



**THE QUEEN'S
HEALTH SYSTEMS**



**HAWAI'I COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW PILOT PROGRAM ENHANCES PEDIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN MAUI COUNTY

The Queen's Health Systems, DOH, HCF launch the first pediatric mental health warmline in Hawai'i

MAUI, HAWAI'I – In an innovative effort to enhance pediatric mental health, [The Queen's Health Systems](#) (Queen's), the [Hawai'i State Department of Health](#) (DOH), and the Hawai'i Community Foundation's (HCF) [Promising Minds](#) initiative announced the launch of the **Mental Health Pediatric Access Line (MPAL)**, the state's first dedicated warmline designed to significantly improve pediatric mental health services in Maui County by helping primary care providers quickly connect with mental health specialists to better assess, treat and refer patients with behavioral health needs. Launched in August 2024, the MPAL pilot program provides free, same-day support to all pediatric primary care providers from any health system on Maui, Lāna'i and Moloka'i.

Promoted by the Hawai'i Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, MPAL is designed to enable timely detection, assessment, treatment and referral of patients (ages 0-21) with behavioral health needs through a user-friendly telehealth platform. The warmline, a free and confidential phone service, connects pediatric primary care providers with child and adolescent psychiatrists and care coordinators within 30 minutes or less for consultative support. Spearheaded by HCF's Promising Minds initiative, the MPAL pilot program is a milestone for the DOH Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Project.

"By partnering with HCF's Promising Minds initiative and the Hawai'i State Department of Health, we aim to make a meaningful impact by increasing statewide access to pediatric mental health services," said Sondra Leiggi-Brandon, vice president of patient care, behavioral health, and medicine, The Queen's Health Systems. "Our goal is to strengthen early prevention and detection by fostering collaboration between primary care providers and behavioral health specialists. This approach paves the way for better infant and early childhood mental health practices, moving from a reactive to a proactive model of care."

As the service provider, Queen's will staff the MPAL consultation line with licensed professionals, including child and adolescent psychiatrists and social workers. These specialists will offer real-time support to pediatricians, family physicians, nurse practitioners and other primary care providers, assisting with brief intervention plans, mental health diagnosis and treatment. Their guidance will help ensure that families receive the appropriate level of care for their children in a timely way. It is an innovative solution that immediately adds capacity to child psychiatry, a specialty currently experiencing a workforce shortage.

"By providing a warmline that offers immediate access to behavioral health professionals, we are making significant strides toward increasing community capacity to identify and respond to the mental health

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needs of our children and youth,” said Keli Acquaro, administrator, DOH Child & Adolescent Mental Health Division. “This public-private partnership not only showcases the power of collaboration, but also builds on proven models from Massachusetts and Seattle, which have demonstrated impressive outcomes in enhancing accessibility to pediatric mental health care. MPAL aims to replicate this success, implementing national best practices and laying the foundation for a robust, statewide pediatric mental health support system.”

A key component of the MPAL pilot program is to build a strong network of support and guidance for pediatric primary care providers across Maui County. This approach aims to enhance their ability to identify and manage mental health concerns in children. The program will track data throughout the pilot phase to help refine and inform the statewide implementation of the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Project by the end of 2024.

“Thanks to a dedicated team at Queen’s who are prioritizing the healthy development of our keiki, the MPAL pilot program is the first of its kind in the state to include consultation services to pediatric health providers that need advice on patients at birth,” said Justina Acevedo-Cross, senior director, HCF. “The program also makes pediatric mental health services more accessible, especially in our rural and underserved communities, creating a more effective and comprehensive mental health framework for children across the state.”

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About The Queen’s Health Systems

The Queen’s Health Systems (QHS) is a nonprofit corporation established in 1985 to provide expanded health care capabilities to the people of Hawai‘i and the Pacific Basin. It is Hawai‘i’s preeminent family of health care-related companies and has more than 10,000 employees and more than 1,800 affiliated physicians and providers in its statewide network. QHS consists of The Queen’s Medical Center (Hawai‘i’s oldest hospital founded in 1859), The Queen’s Medical Center – West O‘ahu, The Queen’s Medical Center-Wahiawa, Moloka‘i General Hospital, Queen’s North Hawai‘i Community Hospital, The Queen’s Health Care Centers, Queen’s Island Urgent Care, Queen Emma Land Company, Queen’s Development Corporation, Queen’s Insurance Exchange, Queen’s Clinically Integrated Physician Network, and Queen’s ‘Akoakoa, and has ownership interests in CareResource Hawaii, Hamamatsu/Queen’s Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Imaging Center, Diagnostic Laboratory Services, and EmPower Health.

About Hawai‘i State Department of Health

The mission of the Hawai‘i State Department of Health (DOH) is to promote and protect the physical, psychological and environment health of the people of Hawai‘i through assessment, policy development and assurance. The department’s vision is that all Hawai‘i residents have a fair and just opportunity to achieve optimal health and well-being. In 2021, the DOH Family Health Services Division was awarded the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Grant by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This grant focuses on integrating behavioral health into pediatric primary care by supporting pediatric providers and developing a statewide system to enhance the quality and accessibility of mental health services for children ages 0 to 21. Grant deliverables include providing training, technical assistance, teleconsultation and establishing a coordinated intake and referral system to help primary care providers treat and refer children with behavioral health conditions. To learn more, visit health.hawaii.gov/pmhca.

About Hawai'i Community Foundation & Promising Minds

The vision of the Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) is to create an equitable and vibrant Hawai'i in which all our island communities thrive. With more than 107 years of history, trusted expertise, and the generous support of donors, we are working to address the root causes of our state's most difficult challenges. In 2023, HCF stewarded more than 1,160 funds, established by individuals, businesses and organizations who share our passion for a better Hawai'i. We distributed more than \$107 million in grants to the community from funds at HCF, contracts and private foundations statewide, including scholarships assisting more than 1,000 Hawai'i students. HCF launched [Promising Minds](#) in 2019 with a focused mission to enhance the healthy development of children ages 0-5 and bolster resilience in those who have encountered the adverse effects of trauma. Central to Promising Minds is the strengthening of trauma-informed practices for early childhood professionals across disciplines such as childcare, social work, therapy, counseling, behavioral health, pediatrics, nursing and more. Over the last six years, Promising Minds has worked to cultivate a robust statewide network comprising organizations and individuals dedicated to addressing early adversity and trauma, and spreading the belief that wellness and resilience for babies and families are core to healthy communities. For more information about HCF, please visit hawaiicommunityfoundation.org and follow our social media channels on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

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