Taking action to make sure all children are GREAT BY 8

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The period of early childhood offers an incredible opportunity to improve outcomes for our children, families and communities.

Early experiences – both positive and negative – have a direct and lasting impact on children’s development.

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The architecture of the brain begins to take shape before birth and continues to develop at an extraordinary pace through the first years of life. As young children grow, learn, and play, their experiences wire their brains’ basic architecture.

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Toxic stress can damage the developing brain.

Stress is tolerable when it is short lived, or when it is buffered by supportive relationships, like a strong family. But when stress lasts longer it can become toxic, especially when children lack the protection of consistent supportive relationships.

Toxic stress releases chemicals that disrupt critical brain connections and can derail healthy development. Toxic stress can lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and mental and physical health.

In Hawai‘i, too many young children are exposed to adverse childhood conditions that can lead to toxic stress.

More than half (58%) of Hawai‘i’s youngest children live in families made vulnerable by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Children in poverty hear fewer words at home. Children in poverty are less likely to be read to frequently. Children in poverty are less likely to attend high-quality preschools.

There are meaningful differences in the early experiences of young children.

- 45 MILLION 12 MILLION
- Children in poverty hear fewer words at home. 94% 63%
- Children in poverty are less likely to be read to frequently. 65% 20%
- Children in poverty are less likely to attend high-quality preschools.

11% of young children in Hawai‘i face three or more risk factors.
Investments in early childhood programs and strengthening the early childhood workforce are some of the smartest community development strategies. Investments in young children and families works.

High-quality efforts that target young children are both more effective – and more cost-effective – than remedial efforts later in life.

The good news: Investing in young children and families works.

High quality early interventions show a return on investment of 6:1.
Early Childhood Action Strategy is a statewide, public-private collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai‘i’s youngest children and their families.

Action Strategy brings together more than 100 professionals from Hawai‘i State departments, county agencies, and early childhood organizations.

Both the public and private sector influence young children and their families, but neither sector can address young children’s needs alone.

Action Strategy is organized into a set of cross-disciplinary teams. Each of these teams works to identify gaps in the system and collaborate around solutions.

For more information, please contact us: ActionStrategy@cnhhawaii.org

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