THE STATE OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN HAWAI`I

2009

Brief Report
Overview of Research
An internet survey was distributed to supervisors, managers, and administrators of social service agencies and units in the state of Hawai`i in the fall of 2009. Based on two recent policy issues that have affected social services – the 2000 decision to open state “social work” positions to non-social work trained employees but give them a new job title in order to address workforce shortages, and the budget crisis of 2008/2009 that has seen serious cuts to state agencies and units across Hawai`i – two main research questions were asked:

Q1: Do social work trained providers deliver more skilled services in social service related position than those who are not trained as social workers?
Q2: What are the impacts of the budget cuts on social service provision in the State of Hawai`i and to clients who utilize those services?

Summary of Findings
Social Service Workforce
Workforce issues are still highly problematic across the islands. Both in the past and in the current budget crisis the poor coordination of social services is still a significant hurdle. In particular, these workforce and infrastructure issues have hit counties outside of O`ahu:
- Kaua`i County reports some of the biggest challenges in finding qualified applicants for social service positions
- Maui County reports some of the biggest challenges to providing quality services overall
- Hawai`i County reports the least manageable caseloads of any county

Social work trained employees are overall providing better services to clients than non-social work trained employees: They have more competent practice skills, behave in a more ethical fashion, are better client advocates, are more likely to use a strengths-based perspective, and have more knowledge of diversity issues. Non-social work employees often scored well in work ethic, longevity, and connection to community, but lack necessary skills to effectively perform job related tasks. Despite these strengths, improving cultural competency of all workers, and offering more trainings related to clinical skills and state systems were seen as critical issues for the social service workforce.

Budget Cuts
As expected, the budget cuts have had a significant impact on the social service network in the state, with both private (52%) and public (30%) agencies/units reporting that they were forced to make cuts to personnel, and half of all agencies/units reporting that they had been forced to cut programs for clients.

Respondents report a statistically significant difference in their ability to meet program goals and objectives, a decrease in the ability to provide high quality services, more problems with unmanageable caseloads, and scarcer resources when comparing the current economic situation with the time before the present budget crisis.

To deal with the budget cuts, agencies/units have been forced to make serious compromises to the quality and integrity of their programs, such as:
- Changing eligibility criteria for clients, making it harder for clients to access services (30%)
- Increasing the use of waitlists, closing cases faster than ever before, and limiting referrals (32%)
- Increasing caseloads per worker, meaning less time is spent on each client while increasing staff hours without compensation, and redefining positions (24%)

15% of respondents said they feared even scarcer resources in the future, and that their agencies/units were facing termination, 22% predicted further declines in programs if swift and meaningful changes were not made, and 28% predicted a significant decrease in quality of life for clients that would be long-lasting due to current budget decisions.

Overall, this means that at-risk populations are even more vulnerable to negative outcomes. They do not have access to the same level of quality services and have fewer options or resources to meet their needs.

Summary of Recommendations

Social Service Workforce

1) Continued and increased support of social work education in the State of Hawai‘i. By supporting the strengths of local people, such as strong community connections, and providing the skills necessary to work effectively in the social service environment through social work education, the issues in Hawai‘i’s workforce can be better addressed.

2) The state should find more ways to encourage equal access to social work education (including on neighbor islands). Models such as the collaboration between University of Hawai‘i Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work and the Department of Health and Human Services in their innovative Hawai‘i Child Welfare Education Collaboration should be explored in fields other than child welfare as a means to provide sponsored education for employees already in position.

3) A system of mandatory Continuing Education needs to be considered for social workers and others working with the state’s most vulnerable populations to address ongoing changes in the state, with particular emphasis on cultural competence.

Budget Cuts

4) Rather than across the board cuts in personnel and contracts, the state needs to create a clear system of priorities for continuing funding to maintain an adequate level of service provision to meet growing community need.

5) The state needs to critically examine the need for coordinating services. This can be accomplished through existing structures, or through the commission of investigations or a new department committed to mapping out the social services structure in the state and to develop plans for more coordinated services.

6) Particular attention should be paid to any current or future cuts to neighbor island services. Given that most neighbor island services were already overburdened and under-resourced even before the budget crisis, cuts to these programs should be halted, and future plans that affect neighbor islands should receive the strictest scrutiny.

7) Funding should be restored to critical services, such as child welfare, mental health, and substance abuse services, to prevent escalation among families in crisis, and to prevent long term consequences to our most vulnerable populations.
## Survey Demographics

The *State of Social Services* Survey was completed by 98 people throughout the State, with an average of 19.4 average years of experience in the social service field, and 9.9 average years of experience as supervisors, managers, or administrators. The majority of respondents held social work degrees (65.3%), many were licensed in the state (43.2%), and the majority held advanced degrees (82.7%). Respondents were a fair representation of the people of Hawai‘i, with whites (38.8%), Asians (20.4%), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders (17.3%) making up the majority of respondents.

The majority of agencies these respondents represented were private agencies (60.8%), and served a variety of people throughout the state, although the majority were involved in child and family welfare broadly defined (32.7%), followed by mental health and substance abuse services (19.4%), and violence, crime, and incarceration (8.2%). There was fair representation across four counties, with 51.0% of respondents from Honolulu County, 25.5% from Hawai‘i County, 10.2% from Kaua‘i County, and 13.3% from Maui County. Although most respondents reported that all their supervisees and clients are on the same island, it is also important to keep in mind that in many state systems many of these respondents (33.7%) had clients who were not located on the same island, and many also supervised employees who were on other islands (10.4%).

### Summary of Respondents

**Demographics of Respondents:**
- Average Age: 47.7 years
- Average Years in HI: 30.2

**Race/Ethnicity:**
- White: 38.8%
- Asian: 20.4%
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 17.3%
- Other: 9.2%
- Mixed Races/Ethnicities: 14.3%

**Qualifications:**
- Highest Level of Education
  - High School: 1.0%
  - Associate’s Degree: 2.0%
  - Bachelor’s Degree: 13.3%
  - Master’s Degree: 82.7%
  - Ph.D.: 1.0%
- Education and Licensure
  - Possess a BSW: 18.9%
  - Possess a MSW: 64.3%
  - Licensed in HI: 43.2%
  - Licensed Outside HI: 3.2%
  - Not Licensed: 53.7%

**Occupational Information:**
- Average Years in SW Field: 19.4
- Average Years as Supervisor: 9.9
- Average Years in Position: 6.7

**Position Title:**
- CEO/President/Exec: 13.3%
- Administrative or Program Director: 43.9%
- Supervisor: 26.5%
- Other: 16.3%

### Agency Demographics

**Type of Agency**
- Public: 39.2%
- Private: 60.8%

**Problem/Population Served:**
- Child & Family Welfare: 32.7%
- Mental Health/Substance Abuse: 19.4%
- Disabilities: 6.1%
- Violence, Crime, & Incarceration: 8.2%
- Homeless/Housing: 3.1%
- Medical Social Work: 5.1%
- Geriatrics: 9.2%
- Education: 4.1%
- Other: 12.2%

**Location:**
- Hawai‘i County: 25.5%
- Honolulu County: 51.0%
- Kaua‘i County: 10.2%
- Maui County: 13.3%

- Supervisees Off Island: 10.4%
- Clients Off Island: 33.7%
Historical Workforce Issues – Prior to the Budget Crisis

Comparing the Counties

Even before the budget crisis, Hawai`i faced many significant workforce issues in regard to providing adequate social services. When asked specifically about work force issues, responding supervisors, managers, and administrators said that they had on average 5 positions open per year, positions routinely took an average of 4.2 months to fill.

Closing Positions – A Lack of Qualified Applicants
23.6% of all respondents said that in the past they had been forced to close positions because they could not find a qualified applicant. The difference between the counties was not statistically significant\(^1\), suggesting that the issues around finding qualified applicants are similar throughout the state. Although not statistically significant, respondents from Kaua`i County reported the most difficulty finding qualified applicants, while Hawai`i County reported the least difficulty among these respondents.

Dispersion of Social Work Degrees
The neighbor islands demonstrate lower rates of having social work trained people in managerial/supervisory/administrative positions, with Kaua`i and Big Island again reflecting the lowest numbers. On Oahu, 83.3% of respondents held social work degrees, 61.5% of Maui County respondents, while Hawai`i County and Kaua`i County demonstrating the lowest at only 40.0% of respondents, a difference that was statistically significant\(^2\). Although it is important to keep in mind that this is a sample of the broader population of supervisors, managers, and administrators in each county, the fact that rates were so low in the sample suggests that the population of trained social workers are also distressingly low on the neighbor islands, particularly Kaua`i and Big Island.

Challenges in Hiring and Retention
All counties also reported significant time invested in trying to hire adequately trained social service personnel. Though the differences between counties was not statistically significant\(^3\), again, Kaua`i reported the most challenges – with an average of 7 months spent trying to hire a qualified person.

In addition to problems acquiring adequately trained employees, respondents reported that people only stayed in their positions for an average of 4.3 years once hired, and that the most common reasons for leaving their job was a relocation/move (22.7%), left for a job with better pay (17.0%), left for another job for other reasons (15.9%), were promoted (12.5%), or left for intrapersonal/emotional reasons, often related to stress (12.5%).

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\(^1\) \(\chi^2 = .819, p = \text{n.s.}\)
\(^2\) \(\chi^2 = 16.4, p < .001\)
\(^3\) \(F = 2.12, p = \text{n.s.}\)
Impact of Social Work Training

In regard to specific skills and knowledge, respondents were asked to rate both their social work trained and non-social work trained employees on a set of skills necessary to work effectively in the social service environment.

**Diversity Issues**
Respondents were asked to rate their employees on their overall knowledge of diversity issues (with higher scores representing higher knowledge), social work trained employees averaged a score of 4.4, whereas non-social work-trained employees averaged a score of 3.7, and this difference was statistically significant.$^4$

![Diversity Issues Chart](chart.png)

**Practice Skills**
Respondents were asked to rate their employees on their overall practice skills (with higher scores representing more competent practice skills), social work trained employees scored statistically higher $^5$ (average of 4.2) than non-social worked trained employees (average of 3.6). This suggests that social workers have better clinical skills than other non-social work trained employees.

![Practice Skills Chart](chart.png)

**Ethics**
In regard to responding whether or not their employees behaved ethically, respondents scored their social work employees higher on behaving ethically (average of 4.3) compared to their non-social work trained employees (average of 3.8). This difference was statistically significant,$^6$ suggesting that social work-trained employees behaved more ethically.

![Ethics Chart](chart.png)

**Strengths-Based Perspective**
When asked if their employees’ perspectives in working with clients, respondents were more likely to agree that their social work trained employees use a strengths-based perspective (average of 4.1) compared to their non-social work trained employees (average of 3.6). This difference was statistically significant, suggesting social work training leads employees to see the strengths in their clients more readily than those without such training.$^7$

![Strengths-Based Perspective Chart](chart.png)

**Client Advocacy**
Respondents were asked to rate their employees on their ability to advocate effectively for clients. Social work trained employees scored an average of 4.2, and non-social work trained employees scored an average of 3.7, a statistically significant difference.$^8$ This suggests that respondents were more likely to agree that their social work trained employees were effective client advocates.

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$^4$ Results of a paired t-test, $t = 5.3$, $p < .001$
$^5$ Results of a paired t-test, $t = 3.6$, $p < .001$
$^6$ Results of a paired t-test, $t = 4.3$, $p < .001$
$^7$ Results of a paired t-test, $t = 3.3$, $p < .001$
$^8$ Results of a paired t-test, $t = 4.1$, $p < .001$
When asked about the strengths of social work educated employees, respondents had a wide variety of comments that can be categorized into three main groups. Social workers were scored high in generalist social work skills, such as in assessment (12.8%), and in engagement and interviewing (7.4%). In addition, social work trained employees were cited as having excellent values consistent with the field of social work, such as being compassionate and empathetic (11.4%), and performing in an ethical and professional manner (15.7%). Social workers were also noted to have a good understanding of psychosocial factors impacting the lives of clients, such as systems-related factors at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels (11.4%). Compared to the 30 or more strengths that respondents listed about social work trained employees had, 4.2% mentioned weak clinical skills, and 5.7% mentioned a lack of experience, but frequently specific weaknesses were related to a lack of understanding of specific state systems, such as CWS, public health, and the legal system (7.1%) that relates to a lack of experience rather than a lack of adequate training.

In contrast, where respondents could list many specific skills of social work trained employees, respondents often were reporting on the personalities of non-social work trained employees. For example, 11.9% mentioned that non-social work trained employees had a strong work ethic, 14.9% responded that they were compassionate to their clients, and 5.9% mentioned they were flexible and willing to learn. Where skills were missing in strengths, they appeared in the responses about weaknesses – 18.0% reported that non-social work trained employees were missing vital social service skills and knowledge, 10.4% specifically reported a lack of clinical skills, and 9.0% reported poor communication skills and a lack of familiarity with social service related terminology. Regarding values, 14.9% of respondents reported that their non-social work trained employees had significant boundary issues and were susceptible to compassion fatigue, and two individuals highlighted that issues about boundaries often take up a large portion of supervision time. Another 8.9% reported a lack of cultural sensitivity or knowledge of diversity. However, it is important to keep in mind that not all non-social work trained employees lack training at all. Many respondents (17.9%) mentioned the connection to local communities that non-social work trained employees brought, and many discussed employees trained in related fields (such as Marriage and Family Therapists) who had skills similar to social work educated employees.

Need for Training and Education

When asked about areas that should be included in social work education in Hawai‘i, again, there was a diverse set of opinions. One of the areas of continued interest was in cultural competence (26.9% of respondents), including topics such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations, disabled, rural, and youth populations, and a commitment to more training for the local population (particularly Marshallese and Chuukese). The most prevalent response besides cultural competence was clinical skills – 12.7% of the respondents mentioned that there needed to be a greater emphasis on social work students learning clinical skills. Respondents also emphasized more focus on legal issues, such as maintaining professional/ethical standards, boundaries, and confidentiality (11.9%); macro-practice related issues such as effective supervisions and leadership skills, training in systems, organizational dynamics, and community resources and networks; and renewed emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving skills (7.5%) as well as personal use of self (7.5%). Although not specifically the focus of any one question, the theme of working on interdisciplinary teams and across professions kept emerging across questions about weaknesses of both social work trained employees, non-social work trained employees, and recommendation for future content of social work education in Hawai‘i. With social services crossing many arenas, such as public health, medicine, criminal justice, psychology, and many others, respondents mentioned the need to learn about other fields to more effectively engage and participate in interdisciplinary teams for the best interest of the client.

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9 n = 70
10 n = 67
Social Service managers, supervisors, and administrators were asked to judge their ability to provide services along four dimensions, and to reflect on how these were accomplished in the past compared to the present. On all four items, respondents reported worse outcomes in the present than in the past, and those differences were consistently demonstrated to be a statistically significant difference. Overall, these results reflect a frightening situation for social services in the State of Hawai‘i in the context of the current budget crisis.

**Meeting Program Goals and Objectives**

When asked about their ability to effectively meet program goals and objectives, respondents indicated clear differences between the past and the present that were statistically significant. Although not perfect scores, respondents reported an average of 4.2 out of 5 for their ability to meet program goals and objects when reflecting on the past, but in the current economic situation, respondents only averaged 3.8.

**Provision of High Quality Services**

Regarding their ability to deliver high quality services to their target population, supervisors, managers, and administrators reported that prior to the summer of 2008 they were more consistent in providing high quality services compared to the present, a difference that was statistically significant. Participants rated their ability to provide high quality services in the past higher (mean = 4.2) compared to the present (mean = 3.5). This suggests that overall social work trained employees are more consistently providing high quality services.

**Manageable Caseloads**

When asked about caseloads, both in the past and in the present, respondents indicated that caseloads have never been highly manageable. However, caseloads in the present were rated as even less manageable than the past, with the past scored at an average of 3.8, and the present at 3.2. This indicates that caseloads are becoming even less manageable in the post-budget crisis social service environment, across the variety of populations and domains represented by these respondents.

**Adequate Resources**

The issue of resources was also another place where the present was rated more poorly than in the past. When rating whether or not they had adequate resources to serve their clients, respondents replied that they agreed that prior to the summer of 2008 there were adequate resources (average of 4.0), while in the present they feel neutral about (average of 3.1) the level of resources. This suggests that in the present agencies are struggling with even fewer resources than in the recent past.

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11 Results of paired t-test, t = 3.9, p < .001
12 Results of paired t-test, t = 5.8, p < .001
13 Results of paired t-test, t = 4.3, p < .001
14 Results of paired t-test, t = 7.1, p < .001
Impact of the Budget Crisis

Comparing the Counties

The budget crisis has had a significant impact on social services and the workforce serving the most vulnerable people in our state. Based on historical information about the workforce it is clear that the state is having a difficult time finding adequately trained social service employees, particularly social workers on our neighbor islands, and that caseloads have been and continue to be unmanageable. Despite this high level of need, the impact of the current budget crisis was reflected in answers regarding open positions. Respondents said that historically, their agency/program/unit had an average of five positions open per year they were struggling to fill with qualified personnel, but since the budget crisis, only an average of one position per agency was open, and many of those positions were frozen, a difference that was statistically significant. A

Along some dimensions the budget cuts have affected public and private agencies at similar rates across the state. However, in other domains, counties have been hit differently by the budget crisis. Two such domains are related to strategies to deal with the impact of the budget crisis, including reducing workforce, and cutting programs. 43.2% of respondents reported that they’d been forced to let at least one person go since the budget crisis began. Another 52.1% have reported that they have had to cut programs entirely from their agency or unit.

Reductions in Workforce

In regard to letting staff go in response to the budget crisis – respondents from Kaua’i County and Hawai’i County were hit particularly hard: 58.3% of Hawai’i County respondents, 70% of Kaua’i County respondents, 25.0% of Maui County, and 34.6% of Honolulu County had been forced to reduce their workforce, a difference that was statistically significant. However, when examining reductions in workforce as a strategy, there was as statistically significant difference between respondents in private vs. public agencies. 30.5% of respondents from public agencies reported they’d been forced to let people go, while 51.7% of private agencies had been forced to employ this strategy due in part to cancelled state contracts.

Cutting Programs

There were no statistically significant differences between the counties in the number of respondents who said that their agency/unit had cut programs as a means of dealing with the budget crisis. However, Hawai’i County reported the highest rates of program cuts at 66.7% of respondents’ agencies, while Kaua’i County reported the fewest cuts to program, at 40.0% of respondents’ agencies. In regard to public vs. private agencies, these two agency types appeared to be utilizing the strategy at similar rates, with 50% of public agencies reporting that they had been forced to cut programs, and 54.3% of private agencies doing the same.

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15 \( \chi^2 = 8.23, p < .041 \)
16 \( \chi^2 = 3.17, p = \text{n.s.} \)
Impact of the Budget Crisis

Current Workforce and Program Delivery Issues

Current Impacts
Rich qualitative data has given us insights into the types of changes that have been occurring. 48.1% of respondents said they had been forced to make cuts, such as decreasing services, reducing the number served (turning away clients), and cutting salaries. In addition to cuts, 31.7% of respondents also report being forced to make programmatic changes, the most prevalent strategy being a redefinition of those served (such as making tougher eligibility standards). Another common change reported by participants (23.5%) were staff changes, including longer hours, higher caseloads, having their positions redefined, having workers share cases, and significant changes in morale. Finally, 31.7% also reported significant changes in the quality of their services, such as having longer waitlists, more difficulty getting or referring to other services, shorter lengths of service delivery, and cases being closed too quickly. A scant 5.8% of respondents reported increased budgets, and only 17.6% of respondents said that they had not yet faced any cuts or changes and were holding steady in the economic crisis.

When asked what respondents perceived as the most pressing issue in the state other than the budget crisis, many respondents answered regarding issues closest to them. For example, people in child welfare saw child welfare issues as the most pressing state concern, people who dealt with Veterans saw returning soldiers as the most pressing issue, etc. (42.1%). Beyond specific areas of concern, there were still dominant themes about the field that emerged. Many cited problems regarding staff and providers (26.3%), namely, the lack of qualified providers and the need for more social workers. Another 11.8% responded that issues regarding a lack of respect for social services and providers was highly problematic, particularly the perception that social services are not valued by the state and can be cut at will. 15.8% of respondents said that there was a poor system in place in the state, a system that has both had duplications and a lack of coordination while simultaneously having significant gaps in services, and that this systemic problem is the most pressing concern for social services in Hawai‘i.

Predictions for the Future
Predictions from respondents for the future were dismal. When asked about the long term impact of the current budget crisis on the future quality of their programs, only 13.8% of respondents reported that they did not foresee any more changes that would need to be made, while the remaining participants all predicted other critical changes. Despite these dismal reports, not all predictions were dire, however. Some participants (11.3%) said that because of the budget cuts they saw their agencies getting more cost effective and innovative. However, 21.3% reported that there would be further declines in quality of services, 27.5% predicted a significant decrease in quality of life for clients, and 15.0% reported that they feared even scarcer resources and that their programs were facing termination. This demonstrates that although some have suggested that the budget crisis is leveling out, the impact of past cuts and current impacts to programs will be felt far into the future.

“Quality will not get better if caseloads continue to rise and numbers in staff remain the same or decrease. The children and families we serve will not receive the utmost care and guidance needed to ensure success in the future. We need to invest now, in order to reap the benefits of society in the future.”

17 n = 85
18 n = 76
19 n = 80
Conclusions

Social Workers in the Workforce

Social Services in Hawai‘i have been significantly impacted by two recent policy decisions. First, the decision by the state to hire non-social work educated employees into positions that are the equivalent of social worker positions, and second, the series of deep budget cuts to social services following the budget crisis that began in 2008. This survey has revealed issues of deep concern to O‘ahu, but particularly to the already limited social service infrastructure on neighbor islands.

Social Work Training

In regard to comparisons of social work vs. non-social work trained employees, social workers were found to score higher in important job related skills, knowledge, and values. Social work trained employees have a varied and diverse skill set that they bring to the job, where non-social work employees are often weak in critical job related skills. However, non-social work trained employees bring their own strengths, such as being connected to community and having a strong desire to help. Respondents consistently discussed the lack of qualified and well-trained employees who are also skilled in local systems and local culture. This speaks to the need for access to education for those who are already part of and familiar with the community versus recruiting practitioners from outside of the islands who may have the desired credentials but lack the cultural competency, traits, and abilities of those already on island. Respondents highlighted the importance of social work education for effective and high quality service delivery, and highlighted how opening jobs to non-social work trained employees may have a long-term impact on the overall quality of support delivered to our most vulnerable individuals and families. In summary:

1) There is still a critical need for social workers in the state of Hawai‘i.
2) Social work trained employees have skills and experience necessary to perform at a high level in the social service field, including:
   a) Having more knowledge of diversity
   b) Having competent practice skills
   c) Utilizing a strengths-based perspective
   d) Being effective client advocates
   e) Behaving ethically
3) Non-social work trained employees have the drive and desire to help, but lack critical skills to do so effectively.
4) Neighbor islands, particularly Kaua‘i County and Hawai‘i County, have particular difficulty regarding the acquisition of adequately trained social service personnel, and Maui has reported some of the least developed social services.

Recommendation 1: Continued and increased support of social work education in the State of Hawai‘i. By supporting the strengths of local people, yet providing the skills necessary to effectively work in the social service environment through social work education, the issues in Hawai‘i’s workforce can be better addressed.

Recommendation 2: The state should find more ways to encourage equal access to social work education (including on neighbor islands). Models such as the collaboration between University of Hawai‘i Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work and the Department of Health and Human Services in their innovative Hawai‘i Child Welfare Education Collaboration should be explored in other fields than child welfare as a means to provide sponsored education for employees already in position.

Recommendation 3: A system of mandatory continuing education needs to be considered for social workers and others working with the state’s most vulnerable populations to address ongoing changes in the state, with particular emphasis on cultural competence.

Conclusions

Impact of the Budget Crisis

The impact of the budget crisis on social services in Hawai‘i has been severe. When asked to compare the state of social services now and in the past, prior to the budget crisis, respondents across the board noted that things were moving in the wrong direction. Half of respondents reported they had to lay off people at their agency and/or cut programs to continue operating, and even with these changes, they have been forced to change eligibility criteria, restrict access to services, and cut down on client contacts. When asked about the future, these experts reported ongoing concerns about the impact on clients and on the safety net for the most vulnerable populations in the state. In particular, the already limited social service infrastructure on neighbor islands has been seriously strained, and the choices that have been made in regard to the budget cuts have exacerbated the inability of social service agencies to adequately meet the demands of their clientele. In the long-term, the potential cost of reduced social services to balance the current budget will result in greater overall cost due to an increase in social instability and increased marginalization of an already at-risk population. Specifically, this research suggests that:

1) Across the state, programs are being cut at an alarming rate
2) The budget crisis has had significant negative impacts on social services, including:
   a) A decrease in the ability to meet program goals and objectives
   b) A decrease in the ability to provide high quality services
   c) Less manageable caseloads
   d) Scarcer resources
3) Agencies have been forced to cut programs, change eligibility criteria, create waitlists, and a variety of other strategies to try to remain viable. This has resulted in a lack of services for many clients in-need, and has decreased the quality of services for those few who are still able to access services
4) At-risk populations are even more vulnerable to negative outcomes. They do not have access to the same level of quality services, and have fewer options or resources to meet their needs

Recommendation 4: Rather than across the board cuts in personnel and contracts, the state needs to create a clear system of priorities for continuing funding to maintain an adequate level of service provision to meet growing community need.

5) Both public and private agencies have been affected, though more private agencies have laid-off personnel
6) The existing social service system in the state is flawed, with both duplication of services and significant gaps in services that need to be addressed, which the budget crisis has only made worse

Recommendation 5: The state needs to critically examine the need for coordinating services. This can be accomplished through existing structures, or through the commission of investigations or a new department committed to mapping out the social services structure in the state and to develop plans for more coordinated services.

7) In regard to cutting personnel, Kaua‘i County has seen the most cuts in personnel, and differences between neighbor islands and O‘ahu are cause for concern

Recommendation 6: Particular attention to should be paid to any current or future cuts to neighbor island services. Given that most neighbor island services were already overburdened and under-resourced even before the budget crisis, cuts to these programs should halt and future plans that affect neighbor islands should receive the strictest scrutiny.

8) Supervisors, managers, and administrators of social service predict that the impact of the current budget cuts will be felt in the immediate and long-term future of social services in Hawai‘i

Recommendation 7: Funding should be restored to critical services, such as child welfare, mental health, and substance abuse services, to prevent escalation among families in crisis, and to prevent long term consequences to our most vulnerable populations.