

Despite its small size (or maybe because of it), Hawaii has consistently been ranked as one of the best states when it comes to healthcare. Compared to the other states, fewer people in Hawaii smoke and are overweight or obese. Hawaii's relative success when it comes to healthcare can largely be attributed to two developments: the Prepaid Health Care Act of 1974 and a commitment to the utilization of electronic medical records.

According to the Commonwealth Fund, in 2007 and 2008, 89.4% of nonelderly adults and 94.9% of children had health insurance coverage in Hawaii, and the state has done both while maintaining the lowest-cost private insurance premiums in the nation and the lowest Medicare costs per beneficiary (31% below the national average). Possible explanations could include the healthier (relatively speaking) Hawaiian population and good access to primary care.

Insurance premiums are particularly important for Hawaii, as, until 2006, they were the only state in the nation to require employers to provide health insurance to their employees. "For what it was intended to do, the Act has been a success, resulting in a much higher rate of employer-sponsored health insurance coverage in Hawaii (61.8 percent) compared with the nation overall (53.4 percent)." For residents not covered by the statute, the state relies on other strategies, the chief of which is Medicaid expansions.

Hawaii also developed implementation of electronic medical records in many of its regions. "Kaiser Permanente, a high-performing integrated delivery system, has a significant presence in the state and has been a leader in using health information technology to improve the quality and efficiency of care. Kaiser's Hawaii region experienced a 26% decrease in the rate of physician visits following implementation of electronic health records." (All information came from Commonwealth Fund's article on best healthcare states included with group).