

Commission for Native Children
Hawai'i Regional Hearing
Panel 1: Physical Mental &
Behavioral Health

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What Explains the Poor Mental and Physical Health of Native Hawaiian Children?

- Overweight, obesity, and early onset chronic disease conditions
 - 38.9% of Native Hawaiian public high school students are overweight or obese (≥ 85 percentile BMI for age and sex)
 - 37.8 percent of Native Hawaiian public high school students have ever had asthma
- Depression, anxiety, and suicidality
 - 17.4 percent of Native Hawaiian public high school students seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months
- Substance Use
 - Alcohol and other drugs (current alcohol & marijuana use)
 - Tobacco product use
- Teen Pregnancy
- Infant mortality
- ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences)



Question- What explains the poorer mental and physical health of Native Hawaiians?

- Same factors as everyone else (just more)?
 - Diathesis-Stress Model
 - Poorer eating habits
 - Poverty
 - Genetics
- Unique factors?



Factors Affecting Native Hawaiian Mental Health

- Current
- Historical
- Systemic
- Inter-Generational



Social Determinants of Health

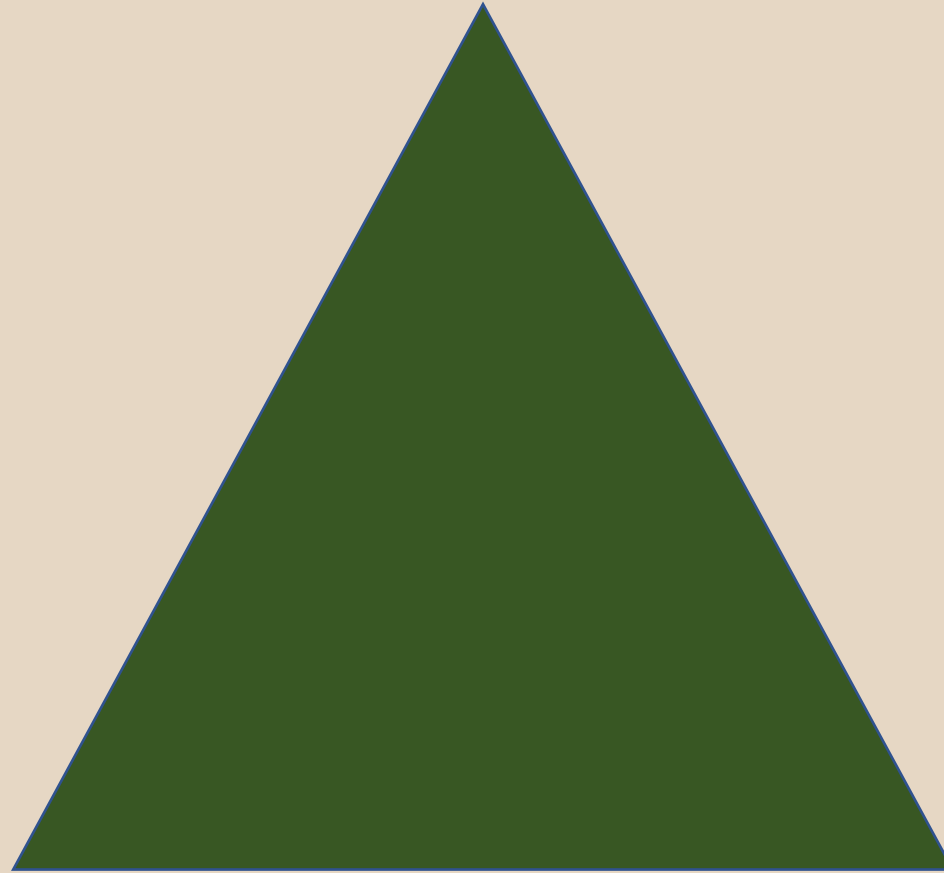
- 12.0 percent of Native Hawaiian families with related children under 5 years live in poverty
- Gestational diabetes, prenatal drug use and alcohol use
- Mothers on Medicaid Quest insurance
- 8.8 percent of Native Hawaiian public high school students most of the time or always went hungry because there was not enough food in their home (during the 30 days before the survey)
- 63.5 percent of Native Hawaiian public middle school students would describe their grades in school in the past 12 months as mostly A's and B's
- 44.8 percent of Native Hawaiian public middle school students reported that they will definitely complete high school
- 16.6 percent of Native Hawaiians are enrolled in college or graduate school [28.5% for the State]

Mauli Ola

Akua

‘Āina

Kanaka





Promising Practices

- Broad Strategies
 - Education = Health
 - Hawaiian Culture Based Education
 - Hawaiian Focused Charter Schools
 - 'Āina-Based Education
 - Speaking 'Ōlelo Hawai'i heals cultural/historical trauma
 - Increased involvement in cultural practices
 - Increased access to 'āina
 - Food security and local food sourcing
 - Protection and advocacy for land and water resources to reduce contaminants that affect health
 - Value traditional wisdom and practices as vital information sources



Promising Practices

- Culturally-minded mental and physical health services
 - Healing vs. Health Care
 - Emphasis on spirituality
 - Strengths-based approach
 - Preventive health
 - Traditional healing
 - Health emphasis is less individualized
 - Most health care exchanges
 - Reinforce that the person doesn't belong
 - Leave them feeling misunderstood, defensive, accused
 - Teaching resilience, coping, and courage through a Hawaiian lens
- Therapy and health care exchanges are an opportunity for a healing experience or further harm. Especially true for indigenous people given the colonization paradigm.



Summary Recommendations

- Support system-wide for promising practices
 - Some generalizable
 - Some community specific
- Workforce Development - Ongoing support for training of Native Hawaiian health professionals
- Training for health and mental health professionals in culturally-minded intervention
- Systemic support for traditional healing practices
- Support for Hawaiian language use
- Culturally-Minded Social Emotional Learning Curriculum embedded in public education
- Support for strengthening and health education programs for NH children
 - Gender-specific and gender-general health education
 - Healthy relationship education (ACES mitigation)
 - Mental health and well-being with cultural emphasis



Summary Recommendations

- Increased primary prevention programs for oral and physical health
- Increase access to dental, mental, and physical health care including school-based programs
- Services, policies, and public campaigns that encourage the use of dental, mental, and physical health care
- Community based screening, referral, and care management programs
- Increased support for health providers in rural and neighbor island communities including reimbursement, training, and use of telehealth

Summary Recommendations

- Close the gaps in the data available on the health of Native Hawaiian children and adolescents. In particular, the role of social and economic determinants of health, as well as research identifying the pathways between the socio-economic determinants and individual health outcomes.
- In addition to implementing dietary and physical activity interventions, the political/economic factors of reduced access to traditional foods and lifestyle should be addressed via policy. These changes may address areas as diverse as access to housing, employment, land tenure, water rights, food security, beach access, etc.
- Given the significant role of education in shaping an ethnically hierarchical society, addressing Native Hawaiian child and adolescent health will require widescale changes to the public education system, such as increasing the numbers of language immersion programs, more equitable resources, and/or changing the governance of the education system.

Health equity and children's rights. Council on Community Pediatrics and Committee on Native American Child Health. *Pediatrics* 2010;125:838-849.

Social Determinants of Health for Native Hawaiian Children and Adolescents. David MKI Liu, MD, PhD, JD and Christian K Alameda, PhD. *Hawaii Med J.* 2011 Nov; 70(11 Suppl 2): 9–14.