

The Hawaii Starting Points Initiative

Note: The following profile describes one of the 11 sites that were funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York as part of the Starting Points initiative. It was developed in conjunction with the Learning from Starting Points project, an assessment of the four and one-half year initiative, and approved by the Starting Points site as of July 1999. For more information see *Learning from Starting Points: Findings from the Starting Points Assessment Project*, prepared by Dr. Jane Knitzer with the assistance of Fida Adely and published by the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), Mailman School of Public Health of Columbia University, 2001. This publication is free on the NCCP Web site: <<http://www.nccp.org>> or copies are obtainable at \$5.00 each prepaid at NCCP Attn. Publications, 154 Haven Avenue, New York, NY 10032. For further information, e-mail: nccp@columbia.edu, fax: 212-544-4200, or phone: 212-304-7195.

The main thrust of Hawaii Starting Points (HSP) has been to support communities in improving the quality, accessibility, and integration of services to families with young children and to work toward systematic reform at the state level. Through its work at the community level, HSP has also helped to develop community leadership for young children. HSP operates within the context of the Good Beginnings Alliance (GBA) (described below) and has provided a framework for bringing Hawaii's early education and care leaders together with health and family support leaders to work toward a common set of goals for the well-being of young children. GBA has been assisted by the Hawaii Medical Association and the University of Hawaii's Center on the Family in this effort.

THE GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT

Hawaii has suffered an economic recession throughout most of the Starting Points grant period. The unemployment rate was high and economic difficulties resulted in decreases in state funding and a shift in resources away from prevention and early intervention. In 2000, however, the economy began to show some improvement and the unemployment rate began to drop for the first time in years. As a result of this turnaround and the sustained advocacy efforts of Good Beginnings over three years, there was an increase in state support in 2000, when GBA received \$150,000 in state funding for core support for the first time.

THE HAWAII STARTING POINTS INITIATIVE

Initiative Leadership and Auspices

HSP is housed in the Good Beginnings Alliance, a state-wide public/private partnership that aims to promote healthy child development from birth through the first five years of life and to build an integrated early child-

hood service delivery system. GBA works at different levels. The governing board and staff of the Good Beginnings Alliance coordinate the overall initiative state-wide. GBA has also established Good Beginnings Councils (GBCs) in each of Hawaii's four counties. These councils are made up of representatives from county government, service providers, consumers, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and philanthropists. GBCs have developed five-year county plans assessing local strengths and needs, and a county coordinator facilitates the work of the local councils. The GBCs also oversee the play and learn group leaders (Keiki Contacts) in their communities. Good Beginning's public partner is the Interdepartmental Council (IDC) a state cross-agency collaboration and decisionmaking body for early childhood education and care. The IDC members are cabinet-level state officials from the governmental departments that oversee children's issues.

Site-Specific Starting Points Goals

As a way to achieve the overall Starting Points goals, the Hawaii Starting Points initiative focused on two major site-specific goals:

GOAL 1: Build community capacity to develop and sustain an integrated early childhood system.

GOAL 2: Align state, county, and community partners to increase the focus on common outcomes for young children.

Site-Specific Activities and Accomplishments

GOAL 1: Build community capacity to develop and sustain an integrated early childhood system.

Develop programs

- Established four model play and learn groups, (which grew to 16 by the end of the initiative) to provide

parents and caregivers with information about child development, school readiness, and available community resources, as well as to create informal support groups responsive to local needs. An estimated 5,000 families have participated in community outreach activities around parenting and quality care.

During Phase II of the Starting Points initiative, play and learn groups were nurtured through a peer support network that included site visits to observe other similar programs and a summit that brought together a variety of community groups, including the play and learn groups and county councils.

Develop leaders

- Developed a leadership program for parents/caregivers who emerge as leaders in the play and learn groups. The program is designed to help leaders establish new play and learn groups while providing leadership and advocating for young children. About 20 parents/caregivers have participated in the training and HSP is developing a curriculum to support this leadership program.
- Built county leadership by facilitating the development and amendment of county council plans. This effort was particularly significant because Hawaii's state government is known to be highly centralized.

GOAL 2: Align state, county, and community partners to increase the focus on common outcomes for young children.

Leverage resources

- Established the Hawaii Early Education Fund in January 2000 to raise funds from the business community for:
 - Professional development opportunities for early childhood providers through TEACH scholarships (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps);
 - Child care facilities to help them meet licensing and accreditation standards; and
 - Community development through the expansion of play and learn groups.

Hawaii Starting Points are working with the Hawaii Business Roundtable (an association of the largest 40 companies in the state) to raise funds. As of July 2000 they had raised \$38,000. Their goal was to raise \$50,000 by the end of 2000 for TEACH/provider scholarships.

- Received a core support grant from the Packard Foundation of \$250,000 in both 1999 and 2000; 2001 is pending. Of these funds, \$40,000 went to Kids Count to track early childhood indicators and to help establish a data center on the Internet for children and families. \$10,000 has been allotted to Children's Budget Analysis to develop an issue brief on Hawaii's early childhood funding. \$158,000 has been allocated to communities to assist them with outreach and the development of the play and learn groups and parent/caregiver leadership programs.

Use outcomes and indicators to drive the agenda for young children and to build the connections between state, county, and local efforts

- Selected to participate in the "Boost for Kids" initiative as one of 13 performance partners in the National Partnership for Reinventing Government. This initiative involves developing partnerships with other organizations in the public and private sectors around common goals. HSP's goal is that all children in the state be safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school.

Specific indicators have been agreed upon for each element of this goal, and partnerships have been launched to work to improve outcomes related to each indicator. In October 2000, the number of children in child care centers receiving a healthy breakfast kick-started the launch of a major partnership. In May 2000, HSP presented the school readiness partnership to the Interdepartmental Council. This partnership focuses on getting children ready for school and schools ready for children by increasing the quality of both early childhood and kindergarten experiences.

These partnerships grew out of participation in a federally funded project called Partnering for Outcomes and earlier work developing indicators for state outcomes that were legislated in the Hawaii House Concurrent Resolution No. 38. GBA has been a major player in both of these initiatives.

- Created a Champions for Children group. Good Beginnings brought together different agencies throughout the state that work with/for children from birth to five years of age to work together as Champions for Children. Each week during the 2000 legislative session, these Champions for Children distributed to each of the 76 legislators a topic sheet relating to the needs/concerns of Hawaii's children. At the end of the session, legislators had a folder with 15 sheets showing what is necessary for all of Hawaii's chil-

dren to be safe, healthy, and ready to succeed. Each page of the folder presented the same framework: a picture of a Hawaiian child, a brief description of an early childhood issue, and a chart or graph depicting the status of this issue in Hawaii. Agencies chose issues to present based on their own work and knowledge. Champions for Children built on the work around indicators that Hawaii has been doing through Partnering for Outcomes and Boost for Kids.

As a result, Champions for Children:

- Visited all 76 legislators;
- Collected and disseminated information about the status of young children (including data that GBA did not have access to before);
- Promoted greater collaboration among and mobilization of different organizations; and
- Created interest among groups that were not involved in the process and among state agency officials.

Reform systems at the state level

- Working with others in 1997, established the Interdepartmental Council, a collaboration of cabinet-level representatives from all five state departments that oversee children's issues to make decisions about early childhood. The council has become the forum at the state level to discuss young children's issues and develop early childhood policies.