

Hawaii Keiki nurse spearheads Pearl-City Waipahu Complex Area COVID-19 testing program

In summer of 2021, Hawaii Keiki: Healthy & Ready to Learn (HK) registered nurse Shantelle Bautista, BSN, RN, who is dedicated to the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) Pearl City-Waipahu Complex Area, spearheaded the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Increasing Community Access to Testing (ICATT) COVID-19 testing pilot program.



The ICATT pilot program is part of the CDC Testing and Diagnostics Working Group that provides support for all aspects of testing strategies. One of their goals is to broaden testing access and support testing programs by providing no-cost testing to underserved populations. The ICATT program operates in pharmacies, schools, surge & pop-up sites, and other priority locations.

The Pearl City-Waipahu Complex Area comprises 17 elementary, middle and high schools. This particular Complex Area was quick to sign up for the ICATT pilot program with five schools initially identified to offer free in-school COVID-19 testing.

Bautista's role as an RN included assisting the Pearl City-Waipahu Complex Area with navigating the intricacies of health & safety within the school setting during the pandemic including the education and implementation of mitigation strategies, in addition to providing COVID-19 rapid response management for cases on campuses. Additionally, she is a

health educator and serves as a community advocate for students and their families.



The ICATT pilot program lasted 3 months from June to August 2021. During this time, school staff, teachers, parents and students faced various challenges and worked together to overcome them. One of the greatest challenges centered around technology. “Many of our families lack access to computers at home and are not comfortable navigating the internet. So online pre-registration was actually a hindrance and a barrier for testing,” said Bautista. “Families also didn’t know how to use smartphones to scan QR codes. We made adjustments and provided paper consent forms which yielded the best results and made it much easier for families to participate.”

The pilot program has since completed, but was an important and unique opportunity to engage the school community with COVID-19 testing during the summer. This pilot program

increased and fostered a sense of security and built confidence for families and staff as the school made plans to re-open for in-person learning in the fall.

“Phenomenal teamwork carried us over and around all the obstacles,” said Bautista. “Hawaii’s COVID-19 testing coordinator, Audrey Fan, and the CVS field testing team, headed by pharmacist Nicholas Ferreira were great to work with. Everyone was dedicated to helping the students and our community. We felt strongly that providing this service was our kuleana (responsibility).”

For Bautista, the most rewarding aspect of the ICATT COVID-19 testing Pilot Program was seeing a sense of relief and confidence on the faces of the teachers, parents and students. Everyone showed tremendous gratitude to the testing team and the school for proactively taking steps to protect the school community.

For more information about the ICATT COVID-19 testing Pilot Program, contact Laura Trinkle, Hawaii Keiki director of operations, administration and relations at ltrinkle@ucera.org.