



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
P. O. BOX 3378  
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:

January 3, 2022

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi,  
President and Members of the Senate  
Thirty-first State Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 409  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Scott K. Saiki, Speaker  
and Members of the House of  
Representatives  
Thirty-first State Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 431  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Saiki, and Members of the Legislature:

For your information and consideration, I am transmitting a copy of the "Annual Report on Dental Health Activities, Expenditures, and Recommendations," pursuant to §321-63, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

In accordance with Section 93-16, HRS, I am also informing you that the report may be viewed electronically at:

<https://health.hawaii.gov/opppd/department-of-health-reports-to-2022-legislature/>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth A. Char".

Elizabeth A. Char, M.D.  
Director of Health

Enclosures

c: Legislative Reference Bureau  
Hawaii State Library (2)  
Hamilton Library

**REPORT TO THE THIRTY- FIRST LEGISLATURE**

**STATE OF HAWAII  
2022**

**PURSUANT TO SECTION 321-63  
HAWAII REVISED STATUTES**

**REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
TO SUBMIT AN ANNUAL REPORT ON DENTAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES,  
EXPENDITURES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



**PREPARED BY:**

**STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**December 2021**

## 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

### DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES DIVISION HOSPITAL & COMMUNITY DENTAL SERVICES BRANCH

#### **Executive Summary:**

The Hospital & Community Dental Services Branch (HCDSB) is the only dental State-operated public health program in Hawaii 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 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 Hawaii that have limited or no access to dental treatment including patients that 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, and would otherwise not receive dental treatment through private dental providers or community health centers.

#### **Program Activities:**

##### **Direct Dental Services**

Dental services are provided by the HCDSB personnel to patients who reside at Hawaii State institutions, including Hawaii 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 Oahu: Diamond Head, Lanakila, Leeward, Windward, and the Hawaii State Hospital. Currently there are no dental clinics located on the Neighbor Islands.

During fiscal year 2021, the HCDSB provided clinical services for 1,002 individuals. The HCDSB dental clinics completed a total of 10,391 dental procedures in the past year. Patients seen by the HCDSB clinics included:

36%	Persons with a mental health disability
47%	Persons with an Intellectual/Developmental Disability (I/DD)
20%	Persons aged 65 years and older
13%	Hawaii State Hospital patients

##### **COVID-19 Pandemic**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the dental clinics were operating and providing comprehensive dental treatment for patients without interruption in services. There were no State or County issued emergency proclamations/orders that instructed providers to limit or restrict elective dental services.

In response to the 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/visitors.

- Dental Infection Control Policies and Procedures addressing the health and safety of patients/staff related to COVID-19.
- Dental site evaluations for clinic reconfigurations and modifications to mitigate against the transmission of 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 Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Dental Association.

### **Community Collaboration**

The HCDSB virtually collaborated and worked with other state, non-profit, and educational institutions to improve access to dental care and address the oral health disparities in Hawaii. There was a coordination of programs designed to enhance the community dental infrastructure for access to dental treatment such as the virtual dental home and dental sealant programs. There were also other activities to analyze the benefits and feasibility of expanding Medicaid adult dental coverage in the state and improving oral health education via outreach programs.

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

- University of Hawaii, School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene at Manoa;
- University of Hawaii, Maui College, Dental Hygiene Program;
- Kapiolani Community College, Dental Assisting Program;
- California Northstate University, School of Dentistry;
- Hawaii Oral Health Coalition;
- West Hawaii Community Health Center;
- Hui No Ke Ola Pono, Community Health Center;
- Women Infant Children Programs;
- Early Head Start and Head Start Programs;
- Hale Makua Health Services;

- Kula Hospital;
- Queen’s Medical Center, General Practice Dental Residency Program;
- Hawaii Dental Association;
- Hawaii Dental Hygiene Association; and
- Dental Lifeline Network

During 2021, HCDSB community oral health activities have been deferred or minimized as programs redirected resources to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Community collaborations and outreach will be increased in 2022 as community conditions allow

**Teledentistry (Virtual Dental Home) Programs**

In 2021 the Hawaii Dental Service Foundation funding for the West Hawaii Community Health Center’s (WHCHC) and Hui No Ke Ola Pono Community Health Center (HNKOP) Virtual Dental Home (VDH) pilot projects ended. This officially concludes the grant funding for these VDH pilot projects.

The WHCHC VDH pilot project focused on providing dental education and dental care for children age zero (0) to five (5) years old at community sites such as Head Start and Women Infant Children (WIC) programs. Since September 2016, early preventive dental services and oral health education was provided at the West Hawaii Head Start Programs, WIC program, Tutu & Me Traveling preschool, and Uluwini transitional housing. Over 1000 children have received dental services via this virtual dental home pilot project.

The WHCHC’s cost analysis found that the VDH program is financially sustainable without grant funding when billing Med-QUEST as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). Although dental procedures completed via teledentistry are covered by Med-QUEST for the prospective payment system (PPS), WHCHC and Med-QUEST are addressing PPS billing issues that still need to be resolved. The WHCHC plans are to continue the VDH program and expand services to public and charter elementary schools once the PPS billing issues are resolved.

The HNKOP VDH pilot project focused on not only providing dental care and education for children age zero (0) to five (5) years old at community sites such as Early Head Start, Head Start, and WIC programs, but also provided dental care to the elderly at Hale Makua Health Services facilities. The pilot project also provided dental care to the intellectually/developmentally disabled at Kula Hospital. Over 450 children, elderly and disabled received dental services via this pilot project. The HNKOP plans to continue the VDH program once their community partners re-open and they are permitted access to the community sites.

In 2021, the WHCHC and HNKOP VDH programs were deferred due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the community partners restricting access to the community sites. Fortunately, in 2021, Kula Hospital continued to permit access to the HNKOP VDH program on Maui. The WHCHC and HNKOP are hopeful that they can restart their VDH programs by the start of 2022 when community sites reopen and remove restricted access. The HCDSB will continue to consult and advise on these VDH programs.

### **Oral Health Trainings**

The HCDSB has identified the need for oral health training for families, caregivers and oral health professionals who provide care and treat persons with I/DD and the elderly. Therefore, the HCDSB developed two training presentations addressing the following areas: 1) oral health awareness and oral hygiene practices for care providers and families of persons with I/DD and the elderly; and 2) dental treatment considerations for oral health professionals when treating persons with I/DD and the elderly.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person oral health trainings were deferred. The HCDSB utilized virtual meeting/presentation platforms to conduct and continue oral health trainings on a limited basis. In 2021 presentations were completed with the following organizations:

- University of Hawaii, School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene at Manoa;
- University of Hawaii, Speech Pathology and Audiology Program at Manoa
- Kapiolani Community College, Dental Assisting Program;
- Kauai Oral Health Coalition
- National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services, Oral Health Webinar
- Transition Medicine Dental Conference, Baylor College of Medicine

The HCDSB plans to resume in-person presentation training and outreach in FY 2022.

### **Problems and Issues Encountered by the Program:**

Oral health disparities continue to be a significant health issue for our Hawaii residents. Medicaid recipients and 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 health care 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 Hawaii'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 COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on clinic operations and dental care for patients this fiscal year. Although the clinics provided comprehensive dental services throughout this year, we are still addressing our patient schedule backlog by prioritizing patients who are high risk or need urgent dental care. This is a result of a reduction of the clinics' daily patient schedules to accommodate the COVID-19 dental infection control protocols implemented and the increase in cancellations/no shows by patients due to COVID-19 concerns.

The HCDSB encountered challenges filling its vacancies due to the staffing shortage of oral health auxiliary workers. In Hawaii, there is a dental assistant shortage, and the marketplace is

competitive. This staffing shortage has directly impacted the clinics by reducing our 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 problems faced by the uninsured and under-insured population in accessing dental treatment services. The HCDSB will also further evaluate the various oral health care models implemented by other states to address Hawaii’s access of care challenges. We will continue to advocate support for those who need but do not have access to dental care.

**Total HCDSB Budgeted for FY2021:**

**Position Count:** 11.00 FTE\*  
**Personnel Services:** \$ 909,249  
**Contract:** \$200,000, The Queen’s Medical Center Dental Residency Program  
**Other Current Expenses:** \$112,075  
**Total** \$1,221,324

**FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION**

Since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Oral Health Disease Prevention five-year grant ended on August 31, 2018, key 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 under-insured 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