

2025 Community Impact Report

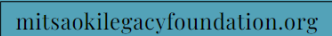
Setting a New Standard of Care for Our Islands



HUI POHALA



Mahalo to Our Partners



Our Board and Staff

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About Hui Pohala

Hui Pohala is a growing coalition of diverse stakeholders working to improve access to high quality palliative care throughout Hawai'i. In Hawaiian, Hui Pohala *hui* means uniting and *pohala* means to provide relief from sickness and worry.

Our logo is also rich in symbolism. In the Hawaiian culture, the color red represents passion and energy and ginger signifies healing. Our logo depicts our commitment to relieving the stress of illness so people can live their best quality of life.

Our Mission

The mission of Hui Pohala is to serve as a catalyst and convener to improve access to high quality palliative care for the people of Hawai'i.

Our Vision

Our vision is for the people of Hawai'i with serious illness to have access to high quality, team based, person-centered palliative care in the setting of their choice.

Our Values

Collaboration: We believe healthcare professionals should work together as an interdisciplinary team and that those with a serious illness should play a key role in helping to direct this team. We also believe that better care requires partnerships and collaborations with individuals and entities in our communities.

Excellence: Every person deserves the best care and that healthcare professionals all along the continuum of care, and in all settings should commit to continuous learning and improvement to function at the top of their license to make high quality palliative care accessible for all in Hawai'i.

Equity: Reducing health disparities is a top priority for Hui Pohala. Everyone in Hawai'i should have access to high quality palliative care, regardless of their socioeconomic status or where they live Hawai'i, including those in rural, underserved areas of our state.

Honor and Respect: We believe patients with a serious illness should receive complete information about their health status so they can make informed decisions about their care and that these decisions will be honored by healthcare professionals and family.

Compassion and Kindness: Every individual with a serious illness deserves to be treated with compassion and kindness throughout their healthcare journey.

A Joint Message from Our Board President and CEO

*F*or far too long, those in Hawai'i who have been diagnosed with a serious illness have not been able to experience the best quality of life. It's a two-fold challenge: patients do not know enough about palliative care to inquire about it, and healthcare professionals at all levels in all settings are not adequately equipped to discuss and provide palliative care for their patients.

The issue is certainly not new. Healthcare professionals all recognize our healthcare system is not where it should be. As a result, patients may unknowingly be giving up an extra, highly effective dimension of support to complement their existing care plan, and providers may not know they can help provide their patients with other resources for better health outcomes. Patients who have access to palliative care can spend more time thriving in a setting of their choice and less time in the hospital.



Hermina "Mia" Taylor
President



Dr. Rae Seitz
Chief Executive Officer

Rising to the Challenge

Hui Pohala has willingly taken on this huge challenge. We are working to weave together a fragmented healthcare system into a cohesive, supportive ecosystem of care and establish a new standard of care for those who need it most.

Although we are a relatively new nonprofit organization, we have begun to chip away at the problem. Thanks to a \$3.6 million grant from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services, Med-QUEST Division, over the past year Hui Pohala has made significant progress to begin to initiate positive change with eight different projects. We believe we are helping to move Hawai'i in the right direction.

Mahalo to Med-QUEST

We are indebted to Med-QUEST for believing in Hui Pohala. Hawai'i is the first state in the nation to offer home and community based palliative care as a preventive benefit for Medicaid beneficiaries. The benefit, which went into effect on January 1, 2025, is game-changing and Hui Pohala had the privilege of helping to move our communities forward to help make palliative care more approachable and this benefit more accessible.

Scratching the Surface

Although a lot of time, energy and effort have been poured into our programs and projects, we've only begun to scratch the surface. There is still much more we need to do and we look forward to continuing to collaborate with the community to uncover solutions together. While the work is difficult, it is our strong belief in the transformative power of palliative care that motivates us to keep moving forward. We hope you will join us.

Mahalo for your ongoing support of Hui Pohala!

Mia Taylor

Hermina "Mia" Taylor, MSN, FNP-BC, APRN-Rx
President, Board of Directors

Rae Seitz

Rae Seitz, MD
Chief Executive Officer

A Solid Foundation

From 2024 to mid-2025, Hui Pohala worked to lay a solid foundation for change. Our Hawai'i Department of Human Services Med-QUEST grant and generous support from philanthropic individuals and organizations helped us get off the ground. In just 13 months, we were able to:

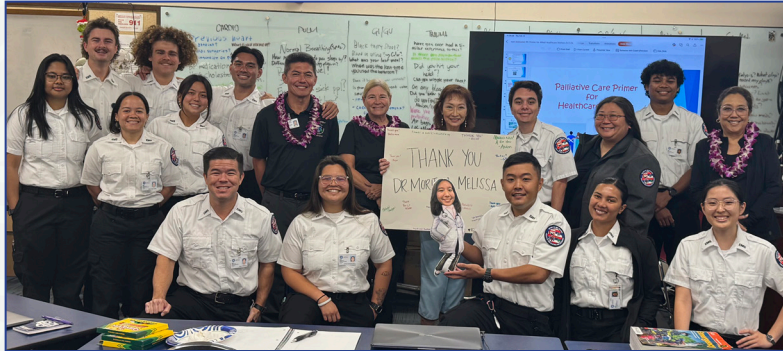
- Craft a statewide strategy for increasing access to and provision of high-quality palliative care based upon a robust environmental scan and critical input from major stakeholders across the state, especially among underserved communities;
- Provide introductory education and training for community health workers and emergency medical technicians to expand Hawai'i's palliative care capacity
- Train healthcare professionals at all levels and in various settings how to effectively facilitate conversations about advance care planning and palliative care with their patients;
- Explore new, innovative ways to recruit, train, and retain palliative care nurses;
- Design the initial framework for a state-of-the-art digital palliative care resource hub, the first of its kind in Hawai'i to empower and equip healthcare providers and patients; and
- Create messaging about home- and community-based palliative care in fresh, new ways that are easy to understand and approachable to the general public, starting with a pilot program in Hilo.



Our Accomplishments

Palliative Care Primer

The Palliative Care Primer project was designed to address a critical gap in the healthcare continuum: the early identification and referral of patients who could benefit from palliative care. By targeting frontline health professionals, including community health workers (CHWs) and first responders, the project successfully moved palliative care from a “last-resort” conversation to an earlier, patient-centered pathway.



The Power of Early Intervention

Allied professionals are uniquely positioned as “powerful messengers” because they often encounter patients and families during moments of

acute crisis or transition. Their ability to provide foundational knowledge can change the entire trajectory of a patient’s journey. The project focused on equipping these individuals with the tools to help ensure palliative care is integrated long before a patient reaches a terminal stage.

Shifting the Narrative: From Hospice to Support

A primary challenge identified during the project was a widespread misunderstanding of what palliative care entails. Feedback from participants, particularly paramedics, entailed:

- **Prior Perceptions:** Before training, most providers associated serious illness care exclusively with hospice and POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) directives.
- **The Paradigm Shift:** The curriculum broadened perspectives, defining palliative care as a distinct, earlier option focused on better health outcomes.
- **Holistic Benefits:** Participants learned that palliative care is not just for the patient; it provides essential support systems for caregivers and families, reducing the collective burden of serious illness.

Key Evaluation Metrics

- **Proactive Advocacy:** Evaluation results confirmed that participants began actively suggesting palliative care to patients who previously would have been overlooked.
- **Proven Results:** 27 respondents reported specific, documented instances where they recommended palliative care directly as a result of the training they received.

Future Direction

The Palliative Care Primer project revealed a widespread, untapped interest in serious illness education across diverse audiences. By continuing to empower frontline providers, including CHWs, we can ensure that every patient facing a serious illness has access to the compassionate, supportive care they deserve.

VitalTalk Expansion

Hui Pohala, in collaboration with VitalTalk and the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine, expanded access to high-quality serious-illness communication training.



Utilizing the VitalTalk curriculum, a nationally acclaimed program that improves the way healthcare providers engage with patients and families facing complex medical decisions, more Hawai'i providers were equipped to recognize and respond to emotional cues, helping patients move through distress and access information needed for informed, values-based decision-making.

Training the Trainer

The project offered multiple training levels tailored to a wide range of caregivers and professionals, strengthening Hawai'i's workforce across disciplines. Hui Pohala successfully trained 14 new VitalTalk faculty members, establishing local instructional capacity on every major island and improving access for rural and remote communities.

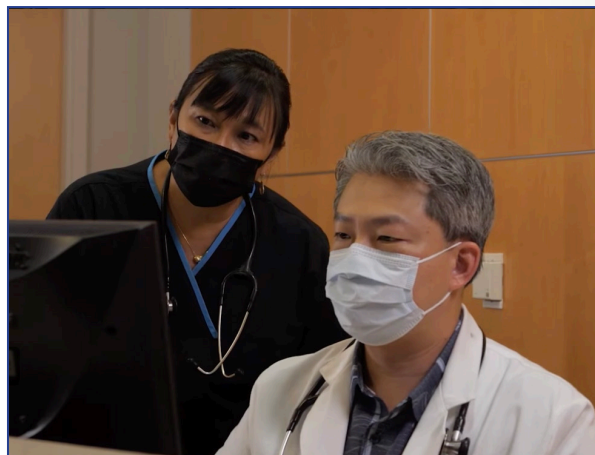
Continuous Improvement

Several lessons emerged from implementation. Demand for training grew rapidly, with participants requesting additional sessions for colleagues, highlighting the need



to reach healthcare professional earlier in their careers, including students and community health workers. Training design was continuously refined through post-session debriefs, improvements to actor coaching, and modifications to case scenarios to better reflect Hawai'i's unique cultures.

Sustainability was identified as an ongoing challenge. Potential solutions include pilot programs, coordinated data collection, and scholarly dissemination to demonstrate value. Evaluation methods are being strengthened through consistent surveys and real-time feedback mechanisms.



ACP Video Platform

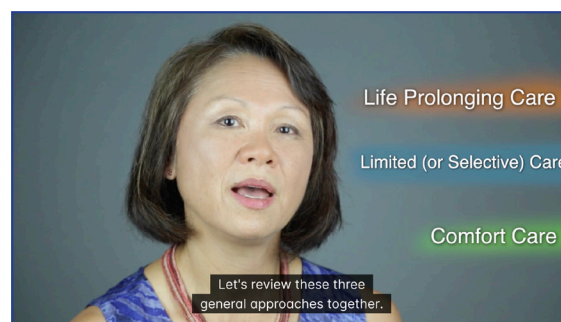
Hui Pohala significantly expanded the adoption of ACP Decisions' video decision aids across Hawai'i, strengthening advance care planning (ACP) conversations and shared decision-making in both clinical and community settings.

Extensive Outreach and Training

More than 539 frontline caregivers and healthcare administrators from 18 contracted organizations were formally trained to integrate the videos into care delivery—an extraordinary increase from 2023, when only one health system was using the video library.

Viewings in Underserved Communities

Patient and clinician engagement also grew substantially, with over 1,228 video views recorded. These viewings represent meaningful moments of patient empowerment, improved understanding, and care alignment, particularly among underserved and limited-English-proficiency populations.







Informed, Patient-Centered Care Decisions

Stories from the field illustrate the depth of impact. Providers report that approximately 80% of patients and families are able to make decisions on goals of care after viewing the videos. Community clinics described how multilingual content helped first-generation immigrants overcome resistance to care planning.

Hospice staff shared that the videos prompted them to complete their own advance healthcare directives and extend conversations into their faith communities. Clinicians consistently praised the tools as easy to use and effective in simplifying complex discussions.

Together, these highlights demonstrate that ACP Decisions' videos are not only reaching more providers, but also catalyzing behavior change among patients and families.

			
Scaling Goals of Care	Heart Failure Videos	Statewide Implementation in Hawai'i	Videos in the Hospital
JAMA Open (2023)	Circulation (2016)	Journal of General Internal Medicine (2016)	Journal of General Internal Medicine (2015)
Read more...	Read more...	Read more...	Read more...

Nurse Apprenticeship Program



The Nurse Apprenticeship Project is a pioneering initiative designed to tackle the critical shortage of specialized nurses in Hawaii, particularly those trained to provide high-quality palliative care in a home setting. By bridging the gap between graduation and professional practice, this project ensures that patients with serious illnesses receive the compassionate, expert care they need within their own communities.

Addressing a Critical Need

The core mission of the apprenticeship program is to create a sustainable pipeline of

skilled healthcare professionals. Key highlights of the project's community contributions include:

- **Real-World Clinical Experience:** The program provides new graduates with essential hands-on training to fill urgent gaps in the healthcare workforce.
- **Expert Mentorship:** Through a partnership with Hawai'i Care Choices, apprentices receive direct guidance from seasoned professionals to master the complexities of palliative care.
- **A Replicable Model:** The project is designed as a blueprint that other healthcare organizations can adopt to multiply the number of trained professionals across the islands.

Improving Patient Outcomes

By preparing more nurse graduates to provide palliative care, the project directly improves access to home and community-based palliative care. This localized approach empowers patients to remain in their homes while receiving professional support, significantly enhancing their quality of life and engagement in their own care decisions.



Hilo-Based Messaging

Hui Pohala, in partnership with Hawai'i Care Choices, advanced community understanding of palliative care through a Hilo-based television messaging project designed to address widespread gaps and misconceptions among both consumers and healthcare providers. Recognizing that palliative care is often misunderstood and inconsistently defined, the project used community access television as an effective medium for education and outreach.



Six culturally grounded episodes were produced with a local host and aired at least twice weekly on television and online platforms. The campaign achieved significant reach, with approximately 165,000 ads aired and a 96% completion rate, demonstrating strong viewer engagement.

Real-Life Patient and Caregiver Stories

Emphasis on real-life patient and caregiver stories helped humanize palliative care and make the content relatable and culturally aligned. Careful thought went into the production of each program. After reviewing more than one hundred potential patient and caregiver candidates, the team adapted its approach to ensure stories were shared respectfully and effectively.

Continuous Improvement in Communication

Early episodes revealed the need for a more emotionally safe and welcoming interview environment, prompting key production changes, including the use of lavalier microphones, softer studio lighting, and a conversational couch-style setting. Guidance from Hui Pohala's subject matter experts strengthened interview techniques and ensured empathy and clarity. Additionally, viewer feedback highlighted the importance of reducing medical jargon, leading to the inclusion of subtitles and on-screen definitions to improve accessibility and comprehension.

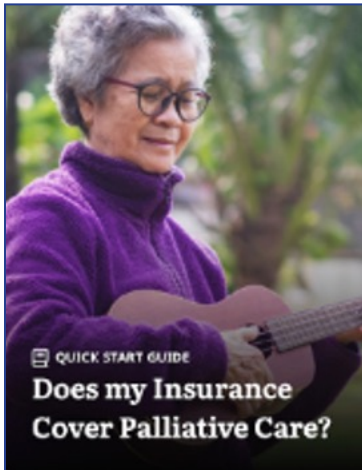
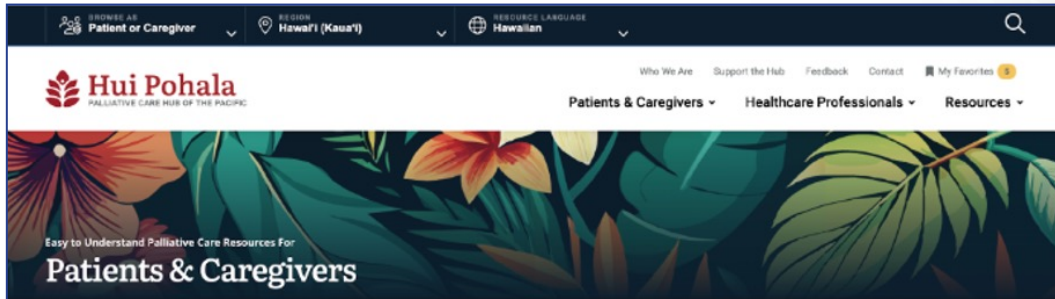
Outreach Beyond TV

Training in digital communication, education, and outreach was also provided to community partners, extending the project's impact beyond the broadcasts themselves.



Palliative Care Resource Hub

The Palliative Care Resource Hub Project addressed the lack of a centralized source for easily accessible current, accurate and relevant palliative care information. Hui Pohala partnered with Beck Digital, which researched the community needs and designed an intuitive, culturally relevant digital platform with curated, multilingual resources and incorporating intelligence to help seekers find information most useful to their needs. This Hub will eventually serve all of the State of Hawai'i and into the Pacific.



Improving Access to Reliable Information

The content process exceeded focus group expectations and can strengthen statewide palliative care efforts by improving access to reliable information and aligning with other training and capacity-building initiatives.

Building the Platform with Tailored Content

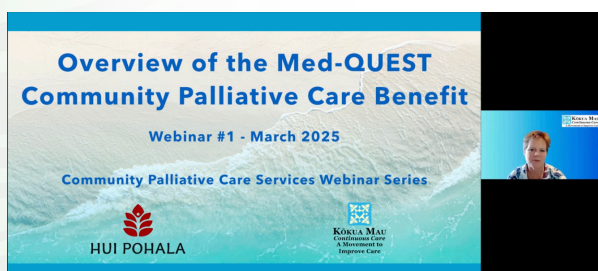
Based on the strong feedback, Hui Pohala is continuing to pursue funding to build out this palliative care resource hub. The platform will continue to improve intelligence to tailor content based on role, purpose, language, and location, ensuring region-specific and

audience-specific guidance.

With both technological infrastructure and content management in place, Hui Pohala is continuing to build on the momentum to move this centralized source forward.



Palliative Care Webinars



With support from the Med-QUEST grant, Hui Pohala oversaw the development and delivery of a comprehensive Palliative Care Webinar Series to educate healthcare providers, health plans, educators, and consumers about Hawai'i's new Medicaid palliative care benefit. As a first-in-the-nation

benefit, the program generated significant interest and questions across the healthcare system.

Filling the Information Gap about the New Benefit

Hui Pohala, in collaboration with Kōkua Mau, designed the webinar series to bridge this knowledge gap by creating a clear and accurate source of information, explaining what the benefit includes, who qualifies, how services are delivered, and how patients and families can access care. Recognizing a critical service gap, the series also included a dedicated webinar on pediatric palliative care, addressing the historical exclusion of children from palliative care services and expanding awareness of their unique needs.

Hui Pohala oversaw the development of four live, audience-specific webinars that provided foundational education on palliative care while offering practical guidance on benefit implementation and access. Topics included eligibility criteria, provider roles, interdisciplinary team models, and strategies for communicating with patients and families about palliative care.

Consultation with Subject Matter Experts

To ensure accuracy and relevance, the series featured subject matter experts from across the palliative care continuum. Nationally recognized consultant Torrie Fields, an expert in palliative care program economics and a key contributor to the Med-QUEST benefit design, provided specialized guidance to ensure the content was comprehensive and aligned with policy intent.



On-Demand Video Access

The webinars received strong positive feedback and quickly became a valued professional development resource. Their impact continues beyond the live events, as all sessions are archived and available on the Hui Pohala, Med-QUEST, and Kōkua Mau websites for on-demand access.

	Home Health	Palliative Care Services	Hospice	Home & Community Based Services	Concurrent Care for Children
Eligibility Criteria	Homebound, with expectation of improvement	Serious illness, with expectation of ongoing decline, patient assessment for eligibility/need	Terminal illness, with prognosis < 6 months, forego disease-related treatments, physician attestation of prognosis	Would otherwise require care in an institutional setting, such as a nursing home	Complex health needs; in need of extra care and support to remain at home/in the community; Want to avoid going to the hospital or long-term care facility; meets HCBS criteria
Services	Speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, wound care, IV placements, clinical nursing visits	Pain and symptom management; advance care planning; shared decision making; care coordination; 24/7 availability of clinical nursing, home health aide, medical, social work, spiritual care, grief counseling	Pain and symptom management; advance care planning; shared decision making; care coordination; 24/7 availability of clinical nursing, home health aide, medical, social work	Pain management, homemaker services, home health aide services, personal care services, adult day health, rehabilitation, respite care	Pain and symptom management; advance care planning; shared decision making; care coordination; 24/7 availability of clinical nursing, home health aide, medical, social work
Concurrent Care	Concurrent treatment not limited, ranging from conservative to aggressive	Concurrent treatment not limited, ranging from conservative to aggressive	Not available, except for children under age 21	Services stop while admitted to skilled nursing facility or other inpatient setting	N/A
Treatment Goals	Short term, limited therapies, focused on functional improvement	Coordinate medical treatments, manage pain and symptoms, and ensure patient and caregiver goals are documented and met	Limited and focused on pain management and symptom management; Coordination of durable medical equipment, medications, and in-home supplies	Personal assistance; limited supportive services	Focused on pain and symptom management; Coordination of durable medical equipment, medications, and in-home supplies

By strengthening understanding of this new benefit, the series is helping to build a more informed and coordinated healthcare workforce. Future plans include updating the series to reflect evolving provider, patient and family experiences as palliative care continues to mature in Hawai'i.

PEACE (Promoting Engagement, Aloha, and Compassion): Social Work & Spiritual Care Special Interest Group



PEACE: Social Work & Spiritual Care Special Interest Group—Promoting Engagement, Aloha, and Compassion in the care of people facing serious illness—is a Hui Pohala initiative dedicated to strengthening Hawai'i's palliative care workforce. PEACE focuses on empowering social workers and spiritual care providers to play a leadership role in delivering high-quality, culturally responsive palliative care across the islands.

In 2024, Hui Pohala convened a series of meetings with prominent local social workers and nationally recognized experts to identify opportunities to grow and support the field of palliative social work in Hawai'i. This collaboration led to the launch of monthly "Munch and Learn" webinars highlighting the essential role of social work in caring for individuals with serious illness. Each session attracted 50–100 participants and received overwhelmingly positive feedback, demonstrating strong interest and a clear need for continued professional development.

PEACE's mission is to strengthen and sustain a skilled, compassionate social work workforce dedicated to palliative care in Hawai'i, while its vision centers on a resilient workforce grounded in cultural humility and community values. Core initiatives for 2025–2026 include an 11-part Munch and Learn webinar series aligned with the National Consensus Project Domains of Palliative Care, continuing education opportunities through Hawai'i Pacific Health, and access to ESPEC training. The ESPEC program includes an eight-hour asynchronous course endorsed by the National Association of Social Workers, followed by advanced, in-person training led by national experts.

By equipping social workers with advanced skills and leadership capacity, PEACE aims to create a ripple effect—building expertise within organizations and communities statewide. With more than 600 licensed social workers across Hawai'i, PEACE is closing a critical gap by expanding education, strengthening interdisciplinary teams, and ensuring people facing serious illness receive coordinated, dignified, and compassionate care.



The Future

Our Strategic Plan

Transforming palliative care across Hawai'i requires clinical excellence, a systems approach, and an understanding of the economic and political environment of our state. Critically, it demands a unified, community-driven strategy that bridges the gap between state-level policy and local, on-the-ground needs which are best informed by the unique communities in which our residents live and work.

The Community Palliative Care Strategic Plan Project sought to create a unified roadmap, based upon community feedback, experiences, and ideas. Our goal is to move away from the current fractured system toward a coordinated ecosystem where every individual facing serious illness receives high-quality, culturally sensitive support.

This project consisted of in-person as well as virtual meetings and phone calls with residents, providers and community leaders from each island, with an emphasis on the neighbor islands and rural areas.

A Vision for Unified Care

The extensive community feedback resulted in four transformative recommendations to catalyze systemic change:

- **Statewide Palliative Care Advisory Council**

The initial community feedback showed a clear need for ongoing collaboration and conversation. This council will bring together palliative care experts, state policymakers, healthcare executives, and community leaders to provide an authoritative voice for palliative care. By influencing resource allocation and maintaining a consistent listening process, the council will accelerate improvements in care quality and access to palliative care across the islands.

- **Provider and Health Plan Learning Collaboratives**

Recognizing that every community has a unique cultural ecosystem, these collaboratives will create a level playing field to empower local providers, community organizations, native healers, and health plans to solve challenges specific to their communities. This ground-level approach ensures that palliative care is tailored to help patients remain in their homes and communities while being fully engaged in their own care decisions.

- **Digital Resource Hub**

There is enthusiastic, statewide support for a central hub that provides vetted, culturally appropriate materials for all levels of caregiving. This hub will address critical issues such as language literacy and cultural sensitivity, ensuring that information is accessible, appropriate, and acceptable to all.

- **Strategic Communications Campaign**

A major barrier to accessing palliative care is persistent misconceptions about palliative care and what value it brings to the care of someone with serious illness. A statewide campaign can “up the game” on palliative care messaging. By providing clear, simple to understand messaging about palliative care in engaging ways that resonate with our island lifestyle, we can better ensure that everyone in Hawai‘i is empowered to access these vital services.

Coupled with work to equip providers with better communication skills, we can elevate the conversation in our communities, socialize the value that quality palliative care enhance care for those with serious illness, and normalize the understanding and provision of high quality palliative care in our state to significantly improve medical, clinical, social, and economic outcomes.

Building on Success

This strategic plan is not just a vision; it is backed by successful partnerships with dedicated organizations such as Torrie Fields Associates, CTAC-Innovations, Papa Ola Lokahi, USC School of Gerontology, Kōkua Mau, and many others. These initiatives are already moving from concept to reality, ensuring that the new home and community-based palliative benefit reaches those who need it the most.

Through these efforts, Hui Pohala is creating a future where high-quality palliative care is not just a benefit, but a fundamental standard for every community in Hawai‘i.

Help Hui Pohala Continue the Momentum

Please consider joining Hui Pohala to create a vibrant palliative care system to transform care for those with serious illness in Hawai'i. Your contribution will allow Hui Pohala to continue our important, catalytic work.

Our initial grant from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services, Med-QUEST Division, has allowed Hui Pohala to make progress in our mission and uncover new ways to fill critical gaps to create a robust palliative care network in our state. Your donation will allow us to continue this momentum.

Hui Pohala is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and your contribution is tax-deductible. To make a secure, online contribution use the QR code, visit huipohala.org or contact Dr. Rae Seitz, Hui Pohala's chief executive officer, at rseitz@huipohala.org.





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