



Kaka`ako Family Assessment Center (FAC)

Summary

The Kaka`ako FAC is an emergency shelter and resource hub for families experiencing homelessness in the city and county of Honolulu, HI. Staff help participants secure documents such as identification and Social Security cards, understand and apply for public benefits, apply for jobs, and search for and secure housing within 90 days of intake into the FAC. The FAC brings wraparound services on-site to make it easier for participants to access the supports they need to stabilize their families and engage in the job and housing search. (Note: Multiple assessment centers in the state serve different populations, including individuals, couples without children, and families, and are operated by various organizations. This case study focuses on one assessment center specifically serving families.)

Funding source



The Hawai`i Department of Human Services (DHS) funds Catholic Charities to operate the Kaka`ako FAC. In 2015, the governor of Hawai`i issued a special proclamation declaring homelessness a statewide emergency and dedicated funding to programs and services addressing the issue. DHS and Catholic Charities entered into a contract following this proclamation to construct and open the FAC. The FAC receives funding for program operations from funds appropriated by the Hawai`i State Legislature to provide services to people experiencing homelessness. In 2020, the FAC had a \$750,000 yearly operating budget.

Intervention description



The goal of the FAC is to stabilize families experiencing homelessness by providing temporary shelter, connecting families to wraparound services, and engaging them in a 4-part sequence to help them find a job and permanent housing within 90 days. By offering all services in one place, the FAC seeks to eliminate barriers—such as transportation or time constraints—that families might face when accessing services in separate locations.

Services provided



Case management; Employment retention services; Financial education; Health services (*Physical health services; Substance use disorder treatment and mental health services*); Work readiness activities (*Employment coaching; Job search assistance*)

Populations served

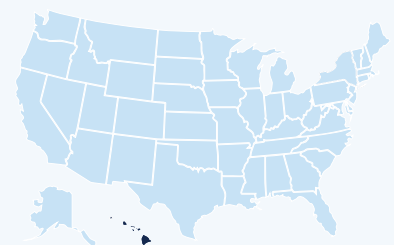


The FAC serves families experiencing homelessness, which the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines as lacking a fixed, regular nighttime residence that is intended for human habitation. In families served by the FAC, someone in the family must be legally caring for a minor. A mix of one- and two-parent families stay at the FAC.

Setting



The FAC is in the Kaka`ako neighborhood of Honolulu, HI.



Year first implemented

2016 (ongoing at the time of data collection)

What are case studies?

Case studies provide practitioners with information about innovative interventions that states, counties, community-based organizations, or other entities are undertaking to improve employment outcomes for TANF participants and other individuals with low incomes, especially public assistance recipients. **Case studies cover interventions not included elsewhere in the Clearinghouse because they have not yet been rigorously evaluated.**

The FAC facility is a large, converted maintenance shed with semiprivate cubicles that can house up to 12 families or 50 people, whichever comes first. FAC staff include two case managers who conduct assessments and help participants access services and supports, two housing specialists who help participants secure permanent housing, and one program supervisor and one program director who have supervisory and managerial duties. Most staff have years of experience working with populations experiencing homelessness. Although staff have specific roles at the FAC, program leaders encourage staff to serve participants in whatever way a participant needs in any given moment. Program staff work one of two shifts to provide staffing coverage 16 hours a day, from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. These lengthened service hours allow staff to build rapport with and serve participants. A security guard is stationed at the FAC overnight.

Other agencies serving people experiencing homelessness refer families to the FAC. Sometimes families hear of the FAC by word of mouth and contact the shelter directly. During intake, case managers assess parents' service needs and develop a service plan outlining their goals. Although all service plans have the same 3 main goals of obtaining permanent housing in 90 days, developing tenancy skills, and maintaining a monthly spending budget, parents outline their own steps to achieve those larger goals. The FAC adheres to the Housing First model, which prioritizes moving people into shelter without prerequisites such as sobriety as a condition of entry. The model is premised on the understanding that shelter is a basic need to be met before people can address other challenges.

FAC participants follow a standard 4-step sequence of events to meet the goal of transitioning into permanent housing in 90 days.

- First, case managers help participants obtain documents like identification, birth certificates, Social Security cards, and homeless verification letters necessary for applying for public benefits, jobs, and housing.
- Second, case managers help participants apply for public benefits. Many families are facing a lapse in

The FAC model is rooted in DHS's `Ohana Nui approach, which seeks to address multigenerational needs to lift entire families out of poverty.

benefits when they arrive at the FAC, often because they are homeless and not receiving mail notifying them of recertification meetings, needed documents, or program requirements. Once a month, a benefits eligibility worker from DHS and an outreach worker from Hawai'i's Medicaid program come to the FAC to answer questions about different benefits programs, determine participants' eligibility, and, in some cases, authorize their benefits. The same benefits workers come to the FAC every month, so they can offer customized, specific guidance to participants; such individualization is not available in a standard DHS office.

- Third, case managers help participants find employment by assisting them with their job search and applications. Many participants are working when they enter the FAC, but their wages are often low (generally ranging from the \$10.10 Hawai'i minimum wage to \$17.50 per hour). These participants focus on finding jobs with higher pay. Staff use their work computers to help participants set up email accounts, write cover letters, and build resumes. The FAC also partners with a program called Hele2Work that offers employment search assistance to homeless populations, such as creating resumes, practicing interview skills, and budgeting. Hele2Work can also pay for required uniforms or bus passes when participants are offered jobs.
- Finally, once participants are receiving benefits and have a steady income (ideally in the third or fourth week of the program), dedicated housing specialists help participants search for housing and additional rental assistance. (The majority of participants require some form of rental assistance.) For example, the specialists might refer participants to Rent to Work, a federally funded program that offers rental subsidies for people experiencing homelessness who are working. Rent to Work participants follow an individualized employment and training plan to remain eligible for the subsidies,

including building a budget and maintaining employment. Housing specialists are intentional about understanding participants' neighborhood and community preferences when engaging in the housing search, as participants' choice in where they live is another tenet of the Housing First model.

The FAC model is rooted in DHS's `Ohana Nui approach, which seeks to address multigenerational needs to lift entire families out of poverty. The wraparound services on-site provide basic and necessary supports for all family members in one place. These supports include child care and parenting programs, as well as a relationship with the Hawaii Department of Education to secure bus passes and school uniforms for children. The FAC also partners with a mobile health van and public health nurses to provide free medical care, including vaccinations, psychiatric services, and general health care for the full family.

Given the various steps that need to happen within the 90-day timeline, program staff describe their case management and housing efforts as hands-on and intensive. Staff hold weekly meetings with participants to review their progress toward the goals laid out in their service plans. Staff and participants also frequently interact in more informal contexts throughout the day because staff work on-site in the FAC, and there is staff coverage 16 hours a day. Staff are constantly accessible to participants.

The 90-day timeline, however, is not a hard deadline. If a family has been actively trying to secure a job and housing and is nearing 90 days, they can stay at the FAC longer. The average length of stay at the FAC is about 84 days. Once a participant secures housing, the FAC provides them with an exit basket that contains essentials like laundry detergent and towels. Staff check in with participants three months and six months after they transition out of the FAC. Although the FAC is unable to provide ongoing case management or wraparound services to participants who have exited, staff try to connect them to other agencies providing emergency assistance in case they need support.

Research on intervention to date



This intervention has not been rigorously evaluated for effectiveness. The FAC tracks information on participant engagement with the program, including length of stay, housing outcomes, and narrative notes about participants' progress toward their goals. There has not been any evaluation of the FAC's impacts.

The FAC intervention was selected as one of nine innovative interventions supporting the employment of people with low incomes. These interventions are described in a series of in-depth, descriptive case studies as part of the [State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Case Studies](#) project, funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. The case study for that project documented information on the services the FAC offers, including populations served; funding; measurements of participant progress; and promising practices, challenges, and lessons learned. This information was obtained through a site visit, including observations of program activities and interviews with participants, staff, and leaders; document reviews; and a follow-up telephone call about how the program responded to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The case study discusses two FACs, one of which has since closed and therefore is not a subject of this Pathways Clearinghouse case study.

Case study information sources

The primary source of information for this case study was the State Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Case Studies report described earlier, which collected information via a site visit in February 2020 and a telephone call in August 2020. The Pathways Clearinghouse shared a near-finalized draft of the case study with the Hawai'i Department of Human Services and incorporated revisions for accuracy and completeness. For more information about the methods for selecting and developing the case studies, please see the Protocol for Pathways Clearinghouse Case Studies on the [Pathways Clearinghouse project page](#).

More information



More information on this program is available at <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/blog/gov-ige-announces-completion-of-the-family-assessment-center/>.

Jayanthi, A., and A. Glosser (2021). *Case study of a program serving families who are homeless: 'Ohana Nui—Family Assessment Centers*, Washington, DC: Mathematica.

Available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/case-study-program-serving-families-who-are-homeless-ohana-nui-family-assessment>.

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