

EPIC

EFFECTIVE PLANNING AND
INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATION

EPIC 'Ohana Conferencing
is a neutral,
non-profit organization.

We are not part of CWS.

Our job is to organize and facilitate
'Ohana Conferences.

We help families and CWS talk,
plan, and make decisions together
for the safety of the children.

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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.

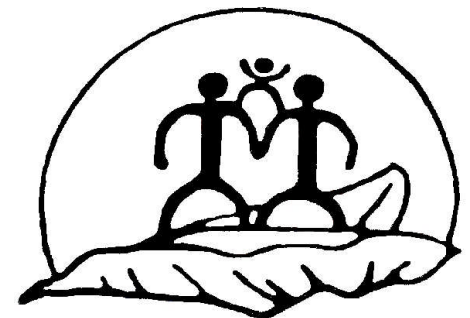


EPIC, INC.
'OHANA CONFERENCING

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What is an
'Ohana
Conference?



What is an `Ohana Conference?

WHAT IS `OHANA CONFERENCING?

`Ohana Conferencing is a new way for CWS to work with families. We bring together extended family members 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 a safety plan. This may include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and others on both sides of the family. The CWS social worker will be there and maybe other people who are working with the family.

WHY DO WE NEED THIS?

If your child has been taken out of your home, you probably want to get him or her back. In the conference, you will find out what you have to do to get your child back. You may want to have some say in where your child is placed - temporarily or, if necessary, permanently. In an `Ohana Conference, your family brings together ideas, resources, and people who care to make the best decisions for your child.

DO I HAVE TO COME?

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?

You help the conference coordinator to plan where and when the conference will be held. She or he will call you on the phone to talk to you about it. Then she or he will make all the other calls to bring everyone together. You help the facilitator to understand your concerns and what you want for your child.

WHERE WILL MY `OHANA CONFERENCE BE HELD?

It 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 DO I HAVE TO DO WHEN I GET THERE?

The chairs will be arranged in a circle. There will be a facilitator and a recorder from EPIC. Everyone will sit in the circle to talk together. (*See agenda at right.*) *The facilitator will help everyone to talk calmly and to reach the goals of the conference. No one is put on the spot. No one is blamed. The focus is on what the children need to be safe. You just say what you think.*

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 plan for food and juice and, with the parents' help, make child care arrangements.

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.

WORRIES - 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.