

Two Mākua Meetings

Two Mākua Meetings is a pilot project that launched in June 2021. We invite you to learn about this project through a Talk Story with our valued partners, Noe Realin from Lili`uokalani Trust and Elladine Olevao from Child Welfare Services. Noe is the Program Integration advisor at Lili`uokalani Trust and her kuleana is programs that assist destitute keiki in our community. Elladine Olevao is the Branch Administrator at Child Welfare Services.

What is the meaning behind Two Mākua? *Noe Realin, Lili`uokalani Trust*

Two Mākua is the belief that both Birth Parents and Resource Caregivers play the role of Mākua (parent) to a child in foster care. Mākua is wider than a parent. Mākua is any person one generation above the child that serves in the caregiving role. The mana`o behind this is to create a bridge that connects the two Mākua (Birth Parent and Resource Caregiver) together to provide a better support, build trust and a relationship for the well-being of that child.

What is the intent behind Two Mākua Meetings? *Elladine Olevao, Child Welfare Services*

Two Mākua means two parents. In the context of our work, Two Mākua is identified as the Birth Parent and the Resource Caregiver (Foster Parent). Two Mākua supports upfront engagement between Birth Parents and Resource Caregivers with the ultimate goal of supporting the child as they enter the Foster Care System. Together, the Birth Parent and Resource Caregiver will be able to form a supportive relationship that could extend beyond their involvement with Child Welfare Services. Establishing this supportive relationship at the onset of a case will help to achieve permanency for children.

How do these meetings help build a partnership between Birth Parents and Resource Caregiver? It started to become to where Child Welfare Services protected the Resource Caregivers, which created barriers – us vs. them – and this caused cases to lag. When Resource Caregivers and Birth Parents are brought together, this creates a team. Trust and relationships are built, visits happen more fluidly, and the case tends to move forward for the better and a little quicker. The child sees that the Resource Caregiver wants to help birth parent and Resource Caregivers continue to support the child after reunification so more support continues for the child on an ongoing basis.

How does this pilot help Child Welfare Services? Two Mākua Meetings will assist Child Welfare Services by helping Birth Parents and Resource Caregivers work together. As an example, Resource Caregivers may be able to provide transportation services and assist with supervising visits.

What is Lili`uokalani Trust's role in the pilot project? Lili`uokalani Trust's role is twofold. Noe is the convener and she guides the design of the meetings to ensure we are meeting needs. "Kipuka's* role is to support new relationships that were developed in first meeting between the birth parent and resource caregivers and provide ongoing opportunities to

support and foster the growth of the relationship Activities are held around dinner time and the roles of family members at dinner such as sitting as an 'ohana. Parents are invited have dinner with the Resource Caregivers, to sit and eat with them, and this really helps to create a sense of trust and teamwork and 'ohana for a child."

*Kipuka is a safe space provided for the families, where they hold their services, and rather it be just the people providing the services, it's the place that allows them to do so.

Any plans on expanding? Two Mākua Meetings is starting as a Pilot Project on Oahu and the goal is to expand to the Neighbor Islands, starting with Hawaii Island. Two Mākua Meetings is also a pre-cursory to identifying cultural services for families and ongoing engagement with 'Ohana Conferencing.

Two Mākua Meetings is bringing family together,
whomever the family members within the 'Ohana.