



## From the governor: Making life better for Hawai‘i’s families

**H**ow do we help children and families in Hawai‘i thrive, not just survive? The answer lies in real, meaningful change to get better, lasting results. That’s Gov. David Ige’s challenge to state government — to find ways to work together more effectively — whether it’s cooling schools, tackling opioid abuse or adopting a new ‘Ohana Nui approach to serving families that reaches across generations. This issue looks at how fresh thinking by the Ige team is forging better results for the future.

**Q. Why is the new ‘Ohana Nui approach to improving services for families needed? (See story on Page 3)**

**A.** Our goal is to break the cycle of poverty by looking at the whole family, starting with the children. That’s where a life of crime, homelessness and drug abuse — issues that affect us all — can start. With a multi-generational, ‘Ohana Nui approach, we’re looking at what we can do in a more comprehensive way across departments to help families get to a more positive place. I consider this a core value of our administration. I think Hawai‘i has always been defined by this same strong sense of ‘ohana.



**Q. What makes this approach to helping families different?**

**A.** The ‘Ohana Nui (extended family) partnership between the state departments of human services (DHS) and health (DOH) is based on my asking people to look at all the state and federal programs we provide — from food and rental assistance to services for children with special needs — and figuring out how to coordinate programs and bridge the gaps. It’s part of making the best use of our resources to get better results. We’re building teams of professionals — the ‘Ohana Nui engineers — to “engineer” change from within.

**Q. How is Hawai‘i responding to the Trump administration’s policy changes and proposed budget cuts in health and human services?**

**A.** We’re working closely with our Congressional delegation on what the impacts would be for Hawai‘i. Governors — both Democrats and Republicans — have said we want to help contain costs, but we need the authority, flexibility and time to make program changes. As the Western Governors’ Association vice-chair, I want to handle these issues in a bipartisan way to protect our citizens.

**Q. How are you feeling about reaching — and exceeding — your goal of cooling 1,000 classrooms? (See story on Page 2)**

**A.** I remember two summers ago when the heat was unbearable for both students and teachers. Thanks to support from the Legislature and the work of the Department of Education, I’m proud we not only reached but surpassed our goal of cooling classrooms with solar-powered AC and other energy-efficient tools. We’ll continue to press for funds to cool more schools statewide. Now with changes to the **Green Energy Market Securitization program (GEMS)**, we can also use those funds to help other schools.



**PARTNERSHIPS:** (top) Gov. Ige with DHS director Pankaj Bhanot and DOH director Dr. Ginny Pressler at the State Capitol.  
**COOL SCHOOLS:** Nanakuli High students interview the governor.

# Waaay cool! More than 1,000 cooler classrooms statewide

For students and teachers at 88 public schools on five islands, learning became a lot easier this fall, thanks to Governor Ige delivering on his promise to air condition 1,000 classrooms with a \$100 million legislative appropriation. In addition, the Department of Education said 323 more AC units will be installed by the end of September.

Instead of traditional AC units, the DOE chose energy efficient solar-powered systems, along with other heat abatement strategies, to prevent increasing utility bills and over-taxing the schools' electrical grid. The governor announced his plan in his 2016 State of the State address after hot classrooms made conditions extremely difficult for students and teachers to function.

At a press conference at Nānākuli High and Intermediate School Aug. 31, Governor Ige thanked the DOE and the Legislature for their commitment and said, "I'm pleased we have kept our promise. This initiative was truly inspired by the students to give them the learning environment they need to excel and pursue their dreams."

Nānākuli senior class president Talafaaiva Ealim expressed his gratitude for the improvements on behalf of the student body. "It's making a huge impact," he said. "Before we'd get all sweaty and sticky. Now we can do better quality work."



**PROMISE KEPT:** Gov. Ige with Nanakuli senior class president Tala Ealim, DOE superintendent Christina Kishimoto and assistant superintendent Dann Carlson.

## Governor takes action on opioid abuse, prevention

Maybe you've seen the headlines, "National opioid crisis kills thousands" and think it couldn't happen here in Hawai'i. Well, think again. Department of Health (DOH) officials are sounding the alarm now about painkiller abuse to get ahead of the problem.

**"Drug abuse is a public health issue.** People of all ages are at risk when they're prescribed painkillers," said Eddie Mersereau, the state DOH chief of the alcohol, drug abuse division. "In fact, more people in Hawai'i are dying of accidental drug overdose than from car accidents, and most of those cases involve opioids."

DOH director Ginny Pressler explained, "Governor Ige wants to take an aggressive approach to get ahead of the opioid problem here. Our goal is to leverage the opioid abuse discussion to improve the system and treat drug addiction as a chronic disease that impacts everyone."

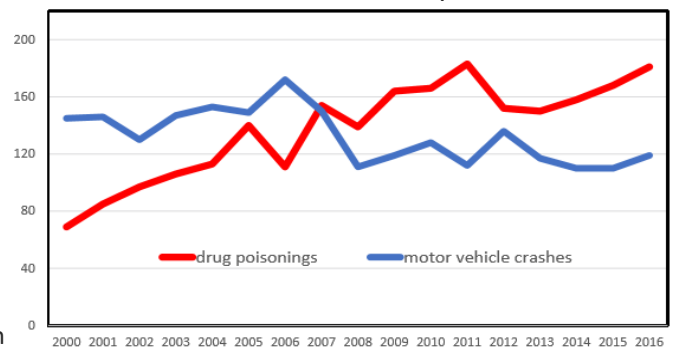
How did this become a crisis nationally? "From the early '80s, doctors shifted to treating pain with powerful painkillers as the first response," Mersereau said. "Once hooked, people pass a point where they don't just need the drugs for the pain. If they can't get more meds, they turn to the black market or 'doctor shopping' to get more pills — even resorting to something like heroin."

**In the coming months,** DOH will be developing a comprehensive, coordinated action plan to combat opioid abuse statewide, helped by \$10 million in federal funds to expand prevention and treatment programs. Actions include:

- **Prevention and intervention** - Mersereau said the state is working with doctors to include a regular patient interview question to determine if there are substance abuse risks and provide interventions. The goal is to provide early screening for substance abuse.
- **Expanded access to "opioid antagonists" to prevent overdoses** – This involves health care professionals, first responders and social services workers who can administer drugs such as Naloxone to "reverse" opioid overdoses. The CHOW project is helping the state distribute more Naloxone kits over the next two to three years.
- **Implementing Act 218 and Act 66** to limit the inappropriate prescribing of narcotic drugs and provide a monitoring system as part of a state controlled substances registration process.
- **Continuing a take-back program** so patients can drop off unused medications for safe disposal instead of just throwing them in the trash. The next take-back day is set for **Oct. 28 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** at several sites statewide. For details, go to [ag.hawaii.gov](http://ag.hawaii.gov).

"We want to catch the problem in the doctor's office and leverage the funding to treat other forms of drug abuse," said Mersereau. **"The good news is the people in this administration are working together — more than I've seen in my 27 years in public health** — to tackle issues like drug abuse that affect everyone in some way. With the governor's leadership, I think our department feels this is a chance to make systemic, lasting change."

**HAWAII: Number of Auto Vehicle Deaths compared to Overdose Deaths**



**ON THE RISE:** Deaths from drug overdoses now exceed those from car crashes.

**"With the governor's leadership, our department feels this is a chance to make systemic, lasting change."**

— Eddie Mersereau, DOH division chief



# 'Ohana Nui: The 'golden opportunity' to help families

**I**t's a big ask: How do you improve the well-being of local families, especially the most needy, and help them on their way to self-sufficiency?

The answer from the governor and the Ige administration is **'Ohana Nui (the extended family)** — what coordinator Kimberly Miyazawa-Frank calls “the golden opportunity” for Hawai'i — the chance for the state to lead the nation in helping families thrive, not just survive. The key is a **new multi-generational approach** to delivering services and a **unique partnership** between the state departments of health and human services and their service providers.

“Our departments are often helping the same families access the system,” she explained. “The governor wants us to implement an 'Ohana Nui approach to focus on the whole family and develop a comprehensive delivery system instead of a fractured one where people may not be getting the help they need.

“We have to do this now because we don't know when the stars will align like this,” says Miyazawa-Frank. “We have the governor making this a priority, the Legislature's support, our committed department directors, Pankaj Bhanot and Dr. Ginny Pressler, and department employees poised to implement this.”

**Unlike past years, people from both departments now cite coordinated efforts** to combine prevention and intervention in addressing a range of issues — from unwanted pregnancies, domestic violence, homelessness, and opioid abuse to basic “survival” needs such as jobs, housing, food, education and health care —with an emphasis on children ages zero to age 5.

“During those early years, there's critical brain development,” explained Miyazawa-Frank. “If there's abuse, the child is affected for his or her life, and there's a social and a financial cost to the whole community. 'Ohana Nui means an investment in kids so we can prevent more serious problems later on.”

DHS director Bhanot says the potential benefit for the community is huge if we can address some of these issues up front through our statewide system. “The fact is DHS sees one in four people statewide and 50 percent of Hawai'i's children. 'Ohana Nui can help us get the services to those who need it the most.”

Dr. Pressler agrees. “Screening and intervention even before pregnancy for substance abuse and depression are crucial to ensuring the healthy development of all children and to help families get a better start in life,” she said. “These basic yet essential measures are taking place now through this unprecedented collaboration between state departments. We have leaders who see the value in combining our efforts to make the best use of taxpayer dollars and the best outcomes for our families.”

## Three examples of 'Ohana Nui

- **Kaka'ako's Family Assessment Center** – Homeless families receive a comprehensive assessment and services to stabilize their lives. That includes housing, school enrollment for children, employment and case management once they leave the FAC so they don't fall back into homelessness.
- **Home Visiting Program** – DHS and DOH teams collaborate to provide prevention and intervention services for families with children zero to five years old. The goal is to strengthen family relationships and prevent child maltreatment.
- **Survivors of domestic violence** – Intervention and prevention services for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to prevent intergenerational trauma and a continuing cycle of abuse, with a focus on protecting children. New contracts require providers to include services for children as well.

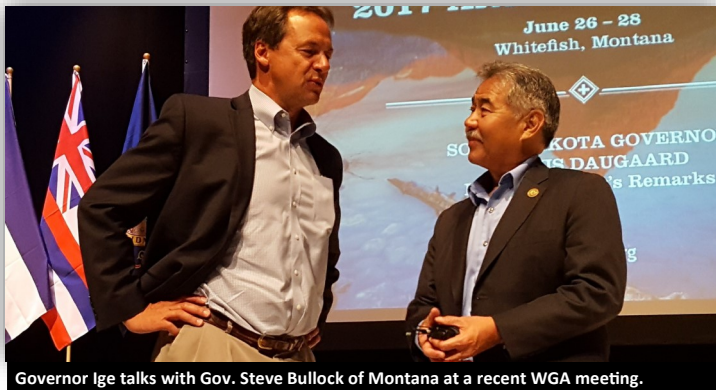


**ENGINEERING CHANGE:** Meet the 'Ohana Nui "Engineers" — DHS and DOH staff members leading the way in transforming how services are provided to children and families.



**'Ohana Nui in action:** Jessica Reyes, a Partners in Development mobile preschool staff member, counts with Relmersan, who was with his family at the Kaka'ako Family Assessment Center. The preschool program gives children a positive start.

# Gov. Ige in line to lead Western Governors Association



Governor Ige talks with Gov. Steve Bullock of Montana at a recent WGA meeting.

Hawai'i's Governor Ige has been elected vice chairman of the Western Governors' Association (WGA) and will serve for one year before becoming WGA chair next year. The WGA represents the governors of 19 western states and three U.S. flag islands — American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

As vice chair, Gov. Ige will lead WGA's policy committee. Through the group, governors work on bipartisan, collective action on issues of critical importance to the western United States. Former Hawai'i governors George Ariyoshi and Ben Cayetano previously served as WGA chairs.

## Hawai'i joins other Climate Week leaders at summit

Ferocious hurricanes. Raging wildfires. Rising seas and coastal flooding. As we in Hawai'i and other parts of the world can attest, climate change is real. To highlight how states can work together to take action, Gov. Ige joined national leaders for Climate Week in New York last month.

"This was a great opportunity for Hawai'i to demonstrate its leadership to the world for a more sustainable planet," said the governor. "Hawai'i was the first state to commit to a goal of 100 percent clean, renewable energy. Other states are considering similar action. We'll be working with them to help our communities fight climate change."

Hawai'i is among 14 states and Puerto Rico who are members of the **U.S. Climate Alliance**, a bi-partisan coalition formed in response to President Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

The alliance's 2017 report included good news for both the environment and the states' economies:



Governor Ige joined governors of other states taking action to fight climate change.

- The alliance states are on track to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below 2005 levels over the next eight years.
- Between 2005 and 2015, the combined economic output of alliance states grew by 14% (the rest of the country grew by 12%). These states are proof that fostering economic growth through clean energy policies and "green" jobs makes sense.

Locally, the state's Climate Commission is developing a Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Adaptation Report for the islands due by the end of this year. As the nation's only island state, Hawai'i is highly vulnerable to flooding from storms and tsunamis.

## More Preschool Open Doors

The Department of Human Services has opened an additional application period for its **Preschool Open Doors (POD) program** and encourages families to apply by Oct. 31, 2017. Applications received during this period will be considered for preschool participation during Jan. 1, 2018 and June 30, 2018.

The program, which currently serves more than 1,400 children statewide, provides child care subsidies to eligible low- and moderate-income families to pay preschool tuition. Families may choose any one of the 426 state-licensed preschools. Interested families may request an application from the department's POD contractor, PATCH, by visiting [patchhawaii.org](http://patchhawaii.org) or calling 791-2130 or toll free 1-800-746-5620.

Contact us at [governor.hawaii.gov](http://governor.hawaii.gov)  
Executive Chambers, State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813  
Phone: (808) 586-0034 | Fax: (808) 586-0006

Hilo Office (808) 974-6262 | Kona Office (808) 323-4542 |  
Maui Office (808) 243-5798 | Kaua'i Office (808) 274-3100

## Uncle Curt: A story hour 'rock star'

Librarian Curt Fukumoto's story hours have become the stuff of legend. He draws crowds of up to a hundred excited preschoolers and grateful parents to his weekly Kāne'ohe Library sessions with books, puppets and songs on his guitar.

"Uncle Curt," who has been twice nominated by the library system as its **Outstanding Employee of the Year**, also has worked at libraries in Wai'anae, Salt Lake and the main Hawai'i State Library.

"Even in this digital age children still love books," said Fukumoto, who also offers a "Baby Storytime" for children under 2. His preschool story hours are every Thursday at 10:30 a.m. in Kāne'ohe.



Uncle Curt, Simone Derow and Willa

Capitol Connection with Gov. David Ige is a regular e-newsletter that provides updates from the State Capitol. As we work to become paperless, the newsletter is available online and via subscription. Check out the governor's website at [governor.hawaii.gov](http://governor.hawaii.gov) to subscribe. Also, follow the governor on Twitter and Instagram @govhawaii and check [www.facebook.com/GovernorIge](http://www.facebook.com/GovernorIge). (Print copies by Hawai'i Correctional Industries)