

# SPOTLIGHT ON NURSING

## Hawai'i Keiki Health Hotline: A Sustainable Option for Providing Health Resources and Telehealth Services

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*The Spotlight on Nursing is a recurring column from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's School of Nursing and Dental Hygiene (UHM SONDH). It is edited by Mary G. Boland DrPH, RN, FAAN, Dean of UHM SONDH; Kristine Qureshi PhD, RN, CEN, PHNA-BC, FAAN, Associate Dean of Research for UHM SONDH and HJH&SW Contributing Editor; and Joanne R. Loos PhD, Science Writer for UHM SONDH.*



The Hawai'i Keiki (HK) Program provides school-based health services to students through a partnership between the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene (UHM SONDH) and the Hawai'i State Department of Education (DOE). The HK Program was launched in 2014 with 4 staff nurses, and has since grown to include 1 medical assistant, 6 registered nurses (RNs) and 15 advance practice registered nurses (APRNs) in the 2019-2020 academic year, serving all 15 DOE complex areas. The program continues to expand, with a dental screening and sealants program initiated for second graders during the 2019-2020 school year, and 15 new RNs added in the 2020-2021 school year to assist schools in responding to COVID-19.

The program has 4 core goals to support the DOE school and student academic success: (1) reduce health-related chronic absenteeism and minimize interruption to instructional time; (2) enhance wellness in the school environment and community; (3) promote optimal student health through preventive screening and support for children with chronic health conditions; and (4) collaborate with primary care providers, community partners, organizations, and resources to provide coordinated school health programs and services. During the 2019-2020 academic year, the HK staff conducted 8024 health room visits for illness, injury, and health guidance, with 88% students returning to classes after the visit and an average visit length of 18 minutes. These nurses also educated students and teachers on various health topics while also partnering with Project Vision, Vision to Learn, Lions Sight, Lions Club, and the DOH Stop

Flu at School campaign to provide hearing screening, vision screening, and flu vaccinations for students.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educational delivery in the DOE was transitioned in March 2020 to a primarily online platform. As such, many students were no longer coming to the school campuses. This decreased access to school-based health services as well as free food and other support services that are provided to many children in the schools. Recognizing these impacts, the DOE partnered with HK to start up the HK Health Hotline (HKHH) that launched on May 1.<sup>1</sup> The goal of the program was to provide equitable access to health services for all DOE students using interactive technology and mobile devices, regardless of location. The HKHH objectives included: (1) increasing the number of children who are able to access health services during a pandemic; (2) assuring continuity of care with a known and trusted provider; (3) providing families an alternative means for accessing health services; (4) reducing morbidity and mortality for students with chronic physical and mental health conditions; (5) maintaining compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); and (6) ensuring students are healthy and ready to learn when campuses reopen. While telehealth technology is not new to school-based health clinics and providers, it was not a service that HK offered previously.<sup>2</sup>

During the planning stage of the HKHH, the leadership team identified specific HK staff/teams to assume various tasks. An essential component within the development of a quality health hotline/telehealth delivery system is the creation of the operational policies and procedures which guide the program.<sup>3</sup> The HKHH operations are codified in a manual that includes the policy and procedures for obtaining patient consent, selection and function of equipment/software, patient privacy and confidentiality, telehealth patient safety, parental/legal representation, special considerations during COVID-19, operational

workflows, clinical workflows with documentation procedures, as well as data collection, reporting and quality assurance. The HK administrative team reviewed each of these processes and documents, then passed them through the appropriate departments at University Health Partners (a HK Program Practice Partner) for approval, and also shared with DOE for their feedback and approval.

Technology considerations for the program included secured laptop/cellphone utilization, a hotline service that receives the calls (Jive), a triage tool (Clear Triage) that provides a nursing triage platform and aids in documentation of calls and parent/guardian education, telehealth platforms (Doxey.me and Face-time), and interpretive services (Boostlingo). The technology also includes the electronic health record (EHR) documentation platforms HealthOfficeAnywhere (for RNs and APRNs) and Epic (for APRNs). Workflows developed for the HKHH include: telephone triage, telehealth visits, telehealth visit using a translation service, process for referring student to DOE behavior health counselors, prescription refills, follow-up phone calls, and a workflow for calls not related to a health concerns on a DOE student.

Prior to the launch of the telehealth program, the staff underwent extensive training, including beta testing platforms, mock scenarios/calls, and an evaluation of the staff's comfort and competency. A debriefing session occurred after each training session, which allowed staff to identify any issues or concerns which needed to be addressed. While staff underwent training, the communications teams from SONDH and DOE worked collaboratively to increase the awareness of the upcoming program which was accomplished with flyers, news media, and social media posts.

On May 1, 2020, the program launched and began providing services Monday through Friday, with the exception of school holidays. During the first 5 months, 161 HKHH encounters were logged. The HKHH was accessed most often (n=130) to answer questions that were not related to a specific student health concern, but rather regarding return to school health requirements, school, and community health resources (Figure 1).

The remaining 31 of the 161 HKHH encounters were related to student health concerns/illnesses for specific students that required nursing triage for physical and/or mental health issues/concerns. These calls resulted in the provision of health education, the scheduling and conducting of a telehealth visits by a HK APRN and/or a referral to a DOE school behavioral health counselor or the student's primary care provider. The largest number of calls came from Honolulu County, followed by Hawai'i, Maui, and Kaua'i Counties.

The initial success led to additional funding from HMSA Foundation and CARES Act funds to continue services throughout the summer months - a new service for the HK program. As K-12 campuses in Hawai'i have reopened in various phases, the

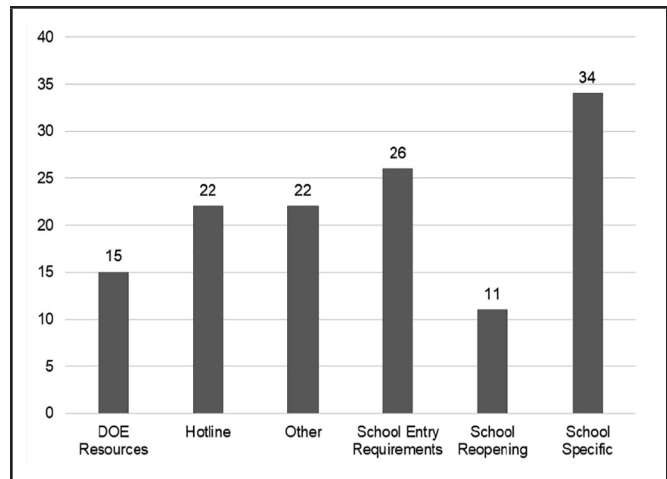


Figure 1. Hotline Calls for Information Requests Not Related to a Student Health Concern (n=130)

HKHH has become a valuable resource for health information about COVID-19, recommendations for safe school reopening guidance, and access to vital school/community resources for students and families. In addition, families that are concerned about their child's physical or behavioral health can call the HKHH to receive care via telephone triage, telehealth services, or referral to a DOE school behavioral health counselor. The HKHH visits are not meant to replace a student's primary care provider, but rather they provide families with an alternative way to access health service while supporting social distancing. The student's primary care providers receive documentation after each hotline call related to a physical or mental health concern. The HKHH services are provided at no cost to the HIDOE students. Families with medical insurance are asked to provide their health insurance for telehealth visits only. The student's health insurance is billed, however there are no co-pays for any family. All DOE public students receive the HKHH services regardless of insurance status.

While DOE campuses begin to reopen in various phases during the 2020-2021 academic year, the HKHH will continue to provide nursing care within the existing school-based health clinics. The HK Program recognizes that providing families and their children with up to date resources and access to health services will continue to be a challenge in our state. Students, now more than ever, have social, emotional and physical health needs that need to be addressed in order for them to be healthy, ready to learn, and successful in school and life. With the continued utilization of the HKHH, the nurses can improve access to care and health outcomes for students in DOE schools, particularly those who live in underserved areas. The HKHH is a viable option that provides families an alternative means of accessing a professional nurse for information, health education, and health services, and is focused on helping to assure that the children of Hawai'i are healthy and ready to learn in our schools.

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