



Making a Difference for Young Children



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Wellness Begins in Early Childhood

What happens to children in the first few years of life plays an important role in their school readiness and long-term wellness. Babies are born ready to learn and their early experiences literally shape their developing brains. Loving, responsive, and secure relationships with parents and other caregivers help babies' brains grow and support healthy development. In fact, the quality of relationships between young children and their caregivers is the most important predictor of children's long-term health and well-being!

Kariñu Supports Young Child Wellness

Kariñu is Guam's Early Childhood System of Care, located within the Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS). Kariñu works to support young children ages birth – eight years by providing the following direct services:

- developmental screening;
- assessments;
- enhanced home visitation;
- family support activities;
- early childhood mental health consultation; and
- early childhood mental health clinical services.

Developmental Milestones Matter

Every child is unique and develops at his/her own pace. At the same time, there are developmental milestones that children typically reach at certain ages. Tracking children's development is important. It allows caregivers to identify children's strengths and identifies children who may have a developmental delay or be at risk. It helps caregivers know when to seek help.

While all areas of development are important, children's social/emotional development is the foundation for all later learning and positive mental health. Disruptions in children's social emotional development can have a negative impact on their ability to relate to others, manage their behavior, and school readiness. Young children with challenging behaviors are more likely to be rejected by their peers, receive less positive feedback from teachers and caregivers, and are less likely to succeed in kindergarten.

You can easily track your child's development using the Center for Disease Control's free Milestone Tracker App.



Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

Download CDC's FREE Milestone Tracker App

 Track Milestones

 Share a Summary

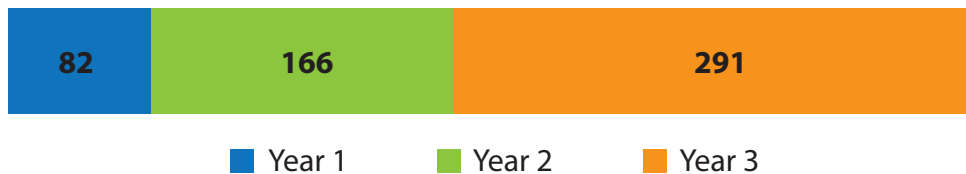
 Get Tips & Activities

Learn more at cdc.gov/MilestoneTracker

How is Kariñu Helping?

- 539** children have received developmental screening.
- 142** children have been referred for additional early childhood services, including enhanced home visitation.
- 29** family support activities have been conducted and participants learned new parenting skills.

Number of Screenings Increased Over Time

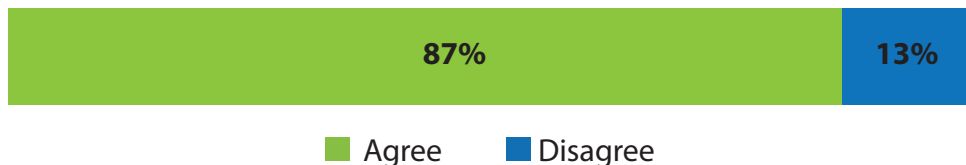


Caregivers Report After Family Support Activities

I learned something that will help me as a parent



I plan to change something about my parenting



Families Are Positive About Services

Family Service Survey: Caregiver Perspective on Services	% Reporting Positively
Satisfaction with Services	96%
Staff Interactions	82%
Increased Parenting Knowledge and Skills	77%
Child, Caregiver, and Family Outcomes	75%

Family Voices



"Being part of the services has given me confidence as a parent and family/ household."



"I really appreciate this program and I would recommend it to anyone I know that needs it."



"The most helpful thing they did was explained different ways on how to help our child...and how to understand and handle our child's behavior."

*Quotes were taken from family surveys and do not necessarily reflect the experiences of the individuals in the photos.

Families Share About Kariñu



Jamie Frietas

What brought you to Kariñu?

When my son turned 20 months old, I noticed that he wasn't speaking as much as other kids his age, and he had trouble communicating with me which led to challenging behaviors. As a mother, I try my best not to compare my child to others because not all children develop at the same rate. I knew there was something that could be done to recognize these concerns that I had for my son. So I decided to have my son screened by the staff at Kariñu.

How has Kariñu helped your child and family?

The results from the screening answered my questions and doubts. He was delayed in communication and a few other areas. I was quickly referred to Guam Early Intervention System (GEIS) for his speech and cognitive development. I am receiving services from Kariñu for my son's social, emotional, and behavioral concerns. Finding out the results of the screenings became a very emotional time for me. My case worker was someone who helped me realize that I am a strong mother and the first step is getting help. As I continue to receive services from Kariñu and GEIS, I have noticed the progress in my son's development and behavior. This is my biggest motivation for me as his mother. Seeing where he was and how far he has come is the greatest feeling and I thank Kariñu for being there for me and my family every step of the way.

What would you like to share with other families?

You are not alone. You are the greatest advocate for your children. Don't be afraid to ask for help. If Kariñu cannot assist with your specific needs, they will find the help and resources for you. They also offer many family support activities that happen monthly. I try my best to attend these events. I meet lots of new people and make new friends who are going through the same challenges. I learn valuable information from the peer support that I use in our daily lives and it is all FREE!



Deborah Polmal

What brought you to Kariñu?

I always thought my son needed help with his speech. This was the main reason. I saw their ad on TV and flyers in other places. I read that Kariñu helped many families. As a mother, I knew I needed help. I didn't want people to think that something's wrong with my child. I called and spoke with a member of Kariñu's staff. She helped me fill out forms and I was happy and proud that I called.

How has Kariñu helped your child and family?

Kariñu showed me that there are many options to help my child.

It's a good opportunity to learn and grow as a family. Kariñu helps my 10 year old daughter be a role model for my son, her brother. She does certain activities at home that help my son. Kariñu also helped me with other activities outside my home. For example, when we go to the grocery store, my son picks out the groceries. He's learning different concepts in the kitchen and the laundry room. Kariñu is also helping me through PATs (Parents As Teachers, a parenting curriculum).

What would you like to share with other families?

Kariñu is free and provides a loving support group. I wish that everyone would see how good Kariñu is. The outside activities are good opportunities for my son to be with people because he always kept to himself or just played with his sister. Now, he is not afraid to be with people anymore. It's okay to say I need help. It (Kariñu) helped me, why not you?



Mercedes and Angela

What brought you to Kariñu?

We are guardians of our child who is almost 5 years old and whom we've had in our care since he was 2 years old. What brought us to Kariñu was during one of our hearings, Judge Ingles suggested Kariñu for him. With it being our very first time in this kind of situation, we followed her suggestion.

How has Kariñu helped your child and family?

Well my partner and I both feel that Kariñu has helped our boy in so many ways...for one, his attitude changes every time for the better. He looks forward to seeing the staff of Kariñu on our

scheduled appointments. He seems to understand them more as they really express themselves at his level, and I know with a little more of these sessions he can be a complete whole. We can proudly say that Kariñu too has helped us as well. A lot of patience, understanding, and a whole lot of love and security are just about the four greatest things we can think of to keep our boy well-loved and safe from harms' way. We both just love him with all our hearts.

What would you share with other families?

To give Kariñu a chance to see what they could do for you and your family. All it takes is for you to listen and be heard. Ask questions and be open because we're sure Kariñu would be more than happy to answer any of your questions. Oh, and don't forget, a pat on the back sporadically for all you do and for whomever is also an assurance that you're doing something good. Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity to do this for ALL of the CHILDREN and OUR FAMILIES of KARIÑU.



Annjenica Cruz

What brought you to Kariñu?

I was referred through GEIS to Kariñu because I was concerned about my daughter's development (specifically her speech) and behavior.

How has Kariñu helped your child and family?

Kariñu would come by for home visits and spend time with my daughter. During that time, they provided educational tools (books, games, puzzles, etc.) and strategies that I could work with her in her development. Currently, her speech and mannerisms have greatly improved from where she started and we continue to use the tools/strategies implemented.

They would also call to check on how the family was doing and provided a lot of support not only to my daughter, but to her little siblings as well. In addition, Kariñu invited us to several activities we could do as a family, such as Playport play dates with other Kariñu families. We were also able to attend their Peer Family Workshops that allowed parents to meet not only the rest of the Kariñu staff, but also with other parents to learn and share our experiences.

What would you share with other families?

I think Kariñu is a great organization. I would recommend any parent who is concerned about their child's behavior or development, even if you're unsure, to have them screened. I feel even with how big families can be on the island or how many people we know, there's still those moments when a parent can feel alone in a situation regarding their child or family. Reaching out to programs like these is one of the best steps you can take to find the help you need or a better mental wellness for whatever situation you may be going through.

Partnering for Success

Kariñu partners with other agencies, programs, and community based organizations to extend early childhood services to special populations and hard to reach families and to increase collaborating programs' knowledge and skills related to early childhood development and prevention services.

Power of Play

Play is important for young children's development. It is how children learn to engage and interact with others and the world around them. During the past year, Kariñu collaborated with Guam's Alternative Lifestyle Association (GALA) to share the "power of play" with 203 children and 86 adults. Tim Dela Cruz, Executive Director for GALA, talks about this experience.

"Kariñu and GALA recently collaborated in delivering Power of Play outreach activities in March and April 2018 at Pagachao (Agat), Gill Baza Subdivision (Yigo), Toto Gardens and the Dededo Sports Complex. Power of Play offered activities that encouraged parent-child interaction that included games, physical fitness activities, arts/crafts, and dance. A unique aspect of the outreach was to encourage play, promote healthy childhood development, feature community resources/services, and to share ideas with parents in creating children's toys using everyday household materials. Prior to the implementation of the outreach activities, our GALA staff and interns participated in trainings conducted by Kariñu that focused on basic concepts of early childhood development and mental health and the Strengthening Families Curriculum. These trainings were intended to help build our capacity/readiness in delivering outreach activities.

Although the Power of Play outreach activities were open to all families with children ages 0-8 years old, it provided an opportunity to specifically target additional underserved minority populations such as LGBTQ families with children. Through the training opportunities, GALA staff are now better prepared to refer families with early childhood developmental concerns to partner agencies and relevant services. The partnership further allowed our staff and interns to learn more about the importance of play in children's brain development and the domains of early childhood development.

GALA's services and programs primarily focus on substance abuse, suicide and HIV/AIDS prevention among LGBTQ and straight ally youth and adults. Our partnership with Kariñu has helped expand services and foster new working relationships and potential partnerships with entities GALA has not worked with before. Most especially, this partnership helped expand GALA visibility and services into neighborhoods such as Gill Baza Subdivision, Hemlani Apartments and Toto Gardens."



Micronesian Resource Center One-Stop Shop

In 2016, Kariñu partnered with the Micronesian Resource Center One-Stop Shop (MRCOSS), a special project of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Guam that provides informational and educational resources to assist Micronesians as they transition to a new life on Guam. The goal of the partnership was to increase access to services for young Micronesian children and their families. As a part of this collaboration, MRCOSS staff participated in several trainings sponsored by Kariñu to increase their knowledge in early childhood development and introduce them to new approaches to conducting parenting workshops. Putting what they learned into action, MRCOSS conducted nine parenting workshops reaching a total of 128 Micronesian caregivers.

The workshops were conducted in the caregiver's primary language and were held in various communities, such as Hemlani Apartments. The multilingual staff's ability to make the information accessible to high need families in their primary language and in their communities has been a key benefit to the partnership. Aileen Namelo, Project Director for MRCOSS, shared her experience collaborating with Kariñu and how it has been mutually beneficial for both organizations.



"Collaborating with Kariñu has helped our agency operate more efficiently and effectively to the community. We collaborated with Kariñu to identify communities and participants who can benefit from the parent trainings. MRC uses the materials and resources to find families within the local neighborhoods. As a result of the collaboration, Micronesian Resource Center was able to address the families' concerns on various issues such as: documentation issues, struggles to make an appointment for immunization, no health insurance, language barriers, and lack of parental involvement. The Micronesian Resource Center was able to address families with children living in inadequate housing and in creating a communication system that works for parental involvement."



Alee Shelter

The Alee Children's Shelter serves as an emergency placement for some of Guam's most vulnerable children. Children placed at the shelter have experienced various trauma which can have a negative impact on their development and well-being. Yoni Towai shares about the Alee Shelter's partnership with Kariñu.

"The Alee Children's Shelter serves as an emergency receiving home for children who are victims of abuse and/or neglect, put in our care by Child

Protective Services. The collaboration with Kariñu has been greatly beneficial for our children who are experiencing social, emotional, behavioral, and developmental challenges. By providing a system of care, our children have been able to access services to promote their growth as well help with any learning difficulties they may be experiencing.

Over the last several years, Kariñu has collaborated with the children's shelter to ensure that every child's mental health is supported and nurtured during their stay with us. The program has provided screenings, assessments, and mental health consultations in early care. They have conducted home visits focusing on the behaviors of the children and provided us with their recommendations. Kariñu has provided parent-skills training to our staff, who serve as caregivers, to enhance their ability to overcome the challenges observed.

The children's shelter serves as an emergency placement, therefore it is not uncommon that we are unable to see the full impact Kariñu's services have on the children referred to them. What we can attest to, is that the time that they are with the shelter, Kariñu's services definitely make a positive difference in their lives."

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES MATTER!

Milestones at 4 Months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Begins to babble □ Responds to affection 	Milestones at 6 Months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Likes to play with others □ Responds to own name 	Milestones at 9 Months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Has favorite toys □ Understands “no”
Milestones at 1 Year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Tries to say words you say □ Waves “bye bye” 	Milestones at 2 Years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Begins to run □ Begins to sort shapes, colors 	Milestones at 3 Years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Knows name and age □ Climbs and runs well

The ABC’s of Children’s Mental Health

Early childhood mental health is the social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of infants, toddlers, and young children. It includes young children’s developing capacity to:



Form close and secure relationships



Experience, regulate, and express emotions



Explore the environment and learn

From ZERO to Three organization.

For More Information About Kariñu Contact:

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