



# Hawai'i's Early Childhood system can play a key role in **fostering resilience** for children exposed to **Family Violence**.

## PREVALANCE

Violence is often interlinked. More than half of children who witness family violence are also maltreated.

[Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2010](#)

### Witnessing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):

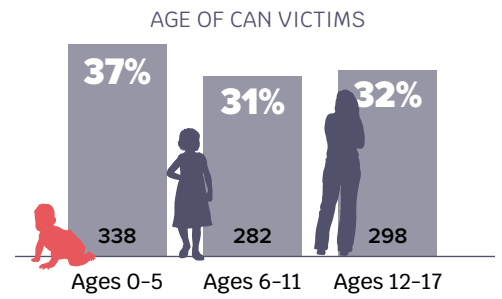
Exposure to Family Violence: Almost 1 in 10 American children saw one family member assault another family member, and more than 25 percent had been exposed to family violence during their life (Finkelhor et al., 2009). [U.S. Department of Justice](#)

In families where IPV occurs, 70%–80% of cases report violence within the first year postpartum. Children 0–5 are in close proximity to caregivers, increasing their likelihood of witnessing violence. [National Library of Medicine](#)

### Child Abuse & Neglect (CAN):

In Hawai'i, 919 children were confirmed to be victims of child abuse and neglect in 2025. 338 CAN victims were age 0 to 5.

**The largest group of child abuse and neglect victims are 0-5.**



State of Hawaii, Department of Human Services, [Databook 2025](#)

## IMPLICATIONS

Severe, lasting stress in early childhood changes the brain and can have lifelong impacts.

Our youngest keiki are the most vulnerable victims.

A sound social and emotional base is the launching pad for all other development – the physical, motor and cognitive development that prepares children for both school and success in life.

Abuse and neglect may result in toxic stress, which can change brain development and increase the risk for problems like posttraumatic stress disorder and learning, attention, and memory difficulties.

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

The lifetime economic burden rivals the cost of public health problems, such as heart disease and diabetes.

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

In the United States, the total lifetime economic burden associated with child abuse and neglect was about \$592 billion in 2018.

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

**This equates to \$2.6 billion in Hawai'i.**

The lifetime economic cost per child includes:

- Childhood Health Care
- Child Welfare
- Special Education
- Criminal Justice
- Adult Medical
- Productivity Loss



[www.childsavers.org/child-abuse-spot](http://www.childsavers.org/child-abuse-spot)

## RISK FACTORS

Violence occurs in all types of families. Some factors increase the risk and make families more vulnerable.

Children living in poverty experience more abuse and neglect. Experiencing poverty can place a lot of stress on families, which may increase the risk for child abuse and neglect.

**Rates of child abuse and neglect are five times higher for children in families with low socioeconomic status compared to families with a higher socioeconomic status.**

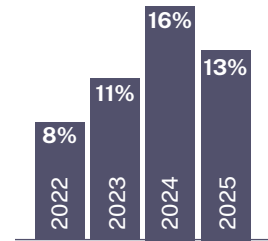
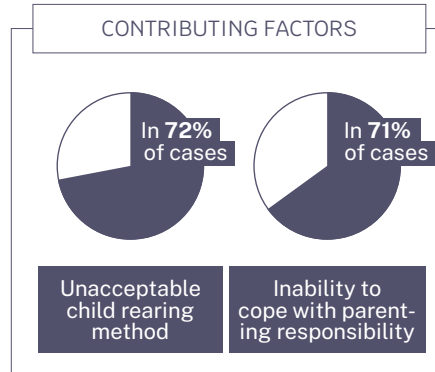
[Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)



**Contributing factors also include limited access to culturally-based medical and mental health care, and experiences of historical trauma.**

[Hawaii State Coalition against Domestic Violence, www.hscadv.org](#)

Contributing factors include parental stress and heavy continuous child care responsibilities.



Child care responsibilities have increasingly been identified as contributing factor in CAN cases.

Heavy Continuous Child Care Responsibility

State of Hawaii Department of Human Services Social Services Division, [Annual Progress and Services Report 2025](#)

## PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Resilience is built in young children through nurturing, stable, supportive relationships.

**Early Care and Education (ECE) can play a key role in fostering resilience.**

- Out of home ECE can reduce children's IPV exposure and related stressors and prevent unsafe contact with abusive parents.
- ECE may mitigate the negative influences of IPV by providing positive experiences, resources, and services.
- ECE may strengthen children's adaptational systems, particularly emotion regulation and social development.
- ECE influences vary based on care type and quality, providers' awareness of IPV exposure, and children's needs.

[Juliann H. Nicholson, Yoonsook Ha, Ellen R. DeVoe, Renée Spencer, Alytia A. Levendosky](#)



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Commit to Keiki is a statewide, non-partisan collaborative designed to ensure a brighter start for Hawai'i's youngest keiki and their families. [CommitToKeiki.org](#)

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) takes action for Hawai'i's youngest keiki by bringing together government and non-government stakeholders to implement systems-level strategies. [HawaiiActionStrategy.org](#)

Contact: Jared Ellis  
[jared@ecashawaii.org](mailto:jared@ecashawaii.org)