

OHANA CONFERENCE III

PLANING FOR YOUR FUTURE

OHANA CONFERENCE III

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OHANA CONFERENCE III

- THIS PRESENTATION IS ABOUT YOU – HAWAII'S FOSTER YOUTH
- I WILL ADDRESS HOW WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO PROVIDE BETTER OUTCOMES FOR YOU!!

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- But first I have a couple of questions.
- Has anyone ever told you that you were not going to make it because you are a girl?
- Has anyone ever told you that you were not going to be successful because you are a person of color?

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- HAS ANYONE EVER TOLD YOU THAT YOU ARE NOT GOING TO MAKE IT IN LIFE BECAUSE YOU ARE A FOSTER CHILD?

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- WELL, THEY ARE WRONG!!!
- DON'T YOU BELIEVE THEM!!!
- IF YOU MAKE UP YOUR MIND TO MAKE IT, YOU CAN AND WILL SUCCEED!!
- AND THAT IS WHAT I'M GOING TO TALK ABOUT TODAY.

OHANA CONFERENCE III

- YOU CAN SUCCEED, BUT SUCCESS IN LIFE TAKES SOME PLANNING.
- AND YOU CAN BE VERY SUCCESSFUL!!
- THOUSANDS OF FOSTER YOUTH HAVE DONE SO BEFORE YOU.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- 1. Foster youth are at risk of poor outcomes in life.
- 2. Through no fault of your own, you have been in out-of-home placement for a significant period of your life.
- 3. You may not have been dealt with fairly while in foster care and,
- 4. You may not have a support system available when you AGE OUT of Foster Care.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- IT IS THE OBLIGATION OF THE STATE AND THE COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT YOU DURING YOUR TIME IN FOSTER CARE AND AFTER YOU AGE OUT.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

FIRST OF ALL, IT IS A MORAL OBLIGATION.

SECOND, IN MANY RESPECTS IT IS A LEGAL OBLIGATION.

I WANT TO SHOW HOW WORKING TOGETHER WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS, YOU CAN ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN YOUR LIFE.

WHOSE OBLIGATION?

- BUT IT IS YOUR OBLIGATION TO PLAN FOR YOUR FUTURE AND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WHAT IS AVAILABLE TO YOU.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- I. How long should the state be required to offer services to foster youth?
- 18?
- 21?
- 25?
- Other?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- What if the legislature passed a law permitting foster youth to remain under state protection until 21 or 25?
- It would be the foster youth's choice after 18.
- Does that make sense?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- SOME STATES HAVE DONE JUST THAT.
- IS HAWAI'I NEXT?
- RECENT FEDERAL LEGISLATION MAKES THAT POSSIBLE, BUT YOU NEED TO WORK TOGETHER WITH OTHERS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN HERE.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- II. Are foster youth receiving all that they need while in foster care?
- What important problems should we all work on to improve the quality of foster care life for you?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- A. Efforts should be made to place the youth with family.
- To accomplish this the social worker/probation officer should:
 - (1) take steps to identify family members including using Family Finding tools.
 - Fortunately, Hawai'i's laws now insist that relatives be preferred over non-relatives for placement of foster children.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- (2) Have wraparound services available to support the youth in a family setting.
- (3) Utilize group decision making models such as O'hana Conferencing to develop a placement plan for the youth. And **YOU** must be included in that Conference.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- B. Efforts should be made to maintain important connections that **YOU** have with others.
- (1) Siblings are the most important connection.
- (2) Relatives are also important.
- (3) But **YOU** also have other connections that are important.

CONNECTEDNESS

- DIMENSIONS OF CONNECTEDNESS:
- **HEART:** Who do you love? Who loves you? Who do you want to love you?
- **MIND:** Who teaches you? What are you learning? Who do you teach? Who do you think about?

CONNECTEDNESS

- **BODY:** Who shares your blood? Does anybody share your body? Who provides you with food and shelter?
- **SOUL:** To what or whom is your soul connected? What or who are your passions?

CONNECTEDNESS

COLOR CODES FOR THE LINES

- **RED** is for the heart.
- **GREEN** is for the fertile and creative mind.
- **BLUE** is for the blood that runs in the veins (body).
- **YELLOW** is for the light of the soul.

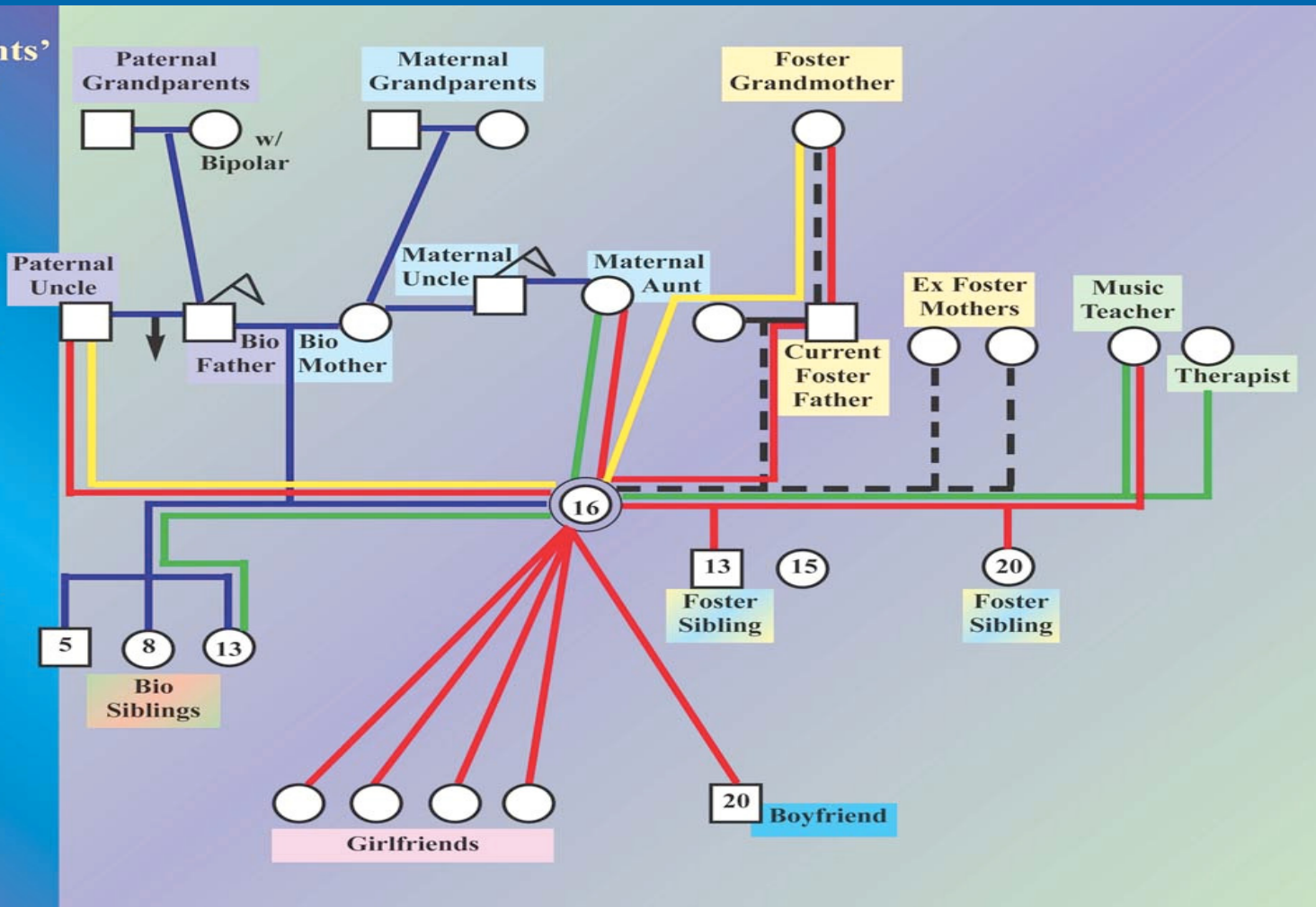
CONNECTEDNESS

Grandparents' Generation (and older)

Parents' Generation

Siblings' Generation (excluding peers)

Peers



CONNECTEDNESS

- HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE AN ADDRESS/TELEPHONE NUMBER BOOK?
- OR DO YOU HAVE THAT CONTACT INFORMATION ON AN IPOD?
- YOU NEED TO STAY CONNECTED BECAUSE THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO WANT TO HELP.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- C. WHAT ABOUT EDUCATION?
- **YOU** are likely to attend multiple schools.
- It takes 4- 6 months for a foster youth to catch up after changing schools.
- Youth in Foster care often have no advocates to help them gain a quality education.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- What can be done?
- How about a law that ensures that a youth will remain in his or her “Home School” until the end of a semester or school year, even if the placement has been changed? (HAWAII has that law).
- How about a trained advocate to follow a foster youth through his or her school years?

EDUCATION

- State law should outline the duties and responsibilities of educational advocates.
- School districts should be held accountable for locating and training surrogate parents for foster youth.

EDUCATION

- What's a Surrogate Parent?
- It's a fancy word for an educational advocate, someone to represent you in the school system, to fight for your rights.
- And everyone in the school system needs an advocate.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- What about a law giving foster youth the right to ask their attorney/gal to have parental rights re-instated?
- On occasion parental rights have been terminated, but the youth has never found a permanent home.
- Moreover, sometimes the biological parents have pulled their lives together.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- Foster youth persuaded the California Legislature to pass a law that enables the youth (not the parents) to return to court and request that parental rights be restored.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED WHEN THEY ARE AGING OUT

- Foster care will end some day.
- What do **YOU** need before and during the aging out process?
- (PLEASE NOTE: I DO NOT USE THE TERM EMANCIPATION)

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- A. Ensure that steps are taken that **YOU** are present at any hearing involving your case. And, in particular in any case where the judge will consider dismissing the case.
- If the youth is missing or unwilling to attend the hearing, the social worker/probation officer should have a declaration regarding efforts to have the youth participate.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- B. The social worker/probation officer should submit a report to the court with critical information about the **YOU** in the report including:
 - (1) summary of the dependency case
 - (2) family history
 - (3) placement history
 - (4) whereabouts of siblings – unless there is a safety issue.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- (5) directions to **YOU** on how to obtain otherwise confidential records about the history of **YOUR** case in court.
- (6) the date of proposed termination of the **YOUR** case from juvenile court. When will you be out of the system?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- C. THE SOCIAL WORKER/ PROBATION OFFICER SHALL ALSO PROVIDE TO YOU:
- (1) social security card
- (2) certified birth certificate
- (3) health and education summary
- (4) identification card
- (5) death certificate of parent(s) (if applicable).
- (6) proof of citizenship/residence.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- (7) A list of medications prescribed to **YOU**, the name/address of the prescribing doctor and the method of obtaining additional medications.
- (8) A copy of any dental records and information how dental care can be continued.
- (9) Information how to continue with mental health or substance abuse treatment services, if necessary.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- (10) Assistance in obtaining a copy of any diploma, certificate of completion, or transcript of high school credits accumulated thus far.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

➤ ANYTHING ELSE??

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- HOW ABOUT A HOTLINE FOR FORMER FOSTER YOUTH IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- HOW ABOUT A FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- HOW ABOUT A GUARANTEE THAT A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY WILL PAY FOR YOUR TUITION AND HOUSING WHILE YOU SEEK HIGHER EDUCATION?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- D. THE SOCIAL WORKER/
PROBATION OFFICER SHALL ALSO
PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN:
 - (1) completing an application for health care or health insurance,
 - (2) referral to transitional or other housing,
 - (3) And assistance in obtaining employment or other financial support.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- E. THE SOCIAL WORKER/
PROBATION OFFICER SHALL ASSIST
THE YOUTH IN APPLYING FOR
ADMISSION TO COLLEGE,
VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM,
OR OTHER EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTION AND OBTAINING
FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- If you have not graduated from high school, there are 11 community schools in Hawai'i where you can take courses to complete your graduation requirements **OR** enroll in a Competency Based High School Diploma Program **OR** help you prepare for and take the GED.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- AFTER HIGH SCHOOL THERE ARE:
- Colleges/Universities
- Community and Junior Colleges
- Service Academies
- Trade/Technical/Vocational Schools

- ALL WAITING FOR YOU

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

➤ HOW ARE YOU GOING TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES?

➤ WWW.GEARUP.HAWAII.EDU

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- F. THE SOCIAL WORKER/
PROBATION OFFICER SHALL
PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN
MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS WITH
INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE IMPORTANT
TO YOU.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- (1) SIBLINGS:
- Every social worker report shall contain information concerning YOUR siblings including
 - + nature of the relationship
 - + The appropriateness of developing or maintaining the sibling relationship.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- +If the siblings are not placed in the same home, why are they not placed together and what efforts are being made to place them together or why such efforts are not appropriate.
- +If not placed together, the frequency and nature of visits between siblings.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- The social worker shall ask **YOU** “to identify any individuals other than the child’s siblings who are important to **YOU**, consistent with the **YOUR** best interest.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- G. EXIT CONFERENCE
- Before aging out of foster care there should be at least one meeting or conference where all of the significant people in **YOUR** life help you plan for your future.
- Include family, extended family, professionals, friends, others...
- **MOST IMPORTANTLY....YOU!!**

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- At the conference everyone will discuss:
- (1) **YOUR** short and long term goals.
- (2) Plans for education, employment and living arrangements.
- (3) What is **YOUR** target date for aging out of the foster care system?
- (4) What do **YOU** need in order to live your adult life successfully?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- (5) What kind of support system do you have? What do you need?
Who will you turn to when there are problems?
- (6) Do you have special needs? If so, how will they be addressed after you are out of the system?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- THAT'S A LOT...BUT SOME STATES HAVE ALL OF THAT AND MORE WRITTEN INTO LAW!!
- BUT THERE IS MORE!!

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT I HAVE OFTEN REFERRED TO SOCIAL WORKERS/PROBATION OFFICERS. WHAT IS ALL THIS TALK ABOUT PROBATION OFFICERS?
- AREN'T WE JUST TALKING ABOUT YOUTH IN THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- WHY SHOULD YOUTH PLACED IN FOSTER AND GROUP HOME CARE IN THE DELINQUENCY SYSTEM BE TREATED ANY DIFFERENTLY?
- DON'T THEY HAVE THE SAME PROBLEMS TO DEAL WITH?
- AREN'T THEY JUST AS AT RISK AS FOSTER YOUTH IN CHILD PROTECTION COURT?

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- IN LOS ANGELES, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PRESIDING JUDGE HAS WRITTEN A PROTOCOL DESCRIBING THE PROCEDURES THAT A PROBATION OFFICER MUST FOLLOW WHEN A YOUTH AGES OUT OF THE DELINQUENCY SYSTEM.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- ACCORDING TO THE PROTOCOL THE PROBATION OFFICERS HAVE TO DO MUCH THE SAME THAT THE SOCIAL WORKER HAS TO DO WHEN IT COMES TIME TO DISMISS THE FOSTER YOUTH'S CASE.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- BEFORE YOUR CASE IS DISMISSED FROM THE JUVENILE COURT, BE SURE TO ASK THE JUDGE TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT
- (1) YOUR FUTURE PLANS ARE CAREFULLY LAID OUT.
- (2) YOU KNOW WHO YOUR SUPPORT PERSONS ARE AND HOW TO CONTACT THEM.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- (3) YOU HAVE TO KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING TO LIVE AND WHAT EDUCATION AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU.
- (4) AND WHAT YOU WILL DO WHEN THERE IS AN EMERGENCY.

WHAT FOSTER YOUTH NEED

- DO YOU KNOW HOW YOU CAN HELP ACCOMPLISH THESE GOALS?
- YOU NEED TO GO TO COURT AND TALK TO THE JUDGE!!
- TELL HIM OR HER WHAT YOU NEED IN ORDER TO HAVE YOUR BEST CHANCE TO SUCCEED IN LIFE!

ORGANIZE

- Are all of these “rights” just dreams?
- They can become realities.
- Foster Youth need to organize.
- You need to approach the Legislature and tell them What YOU Need.
- That is what foster youth are doing in California and look at the results.

CONCLUSION

- YOUR SUCCESS IN LIFE WILL ALWAYS START WITH YOU.
- BUT BY CAREFUL PLANNING YOU WILL BE MAKING CERTAIN THAT THE PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP YOU BE SUCCESSFUL ARE LINED UP AND AVAILABLE.
- BECAUSE WE ALL NEED A LITTLE HELP ALONG THE WAY.

CONCLUSION

- You should organize your own life

AND

Organize the lives of all foster youth.

YOU CAN DO IT.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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