



## Keiki Focus

News

November 19, 2009

### What About the Keiki?

Gandhi's words "Action expresses priorities" are particularly meaningful in today's economy. Who are the people in our communities who are taking action to assure all keiki are safe, healthy and ready to succeed?

By identifying these true champions for children, we create a very real measure for all those who talk the talk. Take a moment to make a mental list of the leaders in business, community, education, healthcare, and government who walk the walk.

### Good Beginnings Alliance

Good Beginnings Alliance (GBA) is Hawai`i's leading champion for children.

On behalf of young children, GBA works across the state so that communities are involved; efforts are connected; and decision-makers are empowered to ensure all Hawai`i's keiki are safe, healthy and ready to succeed.

GBA is a member of Voices for America's Children

### Hawai`i's Young Keiki Need Our Help, too

In our September 16, 2009 Keiki Focus, we talked about our state's ailing economy and the fact that we all need to do our part in shaping a common vision for the benefit of our young children. We thought we had seen the worst with "Furlough Fridays" shortchanging the education of our 175,000+ public school students, and we are thankful that there appears to be a resolution for this problem. Unfortunately, this was just the beginning as we just learned of potentially more devastating news with the Department of Human Services (DHS) proposed increases in parent co-pay for child care and preschool tuitions.

There are several thousand young children receiving tuition assistance through the DHS Child Care Connections and Preschool Open Doors Programs, and we hope to have some good figures in time for Monday's hearing. We do know that there are approximately 2,500 children enrolled in licensed preschools who are receiving subsidies through Child Care Connections and Preschool Open Doors who will be impacted. This total doesn't include children in license-exempt preschools, family child care homes, etc.

Hawaii's needy families are now facing huge increases in their parent co-pays if these proposed changes are approved. For example, under the proposed changes, we calculated the increase in co-pays for a family of 4 with a child attending an accredited NAEYC/NECPA center-based preschool that costs \$600/month. For a family of 4 with an income of \$1356-\$1807 (70%-100% of Federal Poverty Level), their parent co-pay will rise from the current \$0 to \$120 a month. Likewise a family of 4 with a family income of \$2892-\$3162 (160%-175% of Federal Poverty Level) will see their parent co-pay jump from the current \$120 to \$420 - a spike of 350%. We note that the \$600 tuition figure we used in our calculations is a conservative tuition amount. Additionally in both of the above examples, the children will **qualify for free or reduced lunch** when they enter the public school system kindergarten, since their **family income is below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level.**

Ka`ina Bonacorsi, Maui County Early Childhood Resource Coordinator, developed a great spreadsheet for people to calculate the impact of the proposed increased co-pays. [Click here to access a spreadsheet tool](#), and simply enter your child's child care or preschool tuition in the red box.

[Visit our website for more information.](#)

## Get Involved

Your support is appreciated in whatever form it takes: contacting your legislator, passing news on to family and friends, or rolling up your sleeves and volunteering.

If you wish to support GBA financially in its efforts at policy advocacy or data collection, please visit our [Donation Page](#) today.

## Mahalo!

The spreadsheet will calculate the proposed new co-pay.

As stated above, these proposed hikes are still in the **Proposed Stage**. DHS will hold a public hearing on these proposed increases:

Monday, November 23, 2:30 p.m., at the Haseko Center, 820 Mililani Street, Suite 606, Conference Room 2, Honolulu. Department of Human Services  
Benefit, Employment & Support Services Division  
820 Mililani Street, Suite 606  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

We strongly urge early childhood providers, parents, and other advocates to testify at this hearing and specify the impact these proposed co-pay increases will have on families (e.g., parents having to take their children out of preschool, parents quitting work to care for their children). Bring 5 copies of your testimony to this hearing. We need to make a stand for our young keiki—they need our help too!

## GBA Goes Web 2.0!

You can now find GBA on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube!

Get up-to-date information about GBA and what we're doing by following our feeds on these cool sites:

- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Good-Beginnings-Alliance/95009246688?ref=ts>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/GoodBeginnings>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/GoodBeginningsGBA>

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*Good Beginnings Alliance is a nonprofit organization working in partnership with families, communities, policy makers, early childhood providers and advocates to shape community will and public policy, mobilize action and maximize resources for Hawai'i's children. Good Beginnings Alliance is a member of [Voices for America's Children](#)*

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