

## EPIC 'OHANA, INC.

EPIC 'Ohana, Inc. is a non-profit organization. EPIC is not a part of Child Welfare Services (CWS). Our job is to organize and facilitate 'Ohana Conferences, Youth Circles, 'Ohana Finding and 'Ohana Connections. EPIC helps families and CWS talk, plan, and make decisions.

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### Mission Statement

Families are the foundation of our community, and their well-being is inextricably linked to the health and prosperity of the community, state, and nation. EPIC works to strengthen 'ohana and enhance the welfare of children and youth through transformative processes that are respectful, collaborative and solution-oriented.

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# 'OHANA CONFERRING

"Family group decision making for  
Hawai'i's at-risk children and youth"



EPIC  
'OHANA, INC.

## ‘OHANA CONFERENCING

### WHAT IS ‘OHANA CONFERENCING?

‘Ohana Conferencing is a collaborative effort that brings together CWS, providers, families, extended family and the support system of children who are involved with CWS. Families know their own strengths, issues, and resources best - better than CWS or other service providers can. In an ‘Ohana Conference, families work with CWS and use what they know to make the best decisions for the safety of their children.

### WHO’S GOING TO BE THERE?

Members of the child’s family who can help to make decisions for the children. This may include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and others on both sides of the family. The CWS social worker will be there and other people who are working with the family (GAL, counselors, therapists, etc.)

### WHY DO WE NEED THIS?

If your child has been placed out of home, you will find out what you have to do to get your child back. You will be able to express your desires for the placement of your child - temporarily or, if necessary, on a permanent basis. In an ‘Ohana Conference, parents, family members and child welfare staff are brought together to plan and make decisions that support the child/ren.

### DO I HAVE TO COME?

Participating in an ‘Ohana Conference is a voluntary process. Having an ‘Ohana Conference is a choice you make. If the social worker is recommending an ‘Ohana Conference to you, it is because he or she has seen support and strength in your family. He or she believes that your family can make good decisions for your child.

### WHAT IS MY ROLE?

An EPIC conference coordinator will assist you in planning where and when the conference will be held. This coordinator will call you and make all the calls necessary to bring everyone together for the ‘Ohana Conference. By working with the coordinator, you will help the EPIC facilitator, the person who runs the ‘Ohana Conference, to understand your concerns and what you want for your child.

### WHERE WILL MY ‘OHANA CONFERENCE BE HELD?

The conference will be held at a place in your community such as the local library, church, or community center, a place that is convenient for you and your family.

### WHAT CAN I EXPECT WHEN I GET THERE?

The chairs will be arranged in a circle. Everyone will sit in the circle to talk together. There will be a facilitator and a

recorder from EPIC. The recorder keeps written notes about key points of the conference. The facilitator runs the conference and will help everyone to communicate calmly and to reach the goals of the conference. The focus is on what the child/ren need to be safe. (See agenda below)

### WHAT KIND OF DECISIONS WILL WE MAKE?

The family and the social worker make decisions about what you need to do so that you can get your children back (if they have been placed with someone else) or what you need to do to have your CWS case closed. You and your family may help to decide with whom your children will live while you take care of yourself.

### HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

‘Ohana Conferences usually take 3 - 4 hours.

### WILL THERE BE FOOD? DRINKS?

Yes, and you can tell the conference coordinator any special food needs your family might have. There will be water to drink.

### SHOULD I BRING ANYTHING?

Just bring yourself and your willingness to do what is best for your child.

### SHOULD WE BRING THE CHILD?

Children sometimes attend ‘Ohana Conferences. Parents, social worker, therapist (if the child has one), and EPIC facilitators together decide if a child should attend the conference. EPIC needs to know if any child will be attending the ‘Ohana Conference so that we can make proper child care accommodations.

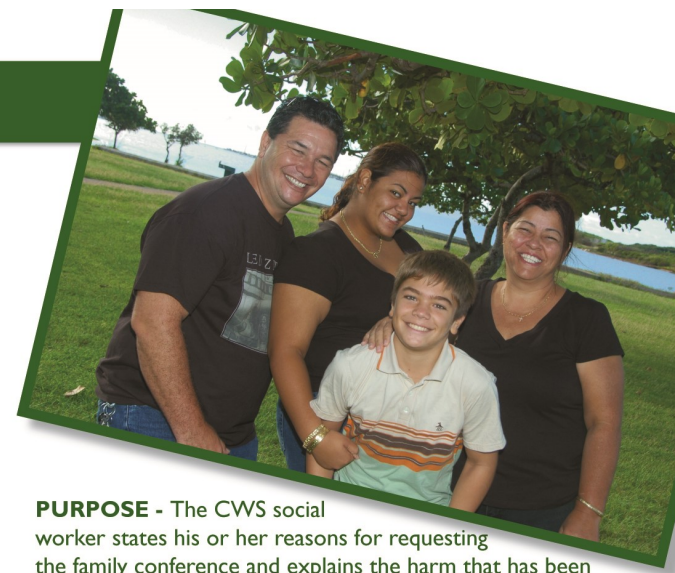
### ‘OHANA FINDING

‘Ohana Finding supports all EPIC ‘Ohana programs. This service includes an extensive search for family members and other kinship support for children and youth entering foster care or who have lost connections with family while in foster care.

### THE ‘OHANA CONFERENCE AGENDA

**WELCOME** - Everyone is greeted. The family may choose to begin the conference with a family-led prayer, moment of silence, or other means according to their own family traditions.

**INTRODUCTIONS** - Around the circle, everyone introduces him/herself and his/her relationship to the child/ren.



**PURPOSE** - The CWS social worker states his or her reasons for requesting the family conference and explains the harm that has been done to the child/ren.

**GOALS FOR THE CHILDREN** - The family identifies its hopes and dreams now and in the future for the child/ren. The family focuses its attention on the child/ren.

**FAMILY STRENGTHS** - Family strengths are identified by family and professionals.

**CONCERNS** - Family members and professionals discuss the concerns they have for the child/ren and for the family. DHS/Family Court timelines and expectations are identified and clearly defined. Long-term consequences are discussed.

**HELP AND SERVICES** - Family, neighborhood, community, and DHS resources are identified. Any limits to family decision-making are noted and clarified.

**PRIVATE FAMILY TIME** - Food and drinks are provided. The family takes as much time as they need to review the information shared and to make recommendations about the placement of the child/ren, visitation plans, etc. to the DHS/CWS social worker.

**AGREEMENT** - Options are explored and negotiation with DHS takes place. The agreement is set in writing and signed by all participants.

**CLOSURE** - Handshakes, hugs, circle of prayer as chosen by the family.

Note: A re-conference may be scheduled at this or a later time, as needed. A confidential EPIC report of the conference will be sent to all ‘Ohana Conference participants.