

parents and children together (PACT)

Honolulu, HI

Overview

Parents And Children Together (PACT) was founded in 1968. Operating a variety of social and educational programs, the program creates opportunities for families and children to identify and address their own strengths, needs, and concerns and successfully realize their potential. PACT's programs are child-focused and family-centered. They are based on the belief that the best life-long advocates for children are their parents and / or primary caregivers. PACT helps families be the best they can be by providing a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment in which families can continue to thrive. PACT's programs and services fall into five major areas:

- Early childhood education
- Child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment
- Domestic violence prevention and treatment
- Mental health support
- Community building and economic development

PACT's structure helps ensure that families with children ages 0 to 5—who are involved in PACT's Early Head Start and Head Start programs—have access to comprehensive health, education, and social services. The goal of PACT's early childhood programs is to increase the social competence of young children from low-income families and children with special needs. Of all families participating in Early Head Start and Head Start at PACT, 80% live in low-income public

Profile

Staffing

Total: 98

Children & Families Served

- Head Start: 201
- Early Head Start: 265

Budget

\$3.8 million

Services Provided On-Site

- Community teen program
- Computer training
- Early Head Start / Head Start
- Educational and vocational activities (ESL, GED, etc.)
- Family centers
- Family literacy
- Home visiting
- Information and referral
- Mental health support
- Parent support groups
- Respite

housing, and about 20% have disabilities. PACT highly emphasizes partnerships among families, schools, and communities. These programs demonstrate the increase in programmatic quality that results from such partnerships.

How the Program Builds Protective Factors

Parents And Children Together builds five key protective factors that reduce child abuse and neglect. Programs, services, and characteristics contributing to each protective factor are listed below:

Parental Resilience

- Family Literacy
- Fatherhood Initiative
- Policy Council
- Social Activities
- Staff-Parent Collaboration
- Training: Parents

Social Connections

- Cultural Sensitivity and Richness
- Family Centers
- Parent Committees
- Policy Council
- Social Activities
- Talk Story
- Volunteering and Mentoring

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

- Fatherhood Initiative
- Lending Library
- Staff-Parent Collaboration
- Training: Parents

Concrete Support in Times of Need

- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention and Treatment
- Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment
- Family Support Workers
- Handy Emergency Listing for Parents (HELP)

Partners

- Drug Addiction Services of Hawaii
- Hawaii Department of Child Protective Services
- Hawaii Department of Education, Special Education Section
- Homeless shelters
- Housing and Community Development Corp. of Hawaii (state housing authority)
- Housing management company
- Local health cClinic
- Promising Practices Network
- Reading Is Fundamental
- Salvation Army drug treatment program

Ways of Identifying When Families Are at Risk

- Within 45 days of entering the program, the family has a strengths and needs assessment.
- Within 90 days, a family partnership agreement is created.
- Each month, case management teams meet to review family partnership agreements and identify families needing extra support; family support workers reach out to them within two weeks.

Response Protocol

If staff are concerned about a child or family, the following occurs:

- Teacher discusses with family support worker and cluster leader
- Mental health consultant and / or disabilities coordinator may conduct observation

- Health and Nutrition
- Mental Health Services

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

- Early Childhood Curricula
- Education Specialist
- Individual Learning Plans
- Mental Health Consultant

Key Program Features

Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention and Treatment

PACT's *Hana Like* program, a member of Hawaii's Healthy Start Network, provides home visits for families of young children in order to enhance child development, strengthen family functioning, and prevent child abuse and neglect. Eligible families: (1) are expecting a child or have a child 0 to 3 months old and (2) have stresses and burdens that put them at risk of child abuse and neglect.

Cultural Sensitivity and Richness

- Children's Activities

In Early Head Start and Head Start classrooms, many languages are spoken and written; some of the children's books are written by parents in Chinese, Korean, Samoan, Hawaiian, and Filipino. Hawaiian expressions such as *aloha*, *talofa*, *ola*, *kasehlelia*, and *chao* are used regularly, and students respect culturally specific practices such as taking off their shoes in the classroom and using *tatami* mats.

- Parent and Community Activities

Early Head Start and Head Start programs provide culturally sensitive and rich services and promote respect and appreciation across many cultures. A letter welcoming parents to the program is written in seven different languages. Parents are encouraged to share their cultures with each other,

- Staff member who has concerns or has strongest relationship with family speaks to family
- Case conference may be conducted to identify resources to help family

If staff suspect child abuse or neglect, the following occurs:

- Staff notify cluster leader immediately
- Cluster leader, Head Start manager, and family support worker go to classroom to talk with child
- These staff and the teacher discuss whether report is warranted
- Head Start manager contacts program director
- Program director reports to division director
- Division director reports suspicions to state department of child protective services (CPS)
- Staff record CPS actions and, when possible, inform parents of those actions
- CPS, Head Start manager, teacher, family support worker, and parent meet
- If child is not removed, staff follow up with family to resolve situation
- If child is removed, staff follow up with CPS and serve as advocate for family
- Parent is referred to parenting classes, psychologist, and other supports for building parenting skills

and an annual community fair celebrates the many cultures of the community.

- Staffing

The program hires staff who represent the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the community served. One-fourth of the PACT staff are bilingual, and staff attend an annual cultural awareness training. Assistants are available to help Vietnamese, Chuukese, and Marshalese staff and families communicate and translate program materials.

- Talk Story

PACT facilitates Talk Story discussion groups throughout the year. Talk Story is a culture-based way for parents to share their ideas and concerns in a non-threatening environment; it is widely practiced in Pacific Basin countries. Rather than relying on linear communication, Talk Story groups use “circular” discussion and encourage sensitivity to multiple layers of meaning. The discussions can take place over a period of hours or days.

Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment

The Family Peace Center on Oahu provides individual and group counseling intervention for victims / survivors, offenders, and child witnesses of domestic violence. It also provides parenting classes, school-based groups for youths, and community education. In addition, Family Peace Centers on Maui provide individual and group counseling to adult and juvenile offenders on Maui and Lanai. Anyone who has experienced or is currently experiencing abuse in an intimate relationship or within a family unit, as well as anyone who has perpetrated violence, is eligible. Puuhonua, PACT’s drop-in center for domestic violence victims in Ohia, acts as a shelter for family members experiencing abuse.

Staff Resources

Staff get support in strengthening families by participating in training on:

- Child abuse and neglect
- Child development
- Cultural awareness
- Family violence
- Issues of poverty
- Parenting skills

Key Elements

- Integration of Early Head Start with Head Start
- Focus on cultural expression as vehicle for learning
- Staff and parent involvement in decisions
- Connection to PACT family centers, domestic violence centers, child abuse and neglect prevention programs, and mental health programs
- Active involvement of mental health specialist

What People Say

“All of the staff feel both the responsibility and the authority to intervene when they see a family in trouble.”
—Staff member

“We’re not downtown or in Waikiki, we’re *here*, and a real part of the community.”
—Staff member

“The most significant impact of this program is reduction of isolation. All of the people here came from village life. Here they have created an international village.”
—Staff member

Early Childhood Curricula

PACT's Head Start teachers use curricula to promote children's social-emotional development and to create communities of cooperation among children and between children and parents. The Peace Curriculum is a collection of songs and activities that promote harmony and the nonviolent resolution of differences by placing these concepts in a cultural framework. The Mediated Learning Curriculum focuses on children's self-expression. It covers topics such as controlling one's own behavior, getting along with people, using the senses, making choices, and understanding feelings. The curriculum provides teachers with a set of intervention techniques to help children change challenging behavior; sometimes, teachers invite parents to volunteer in the child's classroom so that they can observe the teacher modeling these skills and try them at home.

Early Head Start and Head Start

Early Head Start and Head Start provide comprehensive health, education, and social services to families with children ages 0 to 5. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and families with children ages 0 to 3, reaching families at a time at which parent and child are very vulnerable. Head Start serves families with preschool children ages 3 to 5. Both programs give a priority to low-income families and families with special needs.

Early Head Start and Head Start are coordinated and connected at PACT: Families experience no interruption or change of location from one program to the next. And staff communicate across programs, so that when a family starts Head Start, staff are likely to know about the child's developmental process and any needs for extra support in the family. This is especially important for families at risk of child abuse and neglect.

Staff screen children using the social-emotional component of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. Education staff specializing in disabilities as well as teachers review scores with parents. Together, they

"I've gotten the best training I've ever received in this program."
—Staff member

"I had a real conflict with my baby's father about how to discipline our child. Staff backed me up and gave me good ways to convince him that my way was right."
—Participant

develop an individualized service plan for each child, ensuring that the child's individual needs are met in the course of his or her daily activities. Staff perform ongoing assessments and share updates and progress reports with each child's parents. It is mandatory that Head Start programs analyze children's progress in 13 domains, elements, and indicators of development and learning. PACT conducts this analysis in Early Head Start as well and has developed a system for sharing outcomes with the families of children in that program.

Emergency Support for Families

Through a partnership with the Hawaii Community Foundation and the Teresa Hughes Fund (a private endowment), PACT helps families meet emergency needs such as rent, utility bills, medical and educational supplies, and childcare. In order to qualify, the child must either be an orphan or partial orphan, have been born to an unwed mother, or be a victim of abuse. The application process is a teaching tool; families who apply must have plans in place to resolve the underlying issues that led to the crisis. Grants average \$500 but have ranged from \$50 for a bus pass to \$2,000 for dental work. PACT grants \$15,000 to families annually.

In addition, through community partnerships, the program provides funds for school supplies, gift certificates for food at Christmas, and emergency funds for rent, food, furniture, and household items. The program also operates three vans to transport participants to doctor's appointments, enable them to pick up food from the food pantry, or obtain other needed resources.

Family Centers

PACT runs Family Centers in two locations, providing a variety of activities and programs. Each center serves as a modern-day "village well": Community members gather there to draw resources, "talk story," help each other, build social relationships, find resources to support and strengthen family life, and develop a sense of ownership of the community. Many ideas for

events, collaborations, and services come about at these gathering places.

- Kaneohe Community Family Center

This center is located at He'eia Elementary in Kane'ohe, on the island of Oahu, and operates through a partnership with the Hawaii Department of Education. It offers activities and services to the families and the staff of eight elementary, one middle, and one high school, as well as the community at large. Services include: information, referral, and assistance using community resources; help with community organizing; support and self-help groups; parenting education; family literacy; volunteer opportunities; collaboration among service providers; intergenerational activities; computer education; vocational skill development; family goal setting; support for parent involvement in schools; and a monthly newsletter.

- Kuhio Park Terrace Family Center

This center offers social, educational, and vocational activities and programs that focus resources on the development of individual, family, and community capacities. Services include: information and referral, a computer lab, a toy- and book-lending library, life skills workshops, training in providing referral information, school-based education and support, a community newsletter, community celebrations, special events, parenting workshops, concrete services, counseling, and support groups.

Family Literacy

The family literacy program provides parents with opportunities to create books about their cultures and share them with their own and other families.

Family Support Workers

Family support workers work with families participating in PACT programs in areas of social services, health

and dental care, nutrition, and parent involvement. They are the point of contact for families in crisis, and they assist these families by referring them and providing them with transportation to shelters, medical appointments, treatment facilities, and other resources. Family support workers are especially important for families with children in full-day classrooms, because teachers in these classrooms have less time to reach out to parents than staff in partial-day classrooms.

Family support workers are part of the family services division of PACT, which also includes a family service coordinator, a youth services coordinator, a family literacy coordinator, and a bilingual specialist.

Fatherhood Initiative

The fatherhood initiative encourages and promotes fathers' involvement in the program, their children's lives, and the community. At each of the nine PACT centers at which Head Start is offered, half-time father-facilitators:

- Recruit and supervise "room fathers," who staff and coordinate classroom activities such as a Father's Day celebration and field trips
- Encourage fathers to create a safer environment for their children by participating in a neighborhood watch
- Create opportunities for fathers to develop literacy and job readiness skills
- Recruit high-profile men from the community to read to children in the classrooms
- Train men and women on the importance of male nurturing and overcoming barriers to male involvement

Handy Emergency Listing for Parents

The Handy Emergency Listing for Parents (HELP) provides information on a wide array of community resources that support families in times of need, including social service providers, legal assistance, and schools. Its introduction is written in four languages.

Health and Nutrition

PACT's Early Head Start and Head Start programs provide quality health and nutrition services to enrolled families and children. An active Health Service Advisory Committee advocates on behalf of children and families. A comprehensive Nutrition Intake Survey is taken biannually; it includes items suggested by parents and staff. Through the survey, staff determine children's eating patterns and food preferences over a one-year period. Children with special diets are appropriately accommodated, and a nutritionist evaluates each child's food record three times per year and communicates with families on an ongoing basis.

Individual Learning and Education Plans

An individual learning plan is created for each child enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start. To develop these plans, staff screen children and have discussions with families in which they note long-term goals and mid- and short-term objectives. To facilitate the child's progress toward these goals, the child takes part in customized activities in the classroom and at home, and staff and parents promote, observe, and note the child's progress.

For children with disabilities, individualized education plans are also developed. These plans set forth long-term and short-term goals that are specific to each child's diagnosis. To ensure that staff are prepared to carry out the activities in each child's plan, the disabilities specialist administers a survey that identifies areas in which staff training is needed and follows up with technical assistance in those areas.

Lending Library

Families with children in Early Head Start or Head Start can borrow copies of the books their children are reading in the classroom for up to a week. Staff use these books to enrich and strengthen family life in a number of ways: They direct parents' attention to the books as examples of what their children appreciate at their current stage of development and also help

parents use books and stories to establish routines at home.

Mental Health Services

- **Consultant**

PACT has an on-site mental health consultant who:

- Observes children whom program staff feel are acting out or withdrawn and develops behavioral plans for these children with staff and parents
- Provides one-on-one counseling and support to families in which a parent is struggling with mental health issues or in which a child is exhibiting challenging behaviors
- Leads weekly parent education and support groups for parents
- Serves as an observer and a consultant for staff when child abuse or neglect or special needs may be an issue
- Addresses staff mental health issues individually or by incorporating these issues into quarterly “staff wellness days”

The mental health consultant maintains an informal tone in his relationships with staff and families, who call him “Dr. Mike.” In addition to the time he contributes as a paid consultant, he donates many hours and makes himself available for staff and parents to call at home. At PACT, there is no stigma attached to mental health services; everyone sees the mental health consultant as an important and accessible source of support that is there for them, whatever the issue.

- **Intensive Support Services Program**

This program provides mental health services to children and adolescents and their families.

Therapeutic aides, case managers, and therapists provide counseling, supervision, skills training, advocacy, and emotional support. Services are provided in the least restrictive and most natural environment. The program targets people up to 20 years old who qualify under the Individuals with Disabilities Act and Section 504 and who need mental health services to successfully complete their education.

Outreach

Families in the population served by PACT—especially those at the Kuhio Park Terrace site, which is in public housing—tend to be very isolated. To ensure that services reach the families who most need them, pairs of staff and parents reach out to families door-to-door. This enables families to learn about the program in a place that is comfortable to them, from the perspective of a parent who is likely to be a neighbor or friend.

Presence in Community

PACT is embedded in and highly visible to its community. More than one-fourth of the early childhood program staff are parents whose children are or have been enrolled. Services are provided in the communities in which the families served live; PACT established a site at Kuhio Park Terrace, the largest public housing project in the state. PACT has built strong partnerships with shelters, churches, and community service providers, which staff call upon to help parents who need food, shelter, transportation, and other resources.

Program Governance

The structure of PACT provides opportunities for all staff and parents to inform—and know that they are informing—important decisions. For example, when

PACT was reorganized, a consultant led the process, so that all staff and parents could be involved. All were surveyed regarding their needs and thoughts and participated in all levels of decisions, down to the

revision of job responsibilities. A team of staff and parents developed the tool that is used to assess children's educational progress. Committees, which include parents and community members, meet monthly to discuss organizational structure; review forms, procedures, and protocols; and update programs.

- Staff Involvement

Staff are organized in clusters and teams, informal groups in which they share concerns and support. With team members as back-up, staff have the flexibility to respond to families when they are needed. All program managers have an open-door policy, and regular case conferences allow staff to strategize on how to address issues before problems become large. Communication among staff is strong and is facilitated by weekly meetings and a weekly newsletter. Cluster leaders and specialists meet weekly, and supervisors meet monthly. Once each month, PACT closes for an all-staff meeting, coinciding with citywide teacher in-services, at which anyone can bring up any subject and suggest changes to improve PACT. During a quarterly "staff wellness day," staff consult with each other and / or with a psychologist to engage in team building, support, and stress reduction.

- Parent Involvement

The Policy Council is made up of parents with children in Head Start at nine PACT centers, as well as other community members. An elected body, the council meets monthly to discuss and approve or disapprove all proposed policies, program plans, budgets, hiring, and dismissals. The community members on the council often locate or contribute resources for the Head Start program. Two members of the council serve on the PACT governing board. Policy Council members receive training on board functioning and on leadership. In addition, each of PACT's nine centers has its own elected parent committee. Committee meetings are conducted monthly at each center

and serve as a forum for discussing any concerns and guiding activities at the center. Parents choose the dates and times of the meetings. Each committee selects representatives to participate in the Policy Council.

Head Start staff actively include parents in developing and choosing nutrition programs, curricula, services for children with special needs, training, and other programs. Parents can participate in 10 subcommittees that inform specific aspects of program planning.

Social Activities

Parents and staff organize opportunities for parents to talk on an informal basis and to meet families from other PACT sites, including:

- Weekly parents' breakfast club
- Beach day
- Family literacy day
- Family night
- Health fairs
- Multicultural celebrations

Specialists

PACT employs specialists in education, disabilities, health, families, nutrition, and mental health. Generally, family support workers or teachers refer families to these specialists. The specialists also provide support to staff members.

Some of the specialists provide group as well as individual services. The mental health consultant provides individual sessions, leads parent education and support groups, and interacts with children in the classroom weekly. The health specialist provides home visits and gives monthly presentations.

The education specialist helps parents understand what their children are learning in the classrooms,

which helps them become involved in PACT and extend their children's classroom learning into the home.

At the beginning of each school year, teachers receive training from each specialist on noticing when children or families are having problems, talking with families about issues, and other topics. Specialists also provide monthly training sessions for staff and parents.

Staff-Parent Collaboration

PACT fosters strong bonds between staff and parents. Parents work with staff to better support and enhance their children's learning and development. Parents and staff collaborate to develop individual learning goals for children and meet regularly to discuss their progress. Staff consciously model positive reinforcement skills and create many opportunities for parents to apply new knowledge and techniques. They promote active and creative exploration at home as well as in the classroom; parents with children in Early Head Start may choose to have parent-child educators work with them at home to promote their children's development in that environment.

Training

- **Parents**

Parents may attend all training that is available to staff. PACT sponsors parent attendance at various training sessions on the mainland. Parents then train other parents and staff, thereby disseminating the information broadly and becoming empowered, active participants in PACT.

Parents can also participate in training toward becoming a family childcare provider. The 32-hour training provides information on child development, childcare rules and regulations, health and safety, and other topics. Parents who participate in the program are eligible to serve as substitute teachers in PACT's Head Start

classrooms and may eventually be hired as teachers. Approximately 25% of all PACT staff are or have been parents of enrolled children.

- Staff

A number of training programs are available throughout the year, on issues such as child and brain development, child health care, the dynamics of child abuse and neglect, raising “atypical” children, stress reduction techniques, positive parenting techniques, using community resources, and multicultural experiences. Cross training is available from staff of one PACT program to staff of the others; for example, domestic violence staff may open their training to Head Start and Early Head Start staff. This helps staff develop diverse approaches and develop a shared understanding of how to work with families.

Each quarter, all staff are surveyed about their training needs. Responses to the survey are used to create the training calendar for that quarter. Staff also mentor each other across programs.

Volunteering and Mentoring

Volunteering in classrooms and mentoring provide parents with opportunities to develop networks and leadership.

Youth Involvement Initiative

This initiative prepares youths for careers in early childhood education. Students from schools near PACT centers work six hours per week in Head Start classrooms. The initiative builds the youths’ skills, gets youths involved in the community, and develops relationships of mentoring and support between youths and young children.