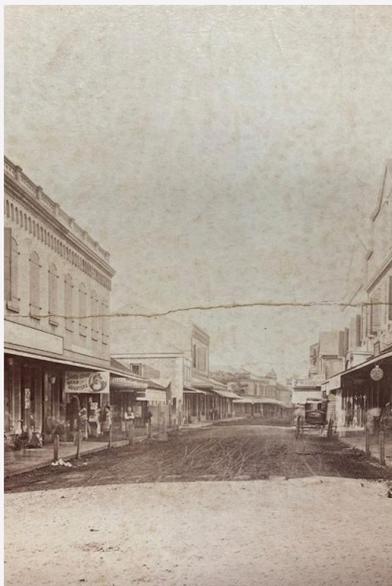
NEWS RELEASE

MO'OLELO OLAKINO

History of Health

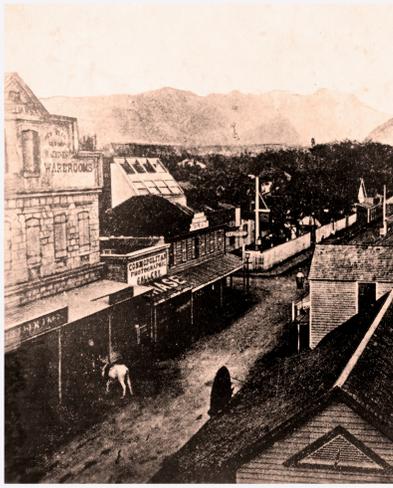


From Telegraphs to Tweets: The Speed of Health Communication



On October 19, 1872, Hawai'i entered the telegraph age when the first line was installed between Mr. Rawson's store and Mr. Eckart's jewelry manufactory in Honolulu. What began as a link between two businesses quickly demonstrated something bigger: the ability to send information instantly.

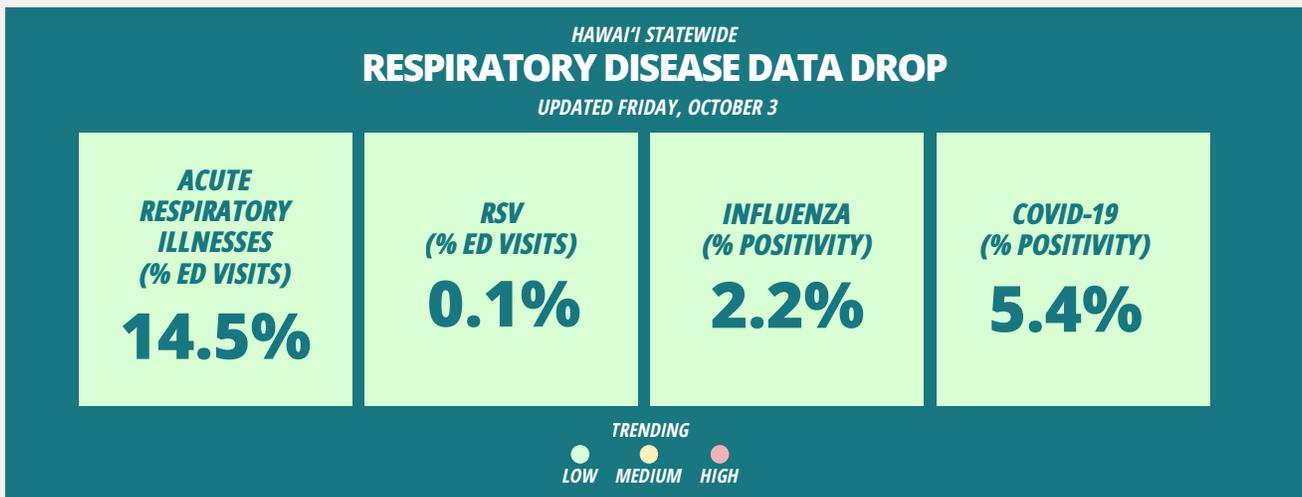
For an island community, speed mattered. Messages that once were delivered by ships or by hand could now travel in moments—a breakthrough that dramatically improved the efficiency of Hawai'i's response to public health threats. From the cholera epidemic and bubonic plague outbreak of the late 1800s to the yellow fever scare of 1910, the telegraph played an instrumental role in alerting communities and protecting lives.



From the telegraph to radio, television, and today's digital alerts, every advance in communication has strengthened public health. Whether sharing guidance during an outbreak or promoting healthy habits, clear, timely information empowers people to protect themselves and one another.

The Department of Health continues this mission today, using modern tools to keep Hawai'i informed, connected, and safe.

This Week's RSV and COVID-19 Data



This week's data shows low activity levels for acute respiratory illnesses (14.5% ED visits) and RSV (0.1% ED visits). Influenza (2.2% positivity) and COVID-19 (5.4% positivity) activity levels remain low.

VACCINE INFORMATION

RESPIRATORY DISEASE DASHBOARD

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



World Mental Health Day, observed on October 10, serves as a reminder that our mental health is just as important as our physical health. In Hawai'i, an estimated 5% of youth have a serious emotional disturbance. Further, on the [2023 Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), only 23% of public middle school students and 20% of high school students reported receiving the kind of help they needed when they felt sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious.

About 21% of adults experience mental illness annually in Hawai'i, with many facing stress from high living costs, limited access to care, and recent disasters like the Maui wildfires. Certain communities, including Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, Filipinos, and working-class residents, are disproportionately affected.

The Department of Health offers vital support through its Child & Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD), which provides free services to eligible children and youth with serious emotional or behavioral challenges. CAMHD emphasizes culturally-sensitive, family-centered care, with services ranging from assessment and case management to home- and community-based supports.

The Department of Health Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) works to ensure equitable access to services across the islands. Resources include the 24/7 Hawai'i CARES 988 crisis line, community mental health centers, peer support, and recovery-focused programs like Clubhouses and WRAP groups.

This World Mental Health Day, remember that mental health is a human right. Hawai'i's strength lies in its 'ohana and communities supporting one another - talking openly, seeking help when needed, and fostering resilience to promote well-being for all.

CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

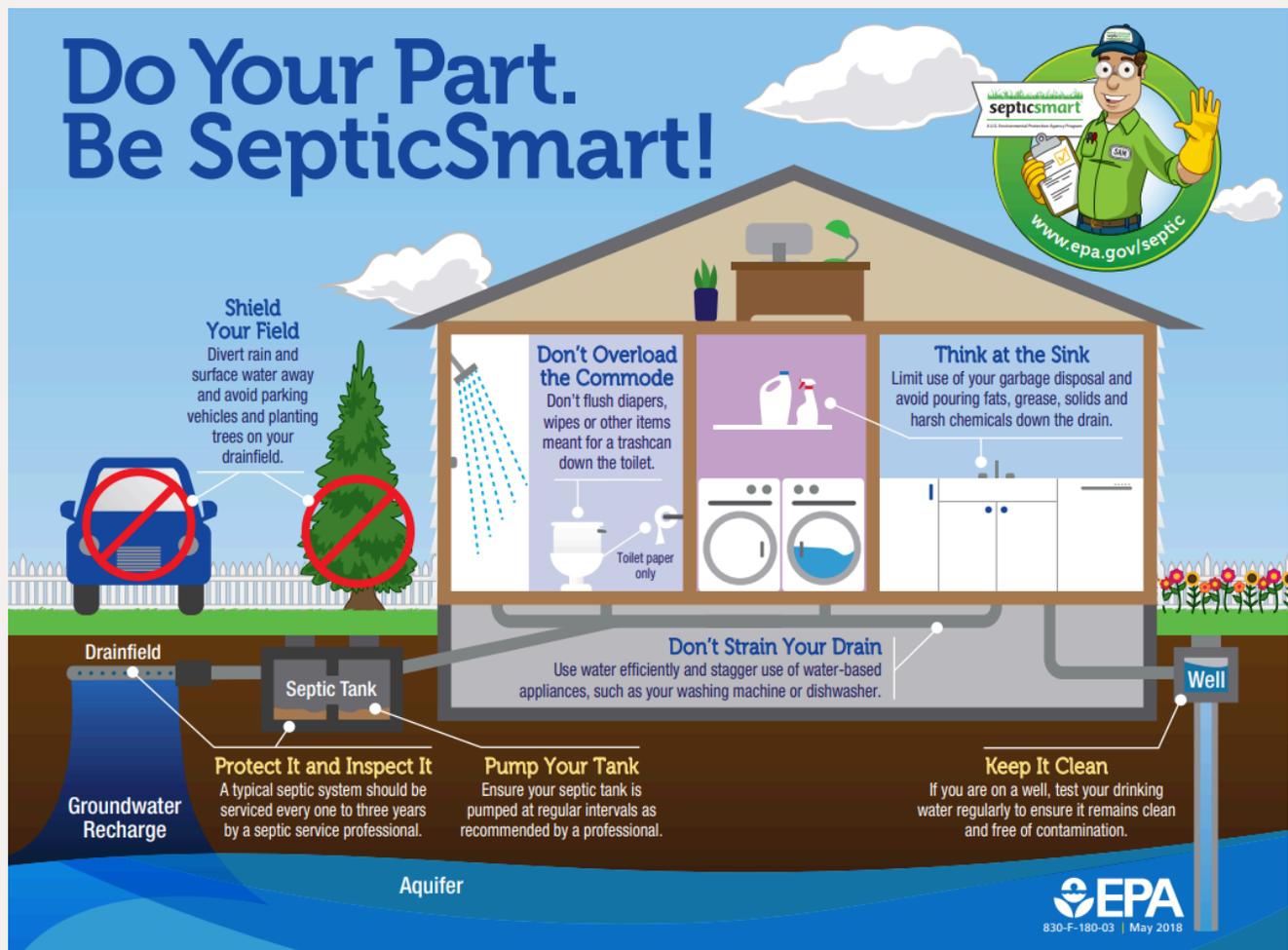


This year marks the 53rd anniversary of the Clean Water Act (CWA), a landmark law that transformed water protection across the nation, including Hawai'i. Before its passage in 1972, raw sewage and industrial waste were routinely discharged into streams and bays, harming ecosystems and public health.

The CWA helped to shape the Clean Water Branch (CWB), giving Hawai'i the authority to issue water permits, enforce water pollution laws, and secure federal funding for watershed protection. Since then, water quality has improved statewide. Pearl Harbor is cleaner due to oversight of industrial discharges, and watershed restoration projects on Kaua'i are reducing pollution at its source. The [Water Quality Advisory website](#) and the future installation of permanent beach advisory signs help the public make informed decisions on whether to enter the water.

You can also [subscribe to email notifications](#) whenever CWB issues a beach advisory or notification, brown water advisory, sewage spill or permit exceedance.

Challenges remain, including pollution from cesspools and failing individual wastewater systems, legacy contaminants, and the impacts of climate change. But everyone has a role to play. By protecting our waters today, we protect Hawai'i's health, culture, and future for the next generation.



SUCCESS STORY: WAIPA WATERSHED

CLEAN WATER BRANCH

SURFACE WATER PROTECTION BRANCH

WASTEWATER BRANCH

PUBLIC HEALTH



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a reminder of the importance of early detection and access to care. In Hawai'i, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer-related death among women.

Many factors can influence breast cancer risk. Some can't be changed, such as getting older or your family history. Reduce your risk by getting screened regularly, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and being active. The Department of Health is committed to ensuring that cost is never a barrier to getting screened for breast cancer. The Hawai'i Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program provides free mammograms and referrals for follow-up when needed. The program partners with healthcare providers on O'ahu, Hawai'i Island, and Kaua'i to provide culturally appropriate care and language support.

This month, the message is clear: know your risk, get screened, and take action. Early detection saves lives.

At a glance:

- Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women in Hawai'i.
- Over 1,200 women in Hawai'i are diagnosed with breast cancer each year.
- Women aged 40 to 74 at average risk for breast cancer should get a mammogram every two years. Getting a regular mammogram helps find breast cancer early, making it easier to treat and saving lives.
- The Hawai'i Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program provides free breast cancer screening to eligible women.

BREAST & CERVICAL CANCER CONTROL PROGRAM

SHORT TAKES

Substance Use Prevention Month: Why It Matters in Hawai'i



October is Substance Use & Misuse Prevention Month, a time to spotlight evidence showing prevention works. In Hawai'i, [recent data](#) from the DOH and the State Department of Education reveal concerning trends: substance use, especially among youth, remains a serious public health issue.

Across the U.S., CDC data through the State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System ([SUDORS](#)) [dashboard](#) show ongoing fatalities from unintentional drug overdoses, underscoring the importance of prevention before harm escalates.

This month, DOH asks communities to share prevention stories, support youth-focused programs, and strengthen resources for those most at risk, especially on neighbor islands or in under-resourced communities. Together, prevention can reduce harm, encourage early help-seeking, and build resilience across Hawai'i.

EXTRA

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day

Safely disposing of unused or expired medications helps prevent misuse and keeps Hawai'i communities safe. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is on Saturday, October 25, 2025, with drop-off sites statewide.

Improperly stored medications are a leading source of prescription drug misuse, especially among youth. According to the CDC, most people who misuse prescription opioids obtain them from family or friends.

Properly disposing of these prescription medications could save a life.
Find a local drop-off location and learn more:

TAKE BACK DAY

ALCOHOL & DRUG ABUSE DIVISION

Big mahalo to everyone who shared story ideas with us. We love to hear from you! If there's a topic you'd like us to cover, please let us know at doh.comm@doh.hawaii.gov.

INFORMATION HOTLINES

DOCD Disease Reporting Line

Assistance with an outbreak of cases
O'ahu (808) 586-4586
Maui (808) 984-8213
Kaua'i (808) 241-3563
Hilo (808) 933-0912
Kona (808) 322-4877

DOH Hotline

Get information & resources
Call (808) 586-4400

Hawai'i CARES 988 Hotline

Local crisis counselors are available to help 24/7
Call or Text 9-8-8
or Call (808) 832-3100
or Call 1-800-753-6879

Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Hawaii

The go-to source for Medicare Fraud Prevention
Education and referral assistance for related
scams.
Toll Free: 1-800-296-9422
info@smphawaii.org

In Hawaiian, the word olakino refers to the state of health and well-being. The word "ola" means life and health, and the word "kino" means body. Olakino is generally considered to be the greatest wealth and great health that one can attain, not just of the body but holistically. Maika'i in Hawaiian means good or wellbeing.

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