

STRATEGIC PLAN

SFY 2024 - 2026



EPIC ‘OHANA, INC
STRATEGIC PLAN SFY 2024-2026

Submitted to the Board of Directors on 2/23/2024
Approved by the Board of Directors on 2/23/2024

<p>Our Vision</p>	<p>Every family has strengths. Every young person is entitled to: connection with family, connection with supporters, and opportunities to succeed.</p> <p>EPIC ‘Ohana is firmly committed to empowerment, effective planning, and innovative communication. We work to honor the power of family connections.</p>
<p>Our Mission</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Our History</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 ‘Ohana Conferencing pilot project, 1996 🌿 EPIC ‘Ohana, Inc., founded 1998 🌿 Youth Circles, 2004 🌿 ‘Ohana Finding, 2007 🌿 Connections, 2007 🌿 HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative (formerly HYOI), 2009 🌿 HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board, 2014 🌿 Family Wrap Hawai‘i, 2014 🌿 Independent Living Collaborator, 2016 🌿 Nā Kama A Hāloa, 2017 🌿 Youth Partners, 2018 🌿 Pono Process, 2020 🌿 Parent Partners, 2020 🌿 Two Makua Meetings, 2022 🌿 Birth Parent Advisory Council, 2022 🌿 Makua Allies, 2022 🌿 Hawai‘i Youth Partners For Education (HYPE), 2023 🌿 QIC-EY, 2023 🌿 Kosasa Opportunity Youth 2023 🌿 Pu‘uhonua O Ka Ululehua, 2023





OPENING REMARKS

by Delia Parker Ulima

As we reflect on EPIC's timeline and journey, we can describe our approach and practice to a metaphor of mālama wai (loving stewardship of water). In Hawaiian culture, the word waiwai means wealth or abundance. It is because we, kanaka 'ōiwi, know that in order to flourish, the people need water. Life thrives because of wai.

The health of fresh water systems is dependent on the elements that feed it. The symbiotic relationship between lo'i kalo and fresh wai is critical to the sustainability of kanaka. Lo'i kalo requires a fresh water stream feeding directly into it. If a stream or river did not run past particular lo'i, water was strategically diverted by creating 'auwai (small canals). Kanaka knew that whomever was at the top of the water source had kuleana for keeping that water clean and properly flowing for those located downstream. This ensured that all the lo'i kalo flourished, impacting the livelihood of the families from mauka to makai. Wai is so precious – it is for all to share, and for all to steward well.

When I think of EPIC, I think of this precious wai. All that has sustained us and all that continues to keep us flourishing and strong requires the same kind of love, time, and care as mālama wai. Our EPIC 'ohana understands that there are pōhaku (rocks/stones) in the pathway of the wai that block and create resistance. It can cause disconnection and separation. It can dry up what was once beautiful and healthy.

EPIC's kūlana for the families and keiki involved in CWS and other systems is to deeply and profoundly understand the wai and the land it is flowing through in order that we may keep the wai clear. Without this firm understanding, how will we know where the wai needs to flow? How will we know what to clean up? It is imperative that we know how the wai should be flowing in places where it has become stuck and/or disconnected. And we know it will get stuck from place to place and over time. This commitment to be strong stewards of our precious wai and this intimate knowledge of how the wai flows in CWS, with families, with young people-- this is the magic that is EPIC 'Ohana.

Understanding the impact of historical trauma, we can better understand where we are now and why Native Hawaiians are disproportionately represented in systems. At the same time, we can begin the work to help the wai flow again and how it should be flowing. It all comes down to relationships and pilina that is inextricable and unbreakable. This pilina is born from understanding the needs of the community, what parts of the system are not being met sufficiently, and most importantly, seeing the true potential for healthy community, healthy families, and resilient keiki.

This is the promise of EPIC 'Ohana. Each one of us commits to being formidable stewards of this wai- healthy families, safe homes, support for those involved in CWS, pilina, aloha, and strong community.

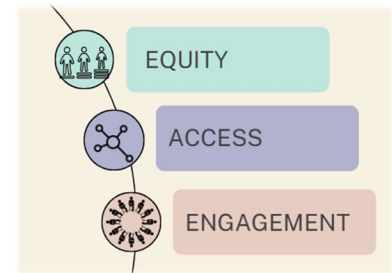
OVERVIEW *of Our Strategic Plan*



As EPIC ‘Ohana looks ahead into the next three years, we center on our hopes and dreams as an organization and hold tight to one another as a strong ‘ohana in order to serve our community in meaningful ways. This strategic plan will serve as the roadmap for our journey, helping to direct our decisions, our new projects and programs, and the kind of growth we desire.

WHO WE ARE

We are stewards of the EPIC “magic” driven by the foundational belief that every family has strengths, and innovative communication and respect are necessary components of fair processes across Systems. We see our kūlana (role) as “connectors and conveners” drawing on a very diverse, unique skill set to support equity, access, and impactful engagement.



OUR COMMITMENTS

Over the years we have come to realize that while many important lessons and teachings guide our work, there are three that resonate deeply. As an ‘ohana, we will always honor and mālama these commitments and embed them in all aspects of our work – from operations, to direct service, to systems advocacy and community outreach.

Organizational Commitments



- Holding close to ‘ike Hawai‘i
- Uplifting and empowering the voices of lived expertise
- Demonstrating trauma responsiveness

OUR STRATEGIC IMPACT

There are three strategic areas of impact we have chosen to focus on over the next three years. Each program and initiative is tasked to understand each impact area and build actionable goals and objectives that align within one or more area.

We start from within, as an organization—team health and well-being, strong internal controls, financial and resource sustainability. We then focus on our community and the supports we provide to each and every individual, making sure our services uplift, foster opportunity, and honors voice and choice. Our broadest reaching area of impact aims to shift systems and bias. Through advocacy, awareness, partnership, and strengthening community, we begin to replace biases with rooted kūlana (roles) a keen sense of kuleana (responsibility).

Three Areas of Impact For Our Work



IMPACT 1: We develop, strengthen, and sustain a strong EPIC 'Ohana

IMPACT 2: Our work strengthens families and young people involved in the Child Welfare system

IMPACT 3: We help improve the Hawai'i State systems that support families and young people



Mōhala i ka wai ka maka o ka pua
 Unfolded by the water are the faces of the flowers
 "flowers thrive where there is water, as thriving people are found where living conditions are good"
 (PUKUI 1983, #2179)

HOLDING CLOSE TO ‘IKE HAWAI‘I

Organizational Commitment 1



Hawai‘i is home to our EPIC ‘Ohana staff, our community partners, and most importantly, the ‘ohana, ʻōpio and keiki that we serve. We are privileged to live, work and raise our ‘ohana on this ‘āina. We acknowledge that kanaka maoli are the indigenous people of this place and lived aloha ‘āina as the physical, spiritual, cultural and genealogically-linked stewards for millenia. Kanaka maoli existed and thrived on the most isolated islands on earth through carefully designed land management and social systems that took into account the delicate balance of deity, humans, land and all of nature. We benefit today from the wisdom, mālama and aloha that has permeated through generations of time here in our beloved Hawai‘i. We firmly believe that it is in the best interest of all who call this place home and who serve in our communities to understand it’s beautiful and painful history and to learn from and adapt, where possible, the teachings and practices of kanaka maoli to help our ‘āina, ‘ohana and community heal and thrive today and for generations to come.

With the start of Nā Kama A Hāloa in 2017, and the many partners who serve as kumu and alaka‘i, many at EPIC began to deeply understand the place of ‘ike Hawai‘i in our work. There is profound mana in the wisdom and depth of ‘ike Hawai‘i. Values and practices around family, community, structure, and health are but a few that resonant today. EPIC ‘Ohana commits to upholding and amplifying ‘ike Hawai‘i within our organization and out to the community.

1. Acknowledging and referencing ‘ike kūpuna
2. Grounding our learning in our na‘au space
3. Awareness of the historic trauma endured and how it impacts native Hawaiians today.
4. Respecting form and essence

Acknowledging and Referencing ‘Ike Kūpuna

Weaving ‘ike kūpuna and ‘ike Hawai‘i into the various aspects of our work not only fortifies our intended purpose and our “why” but also anchors us in precious mana‘o and practices. For example, in the book, “Nānā I Ke Kumu, Helu ‘Ekolu” we learn about Nā ‘Ohana. “One critical aspect of the ‘ohana is the way Hawaiians solve problems and address conflicts and challenges, which allows us to strive for harmony, both within the family unit and between family members and the broader community.” When we share with others the importance of ‘ohana, let us amplify that sharing in the essence of this harmony, the kuleana of family members, the kuleana of community and how we all show up.

It is in this spirit that, where ever appropriate, and whenever possible, we will reference the foundational wisdom of our kūpuna. Our connection to this ‘ike will transcend beyond just words and meanings- it will embody the essence, spirit, and energy that gives it life.

Grounding Our Learning From Na'au Space

In the book, “Nānā I Ke Kumu, Helu 'Ekolu” it is our na'au that “can help us know what is right and wrong; it tells us how to behave in a pono manner. Most important, our na'au helps us balance our feelings, mind, and spirit to keep us forever linked to the wisdom and practices of our ancestors.”

As professionals, we have spent many years thinking and learning from our po'o space, examining written materials, gathering facts and information, addressing issues with logic and reason. While this is important in terms of our education and professional accolades, it is not the only way to be.

In our work at EPIC 'Ohana, it is through our na'au that we create truly safe spaces for authentic and courageous conversation. In order to see people beyond what is written about them, to hear without judgement and filters, to feel the emotions being shared in ways that literally shake and move us – we must first know how to engage from our na'au space deep in our gut and being. As lifelong learners, always open to expanding the way we see the world and all who are in it, trusting our na'au space is critical. Learning this way allows us to embody all the values we hold close – respect, aloha, strengths-based, partnership, connection.

Historic Trauma

Native Hawaiians are consistently disproportionately represented in all systems – human services, health, public safety, education, homelessness, etc. Nā Kama amplifies the need for all of us in social services to be aware of and understand how the history of Hawai'i and the historic trauma that continue to affect native Hawaiians to this day. Some examples of this trauma include: displacement from what was once stewarded land, proliferation of foreign disease, banning of 'ōlelo Hawai'i and integral cultural practices, and the spiraling effects of colonization.

So we continue to ask the question, how do we help to huli this disproportionality? Through our collective and individual understanding of the areas where native Hawaiians are over-represented, as well as integrating as normal practice, the connection of Hawaiian families, kamali'i, and 'ōpio back to cultural resources, practices, and values, we being to position ourselves to support in transformational ways.

Respecting Form and Essence

In embracing 'ike Hawai'i, it is important to also connect to form and essence. In the book, “Nānā I Ke Kumu, Helu 'Ekolu” it is said that “it is the balance and mutuality of form and essence, in both concept and practice, that we know the right meaning (essence) for the right purpose (form).”

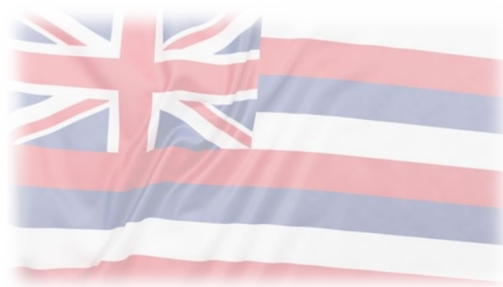
In our endeavor to learn and understand Hawaiian history and historical trauma, and as we commit to weaving in 'ike Hawai'i into our individual foundation and approach, we must be clear that we are haumana scratching the surface of thousands of years of rich indigenous perspective and life. There is kuleana for each of us. Those who are kanaka 'ōiwi can honor the legacy of their kūpuna by sharing their

experiences and joining fellow kanaka to build the collective voice. Those who are not kanaka, while honoring the legacy of their kūpuna, can stand behind, supporting the kanaka voice.

EPIC is fortunate to be connected to many native Hawaiian experts and kumu within the community. Let us call on them to help inform and teach others. Let us call on them when we have questions or need guidance. Whether it be for program or training development, curriculum adaptations, sharing mo'olelo, or even written and spoken 'ōlelo, let us call on them to continue to share the richness that is 'ike Hawai'i, and come ready to learn genuinely and inherently from our na'au space, asking others to do the same.

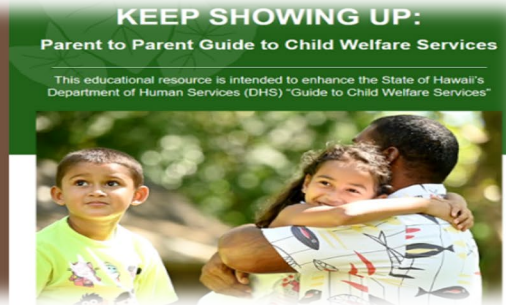
Glossary of Hawaiian words (*hua 'ōlelo*)

'ohana	<i>family</i>
'ōpio	<i>youth</i>
keiki	<i>children</i>
'āina	<i>land</i>
kanaka maoli	<i>native Hawaiians</i>
aloha 'āina	<i>love for the land</i>
mālama	<i>care</i>
kumu	<i>teachers</i>
alaka'i	<i>leaders</i>
'ike Hawai'i	<i>wisdom/knowledge of indigenous Hawai'i</i>
mana	<i>power</i>
na'au	<i>gut/intuition</i>
'ike kūpuna	<i>wisdom/knowledge of ancestors</i>
mana'o	<i>thoughts/ideas</i>
kuleana	<i>responsibility</i>
po'o	<i>head</i>
'ōlelo Hawai'i	<i>Hawaiian language</i>
huli	<i>flip over</i>
kamali'i	<i>children/progeny</i>
haumana	<i>students</i>
kanaka 'ōiwi	<i>of native descent</i>
kūpuna	<i>ancestors</i>
mo'olelo	<i>stories</i>



UPLIFTING & EMPOWERING THE VOICES OF LIVED EXPERTISE

Organizational Commitment 2



Each person at EPIC 'Ohana brings with them more than just diplomas and written evidence of past accomplishments. Each of us pours into our work a part of themselves, whether it be our strengths, our lessons learned, our struggles, our heart, soul, time and energy. This is, in large part, why the magic of EPIC is so profound.

Over the last 25 years, we have come to understand that there is immeasurable learning and physical shifts that occur when we open our na'au to the real-life struggles and experiences of those who have been system-involved. Our youth and parent peer support remind us that the written reports we may read are but a mere fraction of the larger, more inherent picture.

Here is a sampling of the important take-aways shared with us by those with lived expertise in CWS and other systems:

- Among ourselves, the families, and the young people we serve, we must remember that every journey is different and quite unique.
- Healing is not immediate and has no perfect approach. It takes time, involves stumbling and steps backwards sometimes, and requires readiness.
- The healing journey creates resiliency and offers different opportunities for one to evolve and strengthen, even if the light shines only as far as the next step.

As an EPIC 'Ohana, we commit to more fully understanding the kūlana of peer support experts and the transformational impact of their work. At all levels of our 'ohana, we will uplift the vital importance of lived expertise and acknowledge their incredible contributions to strengthen EPIC's team approach as connectors and conveners.

1. Awareness of the lived experience and its influence on Systems
2. Understanding EPIC's definition of peer advocacy
3. Honoring voice and choice
4. Supporting ownership of the mo'olelo shared by those with lived expertise

Awareness of the Lived Experience & Its Influence on Systems

Our youth and parent peer support teams in collaboration with the statewide HI HOPES Youth Leadership Board (HI HOPES) and the EPIC Birth Parent Advisory Council (BPAC) steward the kūlana of sharing real-life stories and experiences, whether it be their own or that of the families and young people they serve. They help raise awareness on the real issues faced by so many involved in CWS and other systems.



There is profound impact on our own biases and perceptions when we hear real stories of the siblings separated in foster care, uncertain of when they will see one another again. Stories of young people who recently aged out of care with nowhere to go having to sleep on the streets, fearing for their safety. Stories of what it felt like for a mom not being able to leave the hospital with her newborn. Stories of what was running through the minds of mom and dad knowing kids were not coming home and staying with people they did not get to meet. Stories of the RCG who had to regulate emotions of separation while also celebrating reunification. These mo'olelo are countless, each one a real-life experience filled with unforgettable trauma and immense struggle.

It is through these stories that, in our hearts and our na'au, we really begin to deepen our work and our impact. We honor these stories and express our gratitude for the gift of such awareness. We commit to standing with our caring parent and youth peer support teams, and the brave leaders of HI HOPES and BPAC to find ways to improve the system, to build partnership, and to model the courageous conversations that result in ground-breaking change.

EPIC's Definition of Peer Advocacy

EPIC has defined a very special approach to advocacy and it is foundational to the work of our team members with lived expertise, be it in direct services or system support. The advocacy of our peer support and peer leaders roots itself in all of EPIC's values and beliefs. First and foremost, it is respectful to all involved. It also nurtures and encourages the importance of partnerships, whether it be partnerships with CWS and providers, resources, or natural supports. The goal is to create connection and bring people together, breaking down silos and separation. It aims to shift or share perspectives that then allow all involved to see a fuller picture and connect as human beings with feelings, emotions, and needs.

EPIC's parent and youth partners employ a very special approach in their direct service work. They walk alongside parents and young people, connecting and building trust by sharing common experiences. They offer hope when things seem impossible. They offer wise assistance navigating complex systems. Our peer support experts are able to model a highly effective communication and engagement style that help young people and parents push past their fear and pain so that they may participate more fully in their case planning, and be more present in team processes such as 'Ohana Conferences, Family Wrap, Youth Circles, and CAMHD Treatment Team Meetings. We uplift this very compelling approach and seek to include peer support in all areas of our practice.

Voice and Choice

EPIC's peer support honors the importance of family voice and choice. Our peer support teams help parents and young people find their own voice, all the while being sensitive to meeting them where they are at. While peer support may be asked to be the voice of the parent or young person early on in a case, the ongoing goal is to help them strengthen and share their own voice. It means helping to make sure parent and young person has a seat at the table and the space to share their voice. It also means respecting readiness of the individual, setting aside their own hopes and expectations for the family. It is essential that all who belong to EPIC also respect family voice and choice.

Supporting Ownership of the Mo’olelo Shared by Those With Lived Expertise

It takes tremendous courage to share stories of life’s most vulnerable moments. Whether we hear stories that recount past mistakes, sadness, loss, pain; or stories of resilience, reunification, healing, and connection; one thing remains constant – these stories belong to those who have lived through them and no one else. It is solely up to each individual if, when, or how they share their mo’olelo. They should feel empowered to decide accordingly without unnecessary pressure or expectation.

As supporters, we are gifted with these life-defining mo’olelo by those with lived expertise so that we may enhance our practice and gain mastery in our work. We must help to protect the sanctity of these experiences and stories, ensuring that they are told only by those individuals to whom these stories belong. Occasionally, there may be need to reframe and redirect questions, comments, and expectations that put our lived experts in uncomfortable situations. We commit to doing so when necessary.

We sincerely mahalo the EPIC teams whose voice and lived expertise create ground-breaking change for their brothers and sisters involved in CWS and other systems. We honor, with respect and deep aloha all that you do and all that you give. Your contribution to this work is profound and inspires incredible change. EPIC ‘Ohana is committed to supporting your overall well-being, your self-empowerment as story tellers, and your continued healing. Mahalo nui for all that you bring to EPIC, to systems reform, and community.





DEMONSTRATING TRAUMA RESPONSIVENESS

Organizational Commitment 3

Within EPIC, even with differing roles and interactions, it is still critical to be readily aware, to understand and be responsive to, and to recognize systems of change grounded in a trauma-responsive approach. In this day and age, with the broad reach and sense of immediacy that technology offers, it is rather common to shape a narrative around our own biases and assumptions. It can shape what we think and understand in our daily interactions, in our experiences, and throughout the journey of life. Being genuinely responsive to trauma means creating a shift away from circumstance and instead grounding in approaches and practices that explore and acknowledge experiences, survival, endurance, resiliency, and healing.

We at EPIC must take time to learn and therefore demonstrate the ability to replace bias with truth and fairness. We commit to operating more on facts, clarity, and proper context. We will show up fully present, checking in with ourself, grounded, ready and open to perspectives and individual experiences.

It is critically important to honor each story, with its twists and turns, absent of judgement and interpretation. It is equally important to show respect to the parents and young people to whom these stories belong. In all parts of EPIC 'Ohana, we must keep these things in mind. We remain ever curious and we keep showing up even when there is resistance and guardedness.

Just as importantly, we must model this very important practice as we hold space and engage with others. It may sometimes mean calling out the need to look through a different lens – one free of judgement and preconceived notions. It means standing courageously, pushing against the bias and addressing moments when judgment finds its way into the space. This is why we at EPIC hold close to our values and work hard to stay grounded in our pou sto and na'au space.

Hopes & Dreams

In 'Ohana Conferencing, Family Wrap, and Youth Circles, time is dedicated to exploring and capturing the hopes and dreams of each parent and young person. It is much more than a step in the agenda. It is our kuleana, as connectors and conveners, to guide all involved to look toward the future. Creating a safe space of respect and aloha is but one step onto the pathway of healing and reconnection as a family. Creating opportunities for the individuals we serve to connect with self, to look ahead, to embrace possibilities is also an essential component of our work.

While there are commonalities laced into individual hopes and dreams – health, education, financial stability, etc. – embedded deep within each person's hopes and dreams are very unique visions of happiness and wellness that come from their own life experiences and their healing through the trauma

endured. Honoring hopes and dreams can be a powerful tool that speak a message of tangible possibilities and direction, and opportunities for healing. We can encourage the families we serve to revisit their hopes and dreams when they feel stuck or tired. We can share that there is more to their story than the past and that they can define the path ahead.

Underlying Needs

In the practice of Wraparound and the Family Wrap program, an important component is the identification of underlying needs. It has proven effective in the shifting of behaviors and addressing past trauma.

National Wraparound Coordinator, Pat Miles, invites us to think of underlying needs in Wrap as, the holes in our hearts - loss, pain, fear, anger, loneliness -- that drive us to do unhealthy things we think will fill those holes. It is important to understand how past trauma contributes to our underlying needs. We all experience it in some shape or form. We have at one time or another allowed our past hurts to drive our response and/or behavior.

It takes true courage to examine the holes in our heart as it often forces us to revisit painful memories and causes us to become vulnerable once more. This makes the need for deep trust, a safe space, support free from bias and judgement imperative.

When underlying needs are successfully addressed, big shifts can occur. Some examples include: Shifts away from feeling unworthy, be it love, forgiveness, happiness, a new beginning, etc., to instead believing that such things are not only possible, but also deserved. Shifts that allow fear to be replaced with strength and resilience. Shifts that reveal options and choices instead of barriers and obstacles. Shifts that are grounded in hope and moving forward instead of staying stuck.

Transformative Healing- Connection and Identity

As we learn from 'ike Hawai'i and 'ike kūpuna, we find that there is great power in connection. Connection to culture, connection to family, connection to community, connection to self – all these things foster a transformative healing that helps to transcend beyond past trauma. Healing is the restoration of identity and the defining of self starting from our roots all the way through to our chosen pathway.

Na wai 'oe? (*Who claims you? Who do you belong to?*) No hea mai 'oe? (*Where are you from?*) These are compelling questions that require deep thought and connection. It calls us to ponder on our lineage, our culture, the values and resilience of our ancestors and their journey. It also encourages us to look ahead and begin to draw on our hopes and dreams. It even invites us to reflect on the holes in our heart and the way we choose to address our underlying needs. As we define who we are and hold close to path created by those who came before us, we are able to make the crucial connections that shape our true identity, far beyond our circumstances and mistakes.

In Youth Circles and HI HOPES, it is called social capital. In Family Wrap it is called natural connections. These are the people who show up for you, who support you, you help create safety. It can take on a variety of shapes and sizes – a friend, church, leadership councils, a support group, a gathering of folks with the same hobby or pastime, a sports club. It is with this in mind that EPIC strongly fosters the need for social capital/natural connections and prioritizes holding meetings in the community of the family or young person.

There is a well known quote by Johann Hari that explains, “the opposite of addiction is not sobriety, it is connection.” This is a real testament to the power of connection and it’s incredible healing effects for each and every one of us.

Modeling Trauma Responsiveness

As the sections above have illustrated, whether it was previously realized or not, there are inherent parts of EPIC that make responsiveness to trauma a priority. The more we understand that trauma can affect parts of us we may not have noticed before, and show up in so many different ways, the more able we are to meet the families and young people we serve where they are at and support them on their journey of healing.

The following are some important examples of being trauma responsive:

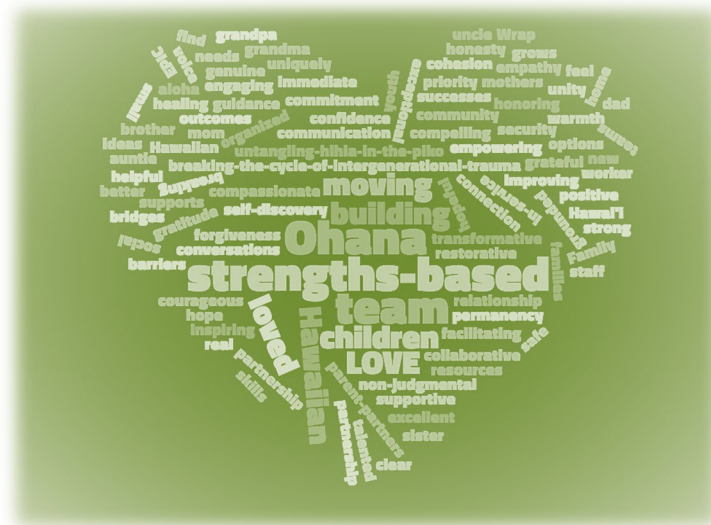
- Understanding the pervasiveness of trauma as it is more common than people realize. Reflect on how that manifests and how unique it can look within ourselves and others.
- How we see real life challenges and barriers and its effect on individual people. Not everyone experiences it the same. It is important to model that understanding for others as well.
- Listen beyond the surface and listen without judgement. Listen from our na‘au space. It is not about us/self therefore bias has no place in the listening and receiving.
- Deep understanding of “equity” and evening-out the playing field for families and young people. This is vastly opposite from taking sides, or trying to sway the outcome. Instead, our kuleana is to create fairness, to work to create mutually beneficial outcomes for all sides when possible. Making space for information sharing, transparency, and informed decision making.
- When helping families navigate an unfamiliar system, ensuring we are creating opportunities where family voice and choice are uplifted and heard. It is possible to trust those who represent systems, to build partnership and pilina with them, and mālama collaboration.
- Honoring the essence of readiness and respecting voice and choice. While we hope, on behalf of the families and young people we serve, for successful case closure, we also understand that not everyone is ready for that kind of change. Healing is a journey and cannot be forced.
- Humanizing the role of the CWS worker, allowing for meaningful shifts to take place rather than being blamed for mistakes and missteps along the way. Helping to build a different kind of connection that effectively supports families.
- Seeing substance use treatment and sobriety as health care and understanding that past trauma, whether in childhood or as adults, are major contributors to substance use disorder. We can then acknowledge it as a treatable disease while also seeing the individual beyond their circumstance, for who they truly are, and all they are capable of.

- Stewarding relationships of shared parenting whenever possible. Each person—parent, RCG, CWS worker, providers, relatives – has a part in taking care of the keiki.

Six Principles to a Trauma Informed Approach

Let us hold close to the “Six Principles to a Trauma Informed Approach” from SAMHSA, the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. These principles align with EPIC’s values in so many ways.

1. **Safety.** Creating a safe space in each and every conference, meeting and circle is our primary goal. And creating safety for each other within EPIC ‘Ohana.
2. **Trust & Transparency.** Building trust and transparency is difficult and takes a commitment to respect and aloha.
3. **Peer Support.** Recently our Youth and Parent Partner programs have proven the vital role that peer support plays in a path from trauma to transformation.
4. **Collaboration & Mutuality.** EPIC’s role is to convene and connect. And as we convene we work to build a spirit of collaboration, within families, for young people, and in our community.
5. **Empowerment, Voice & Choice.** From our very first ‘Ohana Conference to the work of Nā Kama A Hāloa, we find ways to authentically, and powerfully engage parents, young people, children and those who serve them.
6. **Cultural, Historical & Gender Issues.** To be responsive to the racial, ethnic and gender needs of the people we serve.





THE STRATEGIC PATHWAY

Impact Areas 1-3

Three Areas of Impact of Our Work



IMPACT 1: We develop, strengthen, and sustain a strong EPIC 'Ohana

IMPACT 2: Our work strengthens families and young people involved in the Child Welfare system

IMPACT 3: We help improve the Hawai'i State systems that support families and young people

We develop, strengthen, and sustain a strong EPIC 'Ohana

Strong Culture -- Nurture and promote a culture of caring and aloha .

- Model healthy and courageous dialogue for resolving differences, appreciating various points of view, and providing honest, respectful feedback.
- Provide opportunities for connecting employees as one EPIC 'Ohana.
- Cultivate a culture of teamwork and sharing of information within each program and between programs, and supporting one another during challenges.
- Find diverse ways of measuring and celebrating team productivity, and valuing each individual's contribution.
- Incorporate 'āina work days to help build teamwork and strengthen relationships.
- Incorporate 'ike Hawaii and 'ike kupuna into various areas of our work and practice.
- Create opportunities to ensure everyone at EPIC understands the importance of peer support and the voice of lived expertise.
- Care for staff with grace and aloha, grounded in a strong trauma responsiveness.
- Demonstrate a continued commitment to living the 7 Healthy Habits of an EPIC 'Ohana.

Strong Leadership -- Strengthen our management and leadership structure

- Complete a smooth transition of Executive Director leadership.
- Develop leadership through coaching and training.
- Develop a leadership culture of courage, accountability, kindness, and collaboration.
- Sustain EPIC 'Ohana Leadership Academy (OLA).
- Leadership team meetings that support internal partnerships and clearer objectives of EPIC.

Strong Professionals -- Identify and nurture each employee's strengths and talents

- Attract, develop, and retain talented team members.
- Examine our overall compensation and benefits structure and find ways to remain competitive.
- Support the physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial well-being of each employee and provide opportunities for self-care.
- Support regular professional development and prepare the next generation of EPIC leaders.
- Teach each employee the history of EPIC and why our work matters for families and young people.
- Develop a supervision, and training virtual resource library.

Strong Finances -- Develop diversified funding strategies to support and sustain our work

- Reduce the proportion of our resources dependent on government contracts.
- Identify gaps in funding to strengthen our impact.
- Develop and implement ways to fill funding gaps.

Strong Board -- Strengthen our board and governance capabilities

- Recruit, orient, and nurture strong board leadership.
- Develop and communicate clear board policies, procedures, roles, and responsibilities.
- Engage board members in our work.
- Develop a succession plan for the Board membership and leadership; retiring members.

Our work strengthens families and young people involved in the child welfare system

Strong Growth -- Nurture the development of our employees so that each can achieve mastery in his/her work

- Integrate best practice and research, creative learning tools and modalities, and utilizing a reliable reference library.
- Teach each employee the history of EPIC and why our work matters for families and young people.
- Identify mentors to assist with training and increase expertise.
- Develop and sustain feedback and coaching for each employee.
- Offer training opportunities (Ho'oa'a, NH perspectives, Better Together).

- Support all care for employees in ways that are trauma responsive, and centered in grace an aloha.

Strong Outcomes -- Support a learning environment that is clear about desired outcomes

- Articulate clear statements about the quantitative and qualitative outcomes we desire for each program, and establish clear long-term and short-term goals, objectives, and action steps.
- Pay attention to results by regularly collecting external feedback, supporting a learning environment that examines data, develops innovative practices for improvement, and learns from both success and challenges.
- Develop an internal practice for continual feedback at all levels in order to nurture continuous learning.
- Ground practice in the importance of family wellness, as well as voice and choice that foster long term self efficacy.

Strong Collaboration -- Develop and pursue collaborative efforts between EPIC programs

- Identify opportunities across programs to strengthen our impact.
- Develop and pursue collaborative efforts between EPIC programs.
- Provide opportunities for cross-training & collaboration.
- Identify ways to better connect with and support those within the Polynesian and Micronesian communities.

Strong Processes -- Maintain operational and administrative policies, procedures, and process to provide consistently high-quality service.

- Develop clear operational and administrative policies, procedures, and processes for significant program change.
- Develop and strengthen program evaluations.
- Ensure proper documentation of procedures that are consistent, understandable, relevant, and fair across all teams. Centralize for ready access.
- Implement a principled approach to the work, integrating relevant best practices where appropriate.
- Honoring transparency and inclusivity in communications in order to foster collaboration and streamlined output.

We help improve the Hawai'i state systems that support families and young people

Strong Voices -- Be leaders in the community to support families & young people

- Support, promote, and empower the voices and leadership of families and young people.
- Develop information, data and stories to support the importance of family connections
- Provide training and support to other organizations.
- Convene courageous conversations regarding issues related to child welfare, Hawai'i state system processes, etc. in order to strengthen the infrastructure that supports families and young people in our community.

Consistently learn about the child welfare and related system in order to connect the voices of the family and the young people to improve the system.

- We uplift the voices of lived expertise.
- We strengthen our utilization Social media and other means of communication.

Strong Partnerships -- Strengthen our relationship with DHS and other agencies

- Sustain opportunities for outreach.
- Listen deeply to DHS challenges & find ways to partner with DHS and other agencies.
- Provide opportunities for joint training and dialogue.
- Connect and promote appropriate cultural trainings and supports with and between community partners and those being served.

Strong Example -- Model courageous, compassionate collaboration in our community

- Promote strengths-based solution-focused processes.
- Model respect and aloha in every interaction.
- Maintain Birth Parent talk stories.
- Model how to engage with and empower lived expertise to drive systemic reform and promote well-being.
- Develop and engage in community-based approaches that partner with lived experts (youth, youth partners, parent partners, RCGS, others).

Strong Community Engagement—Calling communities together to innovate

- Support the Mālama 'Ohana Working Group and the implementation of strategies and ideas that emerge from the group in 2024.
- Continue to uplift and honor the ongoing work and efforts of Nā Kama A Hāloa.
- Developing the Birth Parent Advisory Council.

Below are just some examples of how EPIC programs, initiatives, and leadership teams uplift the three areas of impact.

IMPACT 1: The EPIC 'Ohana

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Fostering a learning community 🌿 Healthy finances & contracts 🌿 Access to tools & resources 🌿 Encouraging professional growth 🌿 Prioritizing self care and overall well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Strong data collection and integration of CWS data 🌿 Focus on team building 🌿 Celebrating successes 🌿 Inviting staff feedback and input 🌿 Able to pivot and adjust to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Promoting into leadership roles from within 🌿 Strong leadership/Board 🌿 OLA leadership training 🌿 Grounding in values and 7 Healthy Habits 🌿 Offering trainings and attendance at conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Learn from mistakes and try again 🌿 Take risks 🌿 Seek collaboration 🌿 Open to new funding opportunities 🌿 Embrace diversity 🌿 Foster creativity
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IMPACT 2: Direct Services & Supports

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Service plan review & case planning 🌿 Updates on family and children 🌿 Hopes and dreams 🌿 Holding a safe space centered on respect and aloha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Transition planning for youth 🌿 Connection to resources 🌿 Encouraging social capital 🌿 Supporting independent living 🌿 Uplifting youth voice 🌿 Peer support certification training with Pū'ā Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Out of the box solutions 🌿 Peer support 🌿 Untangling complex cases through teamwork 🌿 Fostering transparency and information sharing 🌿 Family voice and choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Finding family and creating family lists 🌿 Identifying supportive relatives 🌿 Encouraging support and connection 🌿 Adjusting to the fluctuations of children in care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Supporting relative connections for young people 🌿 Walking alongside young people in care, CAMHD 🌿 Supporting the connection to resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Supporting expectant/new mothers experiencing substance use disorder 🌿 Connecting to PSUD moms to health and prenatal care 🌿 Incorporating infant mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Leveraging technology 🌿 Diverse IT toolkit 🌿 Written procedures and manuals 🌿 Understanding housing and homelessness 🌿 Addressing food insecurity through key partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Partnerships with hospitals/clinics 🌿 Fostering cultural practices and values 🌿 Understanding impacts of historic trauma through trainings like H'o'a'a and Native Hawaiian Perspectives

IMPACT 3: Systems & Community

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Leveraging social media communication 🌿 Participating in panels, videos, and other speaking opportunities 🌿 Creating campaigns around important topics such as sibling connections, normalcy, Pono Process, juvenile justice, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Participation in workgroups such as LEAG (Lived Experience Advisory Group), Data for Equity and Action, Perinatal Substance Use Workgroup, etc. 🌿 Facilitating Better Together Shared Parenting training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Birth Parent Talk Stories 🌿 Birth Parent Advisory Council 🌿 Birth Parent National Network 🌿 ZTT (Hawai'i and nationally) 🌿 Thriving Families, Strong Children 🌿 AiM-HI and Early Childhood Action Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Continued partnership with Casey Family Programs and Annie E. Casey Foundation 🌿 New partnerships with Kosasa Foundation, Stupsky Foundation, and Geist Foundation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Mālama 'Ohana Working Group 🌿 Partnership with Governor's Office of Wellness and Resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Nā Kama A Hāloa and the various Hui: Hui Pilina, Workforce Training Hui, Ka Piko Hui, Call to Action Hui 🌿 Hui EPIC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Collaboration groups such as CWS-PIC-EPIC team on supporting families & young people with housing insecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Pu'uhonua O Ka Ululehua project (survivors of DV and native Hawaiian healing)



MAHALO NUI

Mahalo to all EPIC staff for their important contributions to this strategic plan. Your dedication and hard work have been phenomenal and leaves a deep impression in our community.

Mahalo to the EPIC Management Team for your vision and leadership.

Deepest respect and aloha to our fearless Executive Director, Laurie A. Tochiki and our dynamic Board of Directors for your creativity, love, and trust. It is because of your incredible talent and expertise, and your mindful direction and guidance we are who we are today.

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Tina Shibata (voices of lived expertise)

Tina Shibata (trauma responsiveness)

THE 7 HEALTHY HABITS OF AN EPIC ‘OHANA



BE RESPECTFUL OF ONE ANOTHER

- Respect that everyone brings their own ideas, perspectives, talents, and strengths to the team.
- Exercise humility and grace.
- Reciprocate the behavior and treatment you prefer for yourself.
- Value the beauty and uniqueness in one another.
- Acknowledge successes, express gratitude, and celebrate incredible efforts.

PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING

- Be in the moment; focus and give your full attention.
- Give others the opportunity to feel heard.
- Listen to understand the other person’s perspective, without judgement or opinion.
- Be mindful of your reaction to what others say.
- Embrace silent pauses that allow the one sharing adequate time to finish their thought.

BE ACCOUNTABLE

- Put forth your best effort and genuinely strive for excellence.
- Embrace opportunities that cultivate mutual trust.
- Follow-through and complete assigned tasks.
- Ensure seamless hand-offs when leaving your tasks for a period of time.

MAINTAIN PROFESSIONALISM

- Embrace life-long learning.
- Understand that a sense of community among colleagues is balanced, mission-focused, and highly inclusive of the entire team.
- Focus on the greater good.
- Understand the value and purpose of staying in your professional role.

TRUST IN OTHERS’ POSITIVE INTENT

- Take no offense and first offer the benefit of the doubt.
- Understand a situation from all angles, including your own.
- Jump toward resolution, not to conclusions.
- Consider the likely possibility of simple misunderstanding and talk it out.

SEEK TO RESOLVE

- Honor the power of compassion when someone is at their limit and has expressed frustration.
- Commit to being solution-focused, offering ideas that may remedy your concerns.
- Graciously accept invitations for a clean slate, fresh start.
- Address conflict with the end in mind; strive for closure and forward movement.

ARTICULATE WITH EMPATHY

- Communicate with a strengths-based approach with others and expect the same in return
- Keep a positive tone.
- Discuss issues and ideas; not people.
- Think before speaking.
- Choose not to feed or strengthen the poison that comes from gossip and rumors.