

September 24, 2009

## Hawaii child-care providers help fill school furlough gaps

Child-care providers working to help parents on Fridays

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The largest providers of after-school child care say they plan to offer services on "Furlough Fridays," when more than 170,000 public school students across the state will not report to school.

The community groups, including the YMCA of Honolulu, Kama'aina Kids, and the Boys and Girls Club of Hawaii, say they have not hashed out all the details yet, but they will be offering some kind of day care and hope to utilize school facilities to do so. Officials say they also hope to work with some of the more than 13,500 public school teachers who will be on furlough those days.

"Our mission is to service the kids of the community as best we can," said Mark Nishiyama, co-founder and vice president of Kama'aina Kids, which operates the A-Plus afterschool program at more than 50 schools.

"When there was the teachers strike many years ago, we helped take care of kids so parents could continue to work," Nishiyama said.

Logistically, Kama'aina Kids has not figured out exactly what their Furlough Friday programs would look like and where they would happen. But Nishiyama said he is working with principals from the schools where the company currently operates the A-Plus program.

"Right now, we don't have the manpower to do it at all of our school sites," Nishiyama said, adding that Kama'aina Kids may have to enlist the support of furloughed teachers.

"It would be an opportunity for them to work on days they aren't getting paid ... (and) to work with some of their own students," he said.

Hawai'i public school teachers Tuesday night ratified a two-year contract that amounts to a 7.9 percent pay cut and will shut down the school system for 17 days now commonly referred to as Furlough Fridays. The first Friday furlough is scheduled for Oct. 23 and will occur twice a month for the school year except for December, when three furlough days have been scheduled.

The furloughs are intended to help address the \$227 million in cuts to the public school system mandated by the governor. The state Board of Education voted to only seek \$117 million in furloughs and labor savings, while cutting the rest from programs and school-level funding.

## School space eyed

Daniel Hamada, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction for the state Department of Education, said the DOE has been meeting with groups such as the YMCA and Kama'aina Kids

about using school facilities.

"For private providers, they would work with individual principals, fill out forms to apply for the use of facilities," he said.

That would mean private groups would be charged by the state for using classrooms or a school's cafeteria during the furlough days, he said.

The cost of using school facilities varies based on the type of room, utility costs on the various islands and other criteria, said Sandy Goya, spokeswoman for the DOE. In general, a classroom without air conditioning would cost approximately \$20 an hour to rent, she said.

YMCA of Honolulu is also one of the largest providers of the A-Plus afterschool program, operating in about 50 school sites. Susan Nakamura, spokeswoman for the YMCA of Honolulu, said officials met yesterday and are committed to creating programming on furlough days.

"We're still working out the details, including the price structure. We're also talking to the school sites about the use of facilities," she said.

Nakamura said YMCA already serves about 7,000 school kids through its existing afterschool programs. Details likely will be announced in the coming days.

"We've always been there for parents and children, and this time is no different," she said.

The Boys and Girls Club of Hawaii, which operate six sites on O'ahu and three on Kaua'i, also hopes to provide childcare on the 17 furlough days. But David Nakata, executive director, said the scope of the programming will depend heavily on the amount of money available.

"This is a topic of conversation we're having internally. As you know, all of the nonprofits are taking it in the shorts, so to speak, in regards to donations and financial resources," he said.

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