

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECE) Technical Assistance and Preparation for a New Online Survey

Project Background: The aim of this project was to provide technical assistance (TA) to identify future evaluation directions and to advance the evaluation planning process for an ECE project with the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH). This collaborative process entailed meetings with the University of Hawai'i's (UH) Healthy Hawai'i Initiative Evaluation Team (HHIET), the ECE DOH team, and DOH's Surveillance, Evaluation and Epidemiology Office (SEEO) team as well as regular email exchanges, brainstorming discussions, phone calls, and sharing of resources. These meetings took place from October 2020 to June 2021 and allowed for exploration of potential evaluation projects, assessment of stakeholder readiness, identifying and prioritizing evaluation needs, and ultimately the development of an Evaluation Plan for a future ECE evaluation project.

Describe the Program Being Evaluated: The Early Childhood Care and Education program focuses on the health and wellness of children from 0 to 5 years old. Childhood obesity is a global epidemic, and in Hawai'i, almost one in three kindergartners are considered overweight or obese. The need for collaborative efforts to support physical activity and healthy nutrition with young children has become increasingly urgent to support lifelong healthy behaviors.

In the recent Healthy Hawai'i Strategic Plan 2030, one goal is to develop a system to monitor and support the implementation of the ECE Wellness Guidelines. Several strategies include convening stakeholders to determine barriers to implementing the Wellness Guidelines, collaborating with stakeholders to create physical activity and nutrition-related curricula, and partnering with the early learning community to identify and implement incentives to support provider implementation of the Wellness Guidelines. Most of Hawai'i's children spend a large amount of time in care outside of their home, thus childcare and early education environments have the potential to impact children's development. While there is a lot of great work being done in the ECE field in Hawai'i, there is also a lack of data on children 0 to 5 years, and therefore this is a knowledge gap to which this project hopes to contribute.

Brief Synopsis of the Upcoming ECE Evaluation Project: An online survey is being developed and targeted towards parents or guardians of children aged 0-5 years who live in Hawai'i. The survey will focus on gathering data to support policies and programs that improve young children's health in Hawai'i in order to assist with: 1) filling the knowledge and data gap on physical activity and nutrition regarding children within this specific age group; and 2) collecting data to help overcome challenges of collecting information on children within this specific age group. The survey results will be used as baseline data and provide support for upcoming grant applications, for CDPHPD programmatic planning, to support policies and testimony in the next legislative session, and to identify areas where further support and resources may be useful.

Culminating Evaluation Product for this Initial Phase: The final product for this TA project was a completed *Evaluation Plan* that specifies the details and logistics for the upcoming survey project. The Evaluation Plan includes details on the following: methodology; stakeholders and potential partners; details on the survey instrument (e.g., number of questions, topics to address); the target audience; timeline of key activities; analysis plan; and data products.

Next Steps: The survey will be launched for approximately one month in November to December 2021 with results being summarized in the following months.

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