

## 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 transforms the culture of child welfare practice through a respectful, collaborative, solution-oriented process that protects children, strengthens families, and enhances the health of the community.

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**EPIC**  
`OHANA, INC.

# `OHANA CONNECTIONS

"Restoring family connections  
for Hawai`i's Foster Youth"



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## ‘OHANA CONNECTIONS

### WHAT IS THE ‘OHANA CONNECTIONS PROGRAM?

When a child is removed from his or her family, family connections can be damaged or lost.

‘Ohana Connections was developed in 2007. The Mission of the program is two-fold: 1) to find and engage family members and other kinship support for children and youth entering foster care, and 2) to find and engage family members for children and youth who have lost family connections while in foster care. The goal of the program is to help families reconnect so that every foster child has relationships that will last a lifetime.

### WHAT IS THE UNDERLYING BELIEF OF ‘OHANA CONNECTIONS WORK?

Every child entering foster care has a right to know their family history and maintain their family connections. Every child has a right to belong to a family, community, and place. Like all children, they deserve to feel stable, secure, and loved.

### WHAT IS INVOLVED IN ‘OHANA CONNECTIONS WORK?

‘Ohana Connections work is team work. While EPIC staff spearheads the process, social workers, resource caregivers, Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), therapists, foster youth, and family members all play an

important role in the Connections effort. Each contributes their expertise, active engagement, and support throughout the process.

There are four key stages in ‘Ohana Connections work. These stages are distinct, but can also overlap during the course of the work. The stages are:

- **‘Ohana Finding:** An extensive search for family and kinship family members of children and youth in foster care is conducted using case mining, internet searches and other information gathering techniques. Family members are contacted and a family list is created to document and track family connections. This service is utilized to support all EPIC ‘Ohana, Inc. programs, including ‘Ohana Conferencing, Youth Circles and ‘Ohana Connections work.
- **Team Building:** EPIC staff meets with the social worker, resource caregivers, GAL, and other service providers to explain the program and enlist their help and support. Throughout the Connections process the team is rallied and turned to for input and participation. When working with a young adult, they are included as a team member.
- **Engagement:** The family and child have contact through letters, phone calls, or visits depending on their comfort level and location. EPIC staff or another team member facilitates the early connections until the connections are strong and self-sustaining. The team remains available throughout, to support the child, youth and family.
- **Planning:** EPIC’s other services -- ‘Ohana Conferencing and Youth Circles – are employed to help plan for the child or youth’s future. These services bring together the foster child, their family, the child welfare services (CWS) case worker, Guardian Ad Litem, and other significant people to develop a plan to support the child or youth in the important aspects of his or her life. These aspects include finding a permanent home, education, social relationships, employment, and housing.



### HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Each family has its unique history, strengths and challenges. Empowering foster children and their families to honor their past and create a different, and more connected future, is the goal of the ‘Ohana Connections Program. The process typically takes six months to a year, but the process can take longer.

### DO YOU STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

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