

2009 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 09-W-07HI

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Hawaii

Assign Program Category (applicant): Human Services (Use list at end of application)

1. **Program Name:** Hawaii Differential Response System
2. **Administering Agency:** State of Hawaii Department of Human Services (DHS)
3. **Contact Person:** Alan Eyerly, Senior Communications Advisor
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8. **Web site Address:** www.hawaii.gov/dhs
9. **Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.** The Hawaii Differential Response

System is a Web-based intake process that assesses each report of suspected child abuse or neglect to determine the most appropriate, most effective and least intrusive response that can be provided by DHS or our community partners. This "triage" system carefully weighs numerous safety factors to assess the level of risk in a family home and determine the best response.

10. **How long has this program been operational?** DHS implemented it in December 2005.

11. **Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?**

Prior to implementing the Differential Response System, DHS was removing children from their biological parents at up to four times the national average with no improvement in safety outcomes. About two-thirds of these children were quickly returned to their family homes, meaning they probably could have stayed with their parents if services were provided. Another problem was that DHS workers had such heavy caseloads that they did not have sufficient time to focus on making widespread enhancements to our child welfare system, as required by the Program Improvement Plan developed for Hawaii following the federal Child and Family Services Review.

12. **Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.** When DHS receives a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, the family home is evaluated with the online Differential Response System to determine if the level of risk is low, moderate or high. In low-risk cases, DHS offers the parents family strengthening services. In moderate-risk cases without safety concerns, DHS places the family in voluntary case management. In high-risk cases with safety concerns, children are removed from the family and placed in foster care.

13. **Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?** The effectiveness of this Web-based system has garnered national attention, including a March 2008 article in the Children's Bureau Express publication of the U.S. Administration for Children & Families. Here is the link:

<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issueid=92§ionid=2&articleid=1500>

The Differential Response System has helped produce a 50 percent drop in the number of foster children from 3,000 to 1,500, which is a 16-year low. More importantly, the child re-abuse rate has also fallen by half to just 3 percent, which is far better than the national standard of 6.1 percent.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.) Start-up costs were minimal. DHS worked with the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services to develop the software program.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs? Since this is a software application already in use by our intake workers, there is no cost.

16. How is the program funded? See above.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number. This change was made internally by DHS and did not require legislative approval.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program? The software program runs on our existing computers.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? Other states are adopting Differential Response Systems, but Hawaii was one of the first.

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ? I do not have detailed information about programs in other states.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? Yes.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples. The Differential Response System has been an overwhelming success. It has been positively received by the community and by our DHS workers. The drop in caseloads has enabled DHS workers to provide better service to their remaining clients.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception? We continue to monitor the program and will make improvements as needed. This program is especially helpful as Hawaii prepares for its second federal Child and Family Services Review in June 2009.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program? The Differential Response System is easily adaptable by other states.

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