Hawaiʻi Public Health Institute: Advancing Our Community's Health and Wellness

By Sally Ancheta

Hawaiʻi Public Health Institute (HIPHI) is a statewide non-profit 501c(3) organization with more than 20 years of experience in providing technical assistance, forging and maintaining coalitions, and activating community power to effect statewide change. Established in 1996 to address the high rates of tobacco use in Hawaiʻi, tobacco prevention and control remains one of HIPHI's flagship initiatives. We focus on decreasing and preventing tobacco use while also addressing second hand smoke exposure for the people of Hawaiʻi.

HIPHI pivoted in 2012 and moved from its singular focus on tobacco issues to a broader public health mission and vision which aims to effect policy and environmental change at a systems level.   HIPHI's advocacy and programmatic work includes oral health, food and agriculture, nutrition and physical activity, tobacco control and prevention, transportation and public safety, and environmental health.

HIPHI works tirelessly to advance the health and wellness of our island through:

- Increasing understanding of what creates healthy people and places; embracing upstream social, cultural, and environmental factors.
- Fostering partnerships among public health, health care, and other diverse sectors to improve health and wellness; and
- Cultivating programs including education, advocacy, research, capacity building and training—to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

Through its strong leadership and solid reputation, combined with public health expertise, HIPHI is able to launch innovative new ideas quickly while maximizing impact and minimizing risk for funders. The number of private and public investments in HIPHI's work can attest to this. HIPHI has the ability to take creative, calculated, and strategic risks to advance our programs while remaining flexible enough to course correct various program development and implementation as COVID-19 needs evolve.

HIPHI's priority issues are food security; obesity; physical activity and healthy eating; the built environment; farm to school; tobacco and electronic smoking devices (ESD); underage drinking and drug use; COVID-19 response; public health workforce development; supporting community health workers, and oral health. Current policy priorities include a ban on flavored tobacco; regulation of ESDs; establishing a sugar sweetened beverage fee; reinstatement of Medicaid adult dental benefits; expanding access to healthcare including telehealth; raising the minimum wage; paid family leave; farm to school workforce development; and farm to food bank.

To advance our priorities and programmatic work we recognize that equity as one of HIPHI's four values is key to addressing the systemic inequities that prevent all residents from thriving. While working with other stakeholders we look at the needs and barriers experienced by vulnerable populations and underserved communities that suffer the greatest health disparities including: Filipinos, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, residents with limited English proficiency, residents with low

levels of education and income, and those living in rural areas. We have become a go-to organization for public health advocacy, education, organizing, capacity building and technical assistance.

HIPHI is a member of the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI), a network with over 40 member institutes across the country. As we look forward, we see the need to address systemic weaknesses in the state's response to the pandemic and will work to develop greater resiliency and disaster preparedness in the public health system.

For more information on HIPHI please visit hiphi.org or one of our social media channels: Instagram @hubforhealth, Facebook @hubforhealth or Twitter @hubforhealth.

Community First serves as a neutral forum for the community to come together and as a catalyst for solutions to improve health and lower medical costs on Hawai'i lsland.
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