Final Report

Department of Human Services, State of Hawaiʻi
12/31/2012

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Family Connections Hawai'i grant from the United States Administration on Children, Youth and Families provided the state of Hawai'i with an invaluable opportunity to build upon the strengths of transformative initiatives placed into practice over the last fifteen years. These initiatives included evidence based assessment practices, differential response systems, a strong 'Ohana Conference process, Family Finding and Family Connections work, and a commitment to the value of family connections as embedded in practice. The state of Hawai'i has embraced the mission and purpose of the 2008 Federal Fostering Connections to Success Act, and has been a leader in implementing the key concepts of the Act. This grant allowed the Department of Human Services to demonstrate the value of family connections work and family engagement strategies for children in the child welfare system.

The grantee is the Department of Human Services of the state of Hawai'i. The lead service agency is EPIC 'Ohana, a non-profit organization dedicated to family engagement practices in Hawai'i. Evaluation services were provided by The Catalyst Group. The project was based on the island of O'ahu, constituting the City and County of Honolulu. The community served is both urban and rural. It is a richly diverse population with issues of poverty, over-represented Native Hawaiian, and Micronesian populations. The service delivery model in this grant had two components:

- **Early 'Ohana (Family) Intervention** brought 'Ohana Conferencing, Family Finding and Family Connections work to the family and the social worker at the very beginning of a case to prevent children from entering foster care, and if removed, to find placement with relative/kin. The Early 'Ohana Intervention utilized an immediate family meeting at the point where a social worker was contemplating removal. Then, a first 'Ohana Conference was convened within a month of the Early 'Ohana Intervention. Immediate Family Finding took place at the point of referral of the case.

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- **Enhanced 'Ohana (Family) Connections** brought Family Connections and permanency options for children aged 4 – 16 who did not currently have permanent legal and/or emotional family connections.

A rigorous research model was employed in both projects. For the Early 'Ohana Intervention, cases were randomized into an Intervention and a Comparison group at the commencement point and automatic referral of the case. For the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections project, randomization took place upon the transfer of data to EPIC 'Ohana of the names of children remaining in care after one year.

Both projects were supported by the strong collaborative relationship between the Department of Human Services, EPIC 'Ohana, and the community. Building respectful, trusting, solution-focused partnerships is key to effective practice.

The work of the project is now sustained through an automatic referral process to Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferencing. The new automatic referral process was built upon the referral processes established for this grant. As a result of the automatic referral process established in January 2012, Family Finding is now provided for all children in care.

Secondary data was collected from regularly collected records maintained by the Department of Human Services and by EPIC 'Ohana. Baseline, six-month and twelve-month data was collected and analyzed. Short term and long term outcome measurements were examined. The conclusions are promising. Highlights of these conclusions are:

- When an Early 'Ohana Intervention took place, children were less likely to be removed.
- With an Early 'Ohana Intervention, children who were removed, stayed in care for a shorter period of time.
- Within twelve months of an Early 'Ohana Intervention, more children were reunified, and fewer children remained in out-of-home non-relative foster care.
- The earlier an 'Ohana Conference took place, the sooner a child was reunified.
- When Enhanced 'Ohana Connections work was done, more family connections were identified.

- When Enhanced 'Ohana Connections work was done, the quality of family connections was much stronger.
- Family Finding methodologies that are blended and build seamlessly upon one another are effective in finding family.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY, POPULATION AND NEEDS

A. Grantee – The Department of Human Services, State of Hawaiʻi

The Department of Human Services of the state of Hawaiʻi, Child Welfare Services Branch is the grantee of the Hawaiʻi Family Connections Project. The Child Welfare Services Branch serves the entire state of Hawaiʻi, although the grant project focused on families on the island of Oʻahu, the City and County of Honolulu. The project was an opportunity to pull together several transformative initiatives that strengthened Child Welfare practice in Hawaiʻi over the last fifteen years. Through a systematic program of change in policy and practice the Child Welfare Services management embraced the values that children are best raised by their families and families are the best experts about their family's challenges and strengths.

In 1996, the Child Welfare Services (CWS), in partnership with the Family Court, initiated the ʻOhana Conferencing (Family Group Decision Making) model. From 2003 to the present, Hawaiʻi developed and instituted a differential response system to divert families from the Child Welfare System for mild to moderate child abuse and neglect cases. The Child Welfare Services administration initiated a program to engage the Native Hawaiian community to help recruit Native Hawaiian families to become foster parents. In 2004, Child Welfare Services initiated Youth Circles to support emancipation preparation for foster youth ages sixteen to eighteen. EPIC ʻOhana, with funding from Child Welfare Services developed and implemented both the ʻOhana Conferencing model and Youth Circles.

Also through EPIC ʻOhana, the Hawaiʻi Department of Human Services developed an innovative and comprehensive approach to Family Finding and Family Connections work. Intensive Family Finding Services, based on the Kevin Campbell model, were developed and implemented in Hawaiʻi by EPIC ʻOhana in 2007. These Family Finding services were an

enhancement to an already well-established Family Group Decision Making service provided by EPIC 'Ohana. The differential response system and the engagement of family in Family Group Decision Making helped the Hawai'i Child Welfare Services Branch achieve significant reductions in the number of children entering foster care. The numbers were cut in half, from 3,074 children in foster care in April, 2004 to 1,479 in May, 2009. Furthermore, Hawai'i DHS has substantially increased the number of children in relative/kin care from 38% to 43% from 2001 to 2008. This long-term development of comprehensive Family Finding, 'Ohana Conferencing, and Family Connections services provided a context of strength to build the services and research for this grant.

B. Community Served

The City and County of Honolulu is composed of the entire island of O'ahu, with a large urban population, as well as rural populations with significant socioeconomic issues. In 2009, when the grant application was written, an average of 115 children entered foster care each month with nearly 2/3 of these placements on the island of O'ahu. Furthermore, nearly one-half of those placements were in two sections of O'ahu: the most urban core of Honolulu, and the Leeward Coast. Through the differential response system, "lower risk" families were successfully diverted to voluntary differential and family strengthening services, while families with safety issues were provided services by the department. Therefore the children/youth served in the grant represented families with more serious problems. With early services through Early 'Ohana Intervention, and supportive services for children in foster care for more than one year, the grant targeted areas in which family engagement and Family Finding could make an impact on early case direction and service implementation.

Although the number of children in foster care was significantly reduced, more than half of the children in foster care in 2009 were aged 4-14, and over half of those children (450 of 766) had been in placement longer than one year. Enhanced 'Ohana Connections work aimed to increase permanent legal and emotional connections for these children, and broaden to include youth up to age 16. By focusing Family Finding and permanency work on that targeted population, the goal was to reduce the number of children who stay in foster care and eventually "emancipate" from the system.

C. Primary Issues Addressed in this Demonstration Project

For the Early 'Ohana intervention, the issue addressed was placement prevention service for at-risk and just placed children. The service was in the form of immediate Family Finding, and early 'Ohana Conferencing. By identifying family early in the process of Child Welfare involvement, active collaborative engagement of biological parents and kin occurred at the earliest stages in a case. Thus, Family Finding and Family Group Decision Making were extended to a new area of child welfare practice: placement prevention. For the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections project, the issues addressed were permanency, safety and well-being. It was anticipated that by identifying kin and strengthening connections with family/kin, children would have better outcomes. Finally, the project included a rigorous research design that was intended to strengthen the knowledge base related to Family Finding and outcomes for youth placed with relatives/kin.

D. Population Served

Early 'Ohana Intervention served newly placed children and children at risk of placement, with immediate Family Finding and Family Group Decision Making services. These services were offered within 24-hours of placement, or possible placement (at the point when a

social worker was making an initial placement decision). When a social worker was dispatched to investigate and determine whether placement was necessary, a call was made to the EPIC 'Ohana dispatch team. Cases were randomly assigned to an Intervention group or to a Comparison group. If the case was assigned to the Intervention group, an 'Ohana Conferencing Facilitator was also immediately dispatched to the home, hospital, or other location.

The communities served included urban Honolulu and the Leeward Coast of O'ahu. Both of the sections serve an extremely multicultural population including Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, Micronesians and many other cultures such as Trukese, Ponapean, Chinese, Japanese and others. The Honolulu section includes the Waimānalo community which contains a large Native Hawaiian population. The Leeward Coast includes the communities of Wai'anae, Nānākuli and 'Ewa Beach. The Leeward Coast is made up of predominately rural small towns, with one major urban area (Kapolei). The area has the highest concentrations of Native Hawaiians on O'ahu, along with large numbers of Samoan, Tongan and Filipinos coupled with the highest rate of child abuse, poverty, unemployment and public health issues.

Cases assigned to the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections project received two services: Enhanced Family Finding and Enhanced 'Ohana Connections. Children who were in foster care for a minimum of 12 months and were between the ages of 4 and 16 were randomly selected for the services. Children in which a guardianship or adoption were pending were excluded.

III.OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM MODEL

Hawai'i's Family Connections Project built upon an established Family Group Decision Making ('Ohana Conferencing) practice, and the more recent Family Finding initiatives to increase Family Finding and Family Connections work in two populations of children.

- **Early 'Ohana (Family) Intervention** brought 'Ohana Conferencing, Family Finding and Family Connections work to the family and the social worker at the very beginning of a case to prevent children from entering foster care, and if removed, to find placement with relative/kin.

- **Enhanced 'Ohana (Family) Connections** focused on Family Finding, Family Connections and permanency options for children aged 4–16 who did not have permanent legal and/or emotional family connections.

Family Group Conferencing, family involvement and family decision making are an integral part of Child Welfare practice in the state of Hawai'i. Since 1996, EPIC 'Ohana has conducted over 13,500 conferences, and since 2006 has conducted more than 1,000 conferences each year. 'Ohana Conferences engage extended family, and find many family members through the simple process of questioning relatives. Since 2007, however, EPIC 'Ohana also expanded Family Finding and Family Connections work by using case mining, internet searches, and questioning families in depth to create and provide comprehensive Family Lists to the Department of Human Services and to enrich the 'Ohana Conferencing process. Our work under this grant moved existing and effective practice into two areas of unmet need, and brought more consistent service to the children and families.

A. Description of Project Goals

The well-being of children is enhanced through emotional and permanent family connections, including placement of children with relatives or kin, and reunification of children with biological parents whenever possible. Family Finding and Family Connections work in the form of Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is a practice approach that increases children's connections with family, both for placement and for emotional and social support.

In **Early 'Ohana Intervention** we sought to provide Family Finding and Family Connections work to prevent children from entering foster care, and if removed, to find placement with relatives or kin. By meeting with a family at the point that a child was about to be taken into care – at the hospital, in an emergency room, in the middle of the night at a police station – supportive family could be identified early as possible placement options. In addition, by consistently providing an early 'Ohana Conference, case planning, Family Finding, and permanency goals were discussed and more effectively planned.

In **Enhanced 'Ohana Connections** the goal was to revisit Family Connections and permanency options for children aged 4–16 who did not have permanent legal and/or emotional family connections. By working with these families to re-weave the fabric of family connections, assisting family members with understanding and preparing for the process of re-establishing relationships within safe and supportive connection opportunities, we anticipated a reduction in the length of stay for children who had been in care for twelve months or more, and an increase in the number of children with permanent emotional and/or legal connections with relatives or kin.

B. <u>Logic Model & Outcomes Measurement Protocol</u> – Please see attached

C. <u>Description of Service Model</u>

Early 'Ohana Intervention

The Early 'Ohana Intervention service model utilized an automatic referral process, an early family meeting at the point of initial Child Welfare Services intervention, and immediate initiation of Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferencing services. The attached service model chart shows the flow of services.

The grant proposal description of the Early 'Ohana Intervention service model remained essentially the same throughout the grant period, however the intake and referral processes were modified in the first twelve months of the grant.

Referral and Intake: After initial screening using risk assessment tools, the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services accepts screened referrals and conducts an investigation. During the three year grant period, if the assigned social worker considered placement of the child or children in a foster home, the case was automatically referred to EPIC 'Ohana. Using a random assignment process, cases were assigned to either the experimental group for an Early 'Ohana Intervention, or to a comparison group.

The process of referral to EPIC 'Ohana was refined in the first twelve months of the grant. EPIC 'Ohana and the Department of Human Services reviewed several possible "trigger points" for the referral process. We looked at the possibility of bringing in cases through the "All in Care" list that was used in the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections process, but found that the Early 'Ohana Intervention service delivery required immediate, "real time" notification. Use of the "All in Care" list would not provide the immediacy we needed. We therefore established a process with the two O'ahu Child Welfare Intake units to provide notice to EPIC 'Ohana of every case in which a social worker was going to initiate an investigation. This meant that only

those cases where it was decided that an on-site investigation was necessary were brought into the study.

The original grant proposal brought into the study those cases in which the social worker was considering placement of the child and the child met the entry criteria for the program. As we began this work we operationalized the "considering placement of the child" to mean going out to the family for an investigation. In that way the Early 'Ohana Intervention could happen at the onset, the referral process could have an objective "trigger point," and the referral could be made quickly. The process established an automatic referral process that we were able to build upon for the sustainability of the later-developed automatic referral process for Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferencing.

Determination of Early 'Ohana Intervention Eligibility: EPIC 'Ohana established a "Dispatch Team" to receive the phone calls from the Department of Human Services. These calls came in during the week and on weekends. Dispatch team members were on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Upon receiving the call from the Department of Human Services stating an investigation was about to take place, the case was entered into a log and the dispatch team member would ask a short series of questions to determine eligibility. If the case was eligible, it was assigned to either the Intervention or Comparison group.

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Eligibility Criteria for Early 'Ohana Intervention

- Children/Youth aged birth to 17
- "Assessed by social worker as in need of placement" as defined by the dispatch of a social worker to investigate

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│              Exclusionary Criteria for Early 'Ohana Intervention  │
│                                                                   │
│    •  No substantiated harm                                       │
│    •  Sexual abuse                                                │
│    •  Prior 'Ohana Conference within one year of intake           │
│    •  Current severe Domestic Violence                            │
│    •  Imminent risk or safety issue – homicidal, suicidal or      │
│       assaultive history                                          │
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Early 'Ohana Intervention: As soon as an eligible case was assigned to the Intervention group, the Facilitator was called and preparation to meet the family began. Family Finding processes were also immediately initiated so that the Facilitator would have the initial Family Finding information as he or she met with the family.

> *"An Early 'Ohana Intervention took place after a mother was arrested for alleged physical abuse to her oldest son. The mother had six sons in her care as a single parent. All boys had the same father with whom the mother had a strained relationship. The father came to the police station and the facilitator was able to talk with him as well as with mother. The facilitator spoke with mother about possible placement with paternal family if needed. She was reluctant but understood that her options might be limited.*
>
> *She preferred her family if possible and was very focused on the boys. The social worker was running late and was juggling several crisis issues. The facilitator was able to finally reach some paternal family members who agreed to take all six boys - otherwise the social worker would have had to split the children up and placed them in different non-relative homes."*
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> *-Facilitator for Early 'Ohana Intervention*

Family Finding: The first step in the Family Finding process was to search CPSS (the DHS Management Information System) and search the EPIC 'Ohana database to determine whether EPIC 'Ohana had previously engaged the family in 'Ohana Conferencing processes. After the case search, the EPIC 'Ohana Facilitator met the parents and family to add to and confirm the Family List. Later, and before the first 'Ohana Conference was convened, (called a

First Conference for Early 'Ohana Intervention cases), the Family List would be more fully developed through internet searches and calls to relatives.

Family Finding Strategies: Our use of the terms "Family Finding" and "Family Connections" may be somewhat different than other models funded by the Children's Bureau, therefore it is important for us to elaborate on the Family Finding and Family Connections strategies utilized in these projects. Family Finding is the process of locating family members who may either become placement options or supportive of the children in care. Family Connections is enhanced work that collaborates with a team to reweave and rebuild connections for children in care – both for the purposes of permanency and to enhance well-being. Family Connections work uses the Family Finding List as the foundation of its work. 'Ohana Conferencing also uses Family Finding as a foundation for its family engagement. In short, all of these efforts are inextricably woven together.

'Ohana Conferencing: An 'Ohana Conference is a strengths-based model of Family Group Decision Making based upon indigenous practices of the Maori and Native Hawaiian people. The Department of Human Services and the Family Court of the First Circuit led the development of the model in 1996. EPIC 'Ohana was formed and engaged as a private non-profit organization to bring 'Ohana Conferences to cases statewide. 'Ohana Conferences are convened and facilitated by neutral parties who can guide family engagement and help to establish collaborative partnerships among family, professionals, and the state.

Hawai'i is rich in cultural diversity and 'Ohana Conferencing is designed to honor the cultural differences of each family by establishing a respectful and comfortable space, and by

utilizing a strengths-based and child focused agenda. As of 2012, EPIC 'Ohana has facilitated

more than 13,500 'Ohana Conferences in the state of Hawai'i.

The 'Ohana Conference Agenda

Welcome & Introductions
Purpose of our work today
Who are the children?
Needs & Services
Hopes & Dreams
Family Strengths
Concerns & Legal Timelines
Help & Services
Family Connections & Visits
Private Family Time
Agreement
Closure

The Early 'Ohana Intervention added an immediate family meeting and Family Finding

to a family's first encounter with the Department of Human Services at the point in which child

removal and placement were being considered. An 'Ohana Conference – called for purposes of

the Early 'Ohana Intervention, a First Conference – was then scheduled within 30 days. The

First Conference was a full 'Ohana Conference, in which extended family was located and

invited to assist in the development of a service plan. In the Comparison groups, an 'Ohana

Conference was available at the request of the social worker, any family member, or the

Guardian ad Litem. 'Ohana Conferencing has always been voluntary and referral based. The

Early 'Ohana Intervention allowed the Department of Human Services to utilize a more

consistent and early family engagement and Family Finding process.

Activity	Intervention Group	Comparison Group
Early 'Ohana Intervention meeting	Yes	No
Family Finding	Immediate and expedited	Yes, upon referral up to one year from intake
'Ohana Conference	Called a "First Conference" and held within 30 days	Yes, upon referral up to one year from intake
Re-conferences	Periodic according to needs of family	Periodic according to needs of family

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections services, which included Family Finding, Family Connections work, and 'Ohana Conferencing when appropriate, addressed the permanency and family connections needs of children aged 4 to 16 who had been in foster care for a minimum of 12 months. The Family Connections Specialist efforts focused on family engagement, assessment, team building, development of permanent family connections and on-going permanency support efforts. One hundred and twenty (120) children from O'ahu were randomly assigned to the Intervention group, and another 120 children to the Comparison group over a period of two years. The original design brought in 40 cases each year over three years, but the timeline for case intake was accelerated in order to generate a full twelve month study of all Intervention cases. The Department of Human Services provided EPIC 'Ohana a list of all children in care. EPIC 'Ohana staff screened that list for eligible children and applied a randomized sampling process to the list. Once a child or youth was referred to the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections component, a case review of previous Family Finding and Family Connection efforts was conducted, establishing a "baseline" of connection for purposes of this

study. Children in placement one year or longer and who were not in a legal guardianship or an adoption process, were eligible to receive Enhanced Family Connections services to improve the likelihood of finding permanent connections. In some cases, however, because the child was already richly connected to relatives, the work of the 'Ohana Connections Specialist was simply to track and follow the maintenance of those connections.

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Eligibility Criteria for Enhanced 'Ohana Connections

- Children aged 4 – 16
- In foster care for a minimum of 12 months
- Not in a legal guardianship or adoption process

Exclusionary Criteria for Enhanced 'Ohana Connections

- Mental illness – actively psychotic, active episode, decompensated, mentally retarded, mental illness making children unable or unwilling to participate
- Sexual abuse
- Imminent risk/safety issue – homicidal, suicidal or assaultive behavior or ideation
- Severe physical disability

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Upon receipt of the referral, an 'Ohana Connections Specialist began working with the family. The Specialist met with the Child Welfare case manager to engage him/her in the process of the Family Connections work. Information gathering included a review of past and current efforts to find and engage family for the child/youth, and current permanency efforts if the child/youth was in placement with relatives and/or non-relative resource caregivers.

Team building work began by identifying all stakeholders in the child's/youth's case including current or former resource caregivers, Guardian ad Litem, therapist and others who may become part of the 'Ohana Connections team. The 'Ohana Connections Specialist met separately with potential team members to engage and assess their involvement, to share the

process and goals of Family Connections efforts, and to enlist their participation in the process. The 'Ohana Connections Specialist also met with the child/youth, if age appropriate, and included the child's/youth's case manager and therapist when possible. The role of the 'Ohana Connections Specialist was to work with the team providing frequent updates on case developments and to plan additional steps in the family connection process. For some cases team activity was structured and formal, for other cases it was not.

In addition to assessment and team building, the 'Ohana Connections Specialist started the Family Finding process utilizing case record mining and internet searches. Each family member identified was screened for past Child Welfare Services or criminal histories. If past or current histories were found, safety concerns were discussed by the team prior to outreach and engagement with the family member. Family members were not automatically excluded because of past history.

Once potential family members were identified as possible resources, the family members were called to see if they were willing to help further the child's family connections, even if the most they could do was to identify other family members. The 'Ohana Connections Specialist assessed family for their understanding of the issues and readiness to participate in reconnecting or meeting the child for the first time. The 'Ohana Connections Specialist, the DHS social worker, and other team members then helped facilitate face-to-face visits and phone calls between the child and his or her family.

"At the time 'Ohana Connections began, Kalei, Koa, and Rochelle, three children under the age of 10, were not having visits with any relatives. During a meeting with the resource caregiver, the Connections Specialist learned the children often asked about two older siblings, Lani, 18, and Shane, 22. They said they missed their older brother and sister and wished they could see them again. Their social worker explained visits weren't allowed because Lani and Shane were unsafe and inappropriate. She shared stories of their numerous problems, and expressed concerns about what their involvement might do to the stability of the children's placement.

The Connections Specialist listened to the social worker's concerns and understood the children's vulnerability. She expressed appreciation for the social worker's protectiveness of the children. "I still think it's important to talk with the older brother and sister," the Specialist explained, "just so I can get a sense of how they're doing today." She assured the social worker she wouldn't take any action towards family connection without the team's consent.

Lani and Shane were excited to receive the call and agreed to meet the Connections Specialist the next day. The Specialist was struck by the sincerity of Lani and Shane's love and concern for their younger siblings. They explained, with tears in their eyes, that their mother was a drug addict so they had helped raise Kalei, Koa, and Rochelle.. They described helping with homework and cooking meals even though they were just kids themselves. They expressed frustration that they had been ruled out from having visits. "Until today, no professional has ever met us," Shane said.

The Connections Specialist asked about their current situation, sensed their genuineness, and developed a simple plan to advocate for sibling visits. Lani and Shane would meet with the children's three therapists so their intentions could be screened, and they could learn the children's trauma related triggers and how to handle them. From there, they'd work towards calls then visits.

During the months of preparation the team communicated regularly, and the children's formerly estranged maternal grandmother and aunt were also brought in. It was decided those relatives could supervise the on-going visits. Visits are now on-going weekly. Lani and Shane were able to develop a bond with the resource caregiver, too – an important step since Kalei, Koa, and Rochelle are soon to be adopted by the resource caregivers. Everyone has agreed, Lani and Shane will remain a vital part of the children's lives."

-'Ohana Connections Specialist for Enhanced 'Ohana Connections

The role of the 'Ohana Connections Specialist was to assist and guide the family and child during the first phase of contacts which often included letters, phone calls, Facebook contact and face-to-face meetings. In the on-going family engagement phase, the 'Ohana Connections Specialist worked closely with family members to assure they were supported and had the necessary assistance from the team.

D. Description of Key Interventions and Activities

Early 'Ohana Intervention

The unique intervention and activity in the Early 'Ohana Intervention was the immediate family engagement and Family Finding at the point of a decision to place a child into care. The purpose of the Early 'Ohana Intervention was to expedite Family Finding activities and family engagement. An Early 'Ohana Intervention took place within 24-72 hours of referral. The goal of the Early 'Ohana Intervention was to put into place Family Finding and family engagement as quickly and early in the process as possible. When successful, the early intervention would decrease the number of children requiring placement and increase the number of children placed with relatives and kin if they were removed. As noted in the service delivery model chart, once DHS accepted a referral, conducted an initial investigation and if the social worker was considering placement, then a case was considered for the Early 'Ohana Intervention project. The case was dispatched to EPIC 'Ohana upon a decision by the social worker to consider placement. An EPIC 'Ohana Facilitator was immediately dispatched to the family, and Family Finding began.

The initial challenge was to intervene in cases very early, and to have a consistent and automatic entry point for the process. It was initially planned that the cases would come into the project once investigation took place. The problem, however, was that investigators must juggle competing cases and are understandably inconsistent in the timing of the completion of investigations. Thus, cases would be waiting for several days or weeks depending on the urgency of the case load of the investigators. Also, an automatic trigger was needed so that cases were entering into the program at a consistent time.

The second activity is an 'Ohana Conference, called a "First Conference" in the Early 'Ohana Intervention as opposed to just an 'Ohana Conference which is the established practice in

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the state of Hawai'i. The 'Ohana Conference is a meeting with extended family and care

providers and the state in which the family engages in safety and placement planning to keep

children in their homes or identify relative placement and develop a service plan. Family

Finding continues as a part of the engagement and location of family and the identification of

possible placement options.

The third activity is the re-conference. These conferences are reconvened as needed by

the family to check on progress and to modify the service plan and placement options as needed.

'Ohana Conferences and re-conferences are available to all families in the Child Welfare system.

Families selected for the Intervention group participated in the Early 'Ohana Intervention

meeting immediately upon placement, and the 'Ohana Conference (First Conference) was

expedited to take place within 30 days.

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections

The first activity in the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections project was the use of the Kevin

Campbell Model as a base for Family Finding. The Family Finding process, based upon the

Kevin Campbell Model, is available to all children and families in the Child Welfare system.

Family Finding, prior to this grant, was initiated upon referral. The Enhanced 'Ohana

Connections project initiated a non-referral Family Finding process for those cases selected for

the Intervention group. For the Intervention and the Comparison groups, a baseline

measurement of Family Connections was taken which captured any Family Finding that had

already taken place as a result of an earlier request to find family for an 'Ohana Conference, or

for the Department of Human Services.

The second activity in the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections project was the Family

Connections work which included the staff contacting and engaging with the children and

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families to help them develop permanent family relationships, collaborating with the Child Welfare Service to establish permanent family placement, and participate in case management to foster team building. ʻOhana Conferencing was utilized by the ʻOhana Connections Specialist to support the Family Connections work when needed or requested.

IV. COLLABORATION

A. Key Partners

Our demonstration project enjoyed the foundation of a strong public and private collaboration, and a strong commitment to community-based Family Group Decision Making. Our project team has remained relatively stable throughout the three years of the grant's work. The project team consisted of the Department of Human Services (DHS) of the state of Hawai'i, with the leadership of Lee Dean as Assistant Program Development Administrator, and Tracey Yadao as DHS project coordinator; EPIC 'Ohana, the intervention service provider, including President and CEO Arlynna Livingston, Program Managers Laurie Tochiki and Julie Barshaw; and Evaluator Catalyst, including Lead Evaluator Richard Kim, and Research Associate Angelina Ahedo. Arlynna Livingston retired as President and CEO of EPIC 'Ohana on August 31, 2012. Laurie Tochiki is now the President and CEO.

B. Relationship between Project Staff and DHS

Building collaborative relationships between DHS staff members and project staff was a key and on-going essential task to the success of Family Group Decision Making and Family Finding efforts in this grant. All of the work in this project rests upon collaborative partnerships between the professional partners, which in turn builds collaborative partnerships with family members.

The work of partnership building was especially challenging since 2009. By April 2010, immediate impacts of the state of Hawai'i fiscal crisis upon the implementation of the Family Connections projects were apparent. The most direct impacts included the implementation of furlough days and the reduction of employees with seniority and leadership positions within the Department of Human Services. During the first reporting period, approximately ten percent

(10%) of the DHS staff was laid off. In the second reporting period, another wave of work force reduction and reorganization of personnel took place with a cumulative effect of a nearly 30% cut in the DHS workforce. During the third reporting period, top level changes in leadership in both the Child Welfare Services office as well as the Department of Human Services took place. In November 2010, statewide elections brought us a new governor, and the appointment of a new Director of the Department of Human Services. Director Pat McManaman was appointed in January 2011. During the fourth, fifth and sixth reporting periods there was much more stability in leadership at the Department of Human Services, although Lee Dean and Tracey Yadao found themselves juggling more than the usual large number of responsibilities.

For the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections project, the timing of our work – after children had been in foster care for one year - also presented a challenge. We found that the majority of the children had already been placed with family or kin, and our work enhanced or expanded the family connections of the children but not necessarily placement. Because of the timing, case managers and Guardians ad Litem worried that Family Connections work may de-stabilize placement. Also, another challenge was that collaborative relationships were hampered in the first and second reporting periods by the reduction in force at the Department of Human Services and the reorganization of regional DHS offices. For the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections project, collaboration with section supervisors, along with dissemination of information about the project assisted in reducing initial barriers to case progress. As each case progressed from Family Finding to Family Connections work, collaboration improved with individual case managers. DHS team members were especially helpful in implementing this progress.

At the very end of the randomization process we found that we had difficulty finding the last few cases. The definition of "twelve months" in foster care was expanded to include those

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children who were in foster care for twelve months, even if those twelve months were not consecutive. This challenge highlights the fact that DHS has been moving children to permanency in a consistent and timely manner, thus children "languishing" in foster care without permanent outcomes on the horizon were harder to find than may have first been contemplated in this project.

C. Context of Key Relationships

Although the relationship with The Catalyst Group for data analysis was new, the relationship between the Department of Human Services, EPIC 'Ohana, and the Child Welfare staff had already been established. 'Ohana Conferencing was developed as a partnership between the Department of Human Services and the Family Court of the First Circuit, and EPIC 'Ohana emerged from that partnership as a non-profit organization. Therefore the connections and ties between our organizations have been vital for effective and innovative programming in Family Group Decision Making, Family Finding and Family Connections. No partnerships were dissolved over the course of the grant funding.

D. Advisory Groups or Steering Committees

No new advisory group was created for the project, although the project looked to the Child Welfare Strategic Planning Committee as an advisor and feedback source throughout the project. The Strategic Planning Committee was comprised of the following individuals: Child Welfare Services branch administration, Child Welfare Services section administration, Casey Family Programs, Family Court, EPIC 'Ohana, and other community partners. These meetings discussed upcoming projects and plans for the Child Welfare Services and allowed the community partners to be part of the discussion on the plans and projects.

E. Collaboration in Implementation and Sustainability Planning

This process refinement required the Crisis and Emergency Response Teams to add additional steps to an urgent and time sensitive intervention process, which included a call to EPIC 'Ohana dispatch staff to log the case into the random assignment protocol, determining whether the case fell into the Intervention or Comparison group, and when included in the Intervention group, incorporate the Family Finding and Connections work and the EPIC 'Ohana Facilitator into the crisis encounter with the family. The lessons learned in implementing the intervention assisted us in bridging to a uniform and early automatic referral process in our sustainability project. This automatic referral process began in January 2012. Mechanisms for referring cases to the Early 'Ohana Intervention project flowed directly into the referral process for automatic referrals in our sustainability project.

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections utilized a database transmission from the Department of Human Services to EPIC 'Ohana each month to bring in new cases to the randomized selection process. This monthly data transmission became the cornerstone for monitoring progress in the automatic referral process in 2012. By checking the All-in-Care list against the automatic referrals, systematic weaknesses in the system could be detected and corrections made to the process.

All of the data analyzed in this grant is secondary data. Data is gleaned from CPSS (the DHS Management Information System) as well as EPIC 'Ohana database, reports and notes. In order to access the data, in particular for the Comparison groups, a work station for CPSS (the DHS Management Information System) was installed in the EPIC 'Ohana office and EPIC 'Ohana staff were trained in gleaning data from the system. This "read only" capability has now translated to a seamless referral process for cases and information to EPIC 'Ohana for conferencing and the sustainability of the grant.

Building Collaborative Relationships with Family Members

Through the grant we reinforced the importance of building the relationships with the families by supporting family engagement and shared decision making. Approaching each family member with an attitude of respect, especially for the rich cultural differences of family members in this project, enhanced the likelihood that work in both projects would further positive outcomes. Viewing parents and extended family members as collaborative partners reflects a shift in practice that is key to the success of this work.

V. SUSTAINABILITY

A. <u>Description of Program Services and Partnership Activities to Sustain</u>

'Ohana Conferencing, Family Finding and Family Connections work was already
embedded as voluntary practices when the grant began in 2009. The grant allowed the
Department of Human Services to build upon the strengths of existing programs by enhancing its
capacity to serve the target population by filling gaps in the service delivery system. One of the
gaps was the referral of cases at the time of possible placement in order to identify family
quickly and prevent placement when possible. This is the group served in Early 'Ohana
Intervention, children from birth to 17 assessed by CWS in need of placement and not yet
placed; and those placed in foster care due to "imminent harm." Early, consistent, and
systematic Family Finding and early Family Group Decision Making were established through
the work of this grant. Enhanced 'Ohana Connections addressed the gap of children aged 4
through 16 who had been in foster care for a minimum of twelve months. Seeking permanency
options and lasting supportive connections for these children developed skills and expertise that
will inform practice in continued Family Connections work, and also in other initiatives of the
Department of Human Services. Although the Early 'Ohana Intervention meeting itself is not
currently being sustained, the Department of Human Services is considering the incorporation of
the lessons learned in an early intervention that is comprehensive and incorporates evidence
based assessment tools as well as Family Finding and family engagement.

What was sustained through an automatic referral process put into place in January 2012
is the use of the referral tools and shared information established in this grant to bring 'Ohana
Conferencing more systematically and consistently to an early place in the life of a case. The
automatic referral process established in this grant was the foundation for the automatic referral

process. Funding for the automatic referral and ʻOhana Conferencing generated from the automatic referral process is incorporated into already existing contracts with EPIC ʻOhana for ʻOhana Conferencing and Family Finding services.

The automatic referral process also put into place automatic Family Finding for all children placed into care. This nearly tripled the number of cases receiving Family Finding services as of January 1, 2012, and brings the Department of Human Services into full compliance with the Fostering Connections to Success Act by providing the Department of Human Services with the tools to notify family within 30 days of placement. Funding for the automatic referral and Family Finding generated from the automatic referral process is also incorporated into existing contracts with EPIC ʻOhana, with no new funding needed.

We began an automatic referral process from DHS to EPIC ʻOhana Conferencing on January 1, 2012. All cases on Oʻahu are referred to EPIC ʻOhana staff, and ʻOhana Conferencing and Family Finding work begins immediately where appropriate. The referral process established in the Early ʻOhana Intervention process was continued to implement this sustainability plan. One early challenge was building a sustainable bridge and moving ʻOhana Conferencing and ʻOhana Connections work into an early and consistent place in the process had to take place without increasing workload demands for already stretched social workers. That challenge was met, and as of March 1, 2012, the automatic referral process has been implemented statewide. Referrals are made to EPIC ʻOhana from Child Welfare Services via faxed intake, FC-IM form, email request, and referral or call in from social worker with a verbal request. The process of receiving all FC-IM forms is still in refinement although the process has made remarkable improvement since its first implementation. FC-IM forms track each movement of a child in out-of-home care. This means that a form will be received for initial

removals, changes in placements or reunifications. When EPIC 'Ohana receives these forms, they are filtered for identification of children with initial placements. This process is used to serve as a "safety net" to ensure that all children new to care are identified and receive automatic Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferencing.

For cases entering care between January 1, 2012 through October 31, 2012, there have been 265 new to care cases with 241 or 91% being automatically referred for Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferencing. Furthermore, of the 241 referred cases, 161 have received automatic Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferencing services and 23 have had case closure. Thus as of December 5, 2012 a total of 184 or 76% have either received automatic Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferencing or had case closure.

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections work also continues under existing EPIC 'Ohana contracts, but returns to voluntary referral. The process of working with each section and with many social workers has helped to build this practice. 'Ohana Connections Specialists worked closely with social workers and family to build relationships and trust. Two of the three 'Ohana Connections Specialists will no longer work for EPIC 'Ohana with the ending of this grant.

As a result of the grant, EPIC 'Ohana Facilitators in Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferencing routinely and systematically utilize the expertise of the remaining 'Ohana Connections Specialist to consult in Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferences. Thus the expertise and skills built throughout the grant is being utilized to weave the services together and enhance Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferencing services.

'Ohana Connections Specialists worked with teams of service providers and care coordinators to help families reweave their connections, and to help children enhance their well-being by establishing meaningful connections with family members. Teams and 'Ohana

Connections Specialists also worked with family members and the care providers to enhance opportunities for permanency and kinship care.

The Department of Human Services has partnered with the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Family Court, and the Office of Youth Services to develop Wrap Services in Hawai'i. The skills and expertise developed in Enhanced 'Ohana Connections is being utilized as EPIC 'Ohana facilitates the Wrap team meetings. This work in enhancing opportunities for permanency and kinship care, as well as weaving in meaningful connections is extremely valuable as the Department of Human Services works with highly vulnerable children impacted by several systems.

B. **Key Products**

The staff of 'Ohana Connections and Early 'Ohana Interventions has developed a manual that will serve as a practical guide to implementation of Family Group Decision Making and Family Connections work as it is informed by the core values of these practices. These core values include family strengths, cultural competence, community based practice, respect, and informed decision making. We learned through the work in Early 'Ohana Intervention and Enhanced 'Ohana Connections that the growth of initiatives must be based upon respectful and trusting relationships. We believe the only way to build these relationships is through authentic fidelity to these core values. A copy of the table of contents for the manual is attached.

VI. EVALUATION

A. <u>Methodology</u>

This project aimed to contribute to the knowledge base of Family Group Decision Making and Family Finding practices by introducing enhancements to existing practice that seek to fill gaps in service and achieve early and more consistent utilization of 'Ohana Conferencing and Family Finding. The two groups served: children from birth to 17 assessed by CWS in need of placement and not yet placed or those placed in foster care due to "imminent harm" (Early 'Ohana Intervention); and those children aged 4 through 16 who have been in foster care for a minimum of twelve months (Enhanced 'Ohana Connections) are the targeted gap groups in service delivery.

The project evaluates the practices based upon a rigorous randomized comparison group design for each project. The randomized comparison design is supported by collaborative relationships between the Department of Human Services, EPIC 'Ohana, and The Catalyst Group, by which secondary data was collected and analyzed.

Early 'Ohana Intervention Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions included both process evaluation questions and outcome measurements. The process evaluation looked at the fidelity of the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria, the timing of the Early 'Ohana Intervention and First Conference, the number and types of searches conducted and the number of family members found in the search methods used. The process evaluation also captured the process of establishing an automatic referral system.

Early 'Ohana Intervention Process Evaluation Questions and Methods

Activity	Evaluation Questions	Indicators
Expedite Family Finding activities to locate and engage family members and Early 'Ohana Intervention meeting	• Type of referrals – consistency with inclusionary and exclusionary criteria • Were Family Finding efforts made within 24-72 hours of referral • Number and types of searches, efficacy of each type • Number of family members found/identified that are willing to be involved in a child's life	• EPIC 'Ohana referral form • Search Method Form • Family Finding activity tracking worksheet • Family List
Convene an 'Ohana Conference	• When and where was the conference convened • Who attended and participated • Signed safety and placement plan • Preliminary service plan • Placement outcome based on 'Ohana Conference • Amount/frequency of family connections when child is in non-relative care • Participants satisfied with services	• Conference sign in sheets • 'Ohana Conference report which includes safety and placement and service plan • Client Satisfaction Survey
Re-conference	• When and where was the conference reconvened • Who attended and participated • Which additional family members attended • Placement outcome based on re-conferencing • Participants satisfied with services	• Conference sign in sheets • 'Ohana Conference report which includes safety and placement and service plan • Client Satisfaction Survey

Secondary data in the form of reports and regularly collected Client Satisfaction Survey forms and other records were transmitted to The Catalyst Group with only case numbers as identifiers. Tracey Yadao with the Department of Human Services conducted a fidelity check periodically during the intake period. Results of the fidelity check were transmitted to The Catalyst Group.

Outcome evaluation questions were also studied for the Early 'Ohana Intervention. A randomized comparison group design was established. As cases were referred to EPIC 'Ohana by the Department of Human Services, a randomization chart was used to assign children to either the Intervention or the Comparison group. As Comparison group cases received 'Ohana Conferencing services through already established referral practices, cases receiving 'Ohana Conferencing were assigned to Comparison Group 1 and those remaining cases that did not receive 'Ohana Conferencing were assigned to Comparison Group 2. As will be discussed later, Comparison Groups 1 and 2 ended up being very different types of cases because 'Ohana Conferencing is an embedded practice in Child Welfare. Comparison Group 2 was largely comprised of cases in which children were returned very quickly and therefore further family engagement and Family Finding was deemed unnecessary by the social worker.

Secondary data from CPSS (the DHS Management Information System), as well as the EPIC 'Ohana database and forms regularly kept in EPIC 'Ohana practice were captured on data analysis forms and transmitted without identifying names to The Catalyst Group.

Short Term outcomes	Evaluation Questions	Indicators
Significantly more youth in the Intervention group will remain at home	• Did more youth remain at home	• CPSS – DHS Management Information System
Significantly more youth in the Intervention group who are unable to stay in their family home will be placed with relatives/kin after receiving project services	• Were children who were not able to remain in their home placed with relatives/kin	• CPSS – DHS Management Information System
Youth in the Intervention group who are unable to stay in their family home or be placed with relatives/kin will have more family connections than Comparison group youth after receiving project services	• Among those youth whom were unable to remain in the family home or be placed with relatives/kin, were they more likely to maintain family connections	• 'Ohana Conference report • Family List • CPSS – DHS Management Information System

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections Evaluation Questions

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections also was structured with both process and outcome evaluation questions. The practice of 'Ohana Connections work was not as deeply embedded in Hawai'i Child Welfare practice as 'Ohana Conferencing. Hawai'i had been using the Kevin Campbell Model since 2007 on a referral basis. Enhanced 'Ohana Connections sought to bridge a gap in service delivery. The goal of Enhanced 'Ohana Connections was to enhance permanency and well-being by assisting children and youth ages 4 through 16 who were in longer term foster care.

The objectives of Enhanced 'Ohana Connections were to: 1) increase identification and location of family members, 2) enhance contact, assessment and engagement of family, 3) if unable to establish a legal permanent family, a secondary objective is to increase permanent emotional connections for the child and increase the number of children who maintain permanent family connections, and 4) provide service to 120 children.

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections Process Evaluation Questions

Activity	Evaluation Questions	Indicators
Use the Campbell Model as a base for Family Finding including family search and identification contact and engagement and documentation	• Types of referrals – consistent with inclusionary and exclusionary criteria • Number and types of searches • Efficacy of each type • Number of family members found and identified that are willing to be involved in child's life	• EPIC 'Ohana referral form • Search Method Form • Family Finding activity tracking worksheet • Family List
Family Connections work including contact, engagement, development of relationships, establishing team, providing support for family connections and 'Ohana Conferencing	• Amount/frequency of family connections when child is in non-relative care • Number of family members contacted and engaged • Level of team building • What type of supports are given to the youth • Participants satisfied with services	• Family Finding activity tracking worksheet • Service activity log • Quarterly progress reports • Team member lists • Client Satisfaction Survey

The experimental design used in Enhanced 'Ohana Connections sought to evaluate the family connections established and supported over a period of time. Baseline and snapshot data were captured onto Data Capture Forms at baseline, six-month and twelve-month anniversaries for both the Intervention and Comparison groups. Secondary data was used for all Data Capture Forms utilizing forms and information regularly kept by the Department of Human Services and EPIC 'Ohana. Data Capture Forms were transmitted to The Catalyst Group without names and only case numbers as identifying information.

Short term and longer term outcome questions were examined, and in the process data about the breadth and depth of each connection found and supported was captured at baseline, six-months and twelve-months.   Frequency of contact as well as the quality of contact was captured.

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections Short Term Outcomes Assessment

Long Term Outcomes	Evaluation Questions	Indicators
There will be significantly more family members found that had previously lost touch or were not before known for the youth in the Intervention group than Comparison group youth after receiving project services	• As a result of the project services are youth more likely to find family members that they previously lost touch with or had not known before	• Search Method Form • Family Finding activity tracking worksheet • Family List
Significantly more youth in the Intervention group will have visitation with family/kin established after receiving project services as compared to the Comparison group youth	• As a result of project services are youth more likely to have visitation with family/kin established	• CPSS – DHS Management Information System • Monthly and quarterly progress reports to DHS
Significantly more youth in the Intervention group will have foster placement stability in non-relative home, unless child is placed in less restrictive (relative) setting	• As a result of project services are youth more likely to have foster placement stability in non-relative home, unless child is placed in a less restrictive setting	• CPSS – DHS Management Information System

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections Long Term Outcomes Assessment

Long Term Outcomes	Evaluation Questions	Indicators
Significantly more youth in the Intervention group will have family commitment established after receiving project services as compared to the Comparison group youth	• As a result of project services are youth more likely to have family commitment established	• Direct contact • Family Finding activity tracking worksheet • Monthly and quarterly progress reports to DHS
Significantly more youth in the Intervention group will have permanent placement (return home, adoption/legal guardianship with family/kin as compared to the Comparison group	• As a result of project services are youth more likely to be in permanent placement with family/kin	• Permanency is defined as returning home, adoption/legal guardianship as captured by CPSS - DHS Management Information System

Evaluation Design: An experimental design, with random assignment, was used in this project. Services were available to all children and families, but children and families identified through random sampling were given the enhanced services of Early 'Ohana Intervention and Enhanced 'Ohana Connections. Secondary data was collected through CPSS (the DHS Management Information System), the EPIC 'Ohana database, and forms and reports prepared in the regular course of service delivery for both the Department of Human Services and EPIC 'Ohana. Data gleaned from these secondary sources were entered onto Data Capture Forms and transmitted to The Catalyst Group without identifying names. Because only secondary data was used, IRB approval was not required.

Data Collection Procedures: Through the collaborative relationship between the partners in this project, data was shared through CPSS (the DHS Management Information System), EPIC 'Ohana database, and forms and reports kept by EPIC 'Ohana. All forms and database systems, including Client Satisfaction Survey instruments, were created and utilized as a part of regular practice established prior to the commencement of the grant. EPIC 'Ohana staff gleaned information which was placed onto Data Capture Forms and transmitted to The Catalyst Group without identifying information.

As we approached the twelve-month anniversary for most of the cases in both parts of this study, we realized from preliminary reports generated by The Catalyst Group that the Data Capture Forms were being captured by EPIC 'Ohana staff in ways that were inconsistent, and that all of the data needed to measure the outcomes desired was not being captured. EPIC 'Ohana performed a "triangulation" process on a random selection of data sheets. Three independent data sheets were produced and compared. Significant differences were revealed in how placements were counted, how the length of time in placement was counted and in family

found and connections tracked. As a result, the EPIC 'Ohana staff and The Catalyst Group spent

a great deal of time discussing the differences, clarifying definitions to ensure consistency and

engaging in quality assurance checks. The result was a second complete set of corrected data

that was used by The Catalyst Group for these final reports.

B. <u>Process Evaluation Results</u>

For both projects, full descriptions of the results of the data analysis are attached in the

form of final reports from The Catalyst Group. For purposes of discussion only the highlights of

these reports will be included here. Demographics and other descriptors can be found in the final

reports attached. It is important to note that in the final reports from The Catalyst Group, some

measurements reflect data on the family and in other places, data on the children. For the

Intervention group and each Comparison group, 120 families were served. The number of

<u>children in each group, however, is not equal.</u>

Fidelity checks were performed by Tracey Yadao periodically during the study and she

independently found that the process of intake, randomization, inclusion and exclusion and data

collection was performed in accordance with the research design.

In the Early 'Ohana Intervention, immediacy of Family Finding and family engagement

was perhaps the most important process question. Immediate Family Finding and an Early

'Ohana Intervention meeting was held in the Intervention group within 24-72 hours of intake in

98% of the cases. Further information about the composition of the family members attending

the conferences, the number of family members found, the types of searches conducted and the

number of family members found in each type of search are included in the attached final

reports.

Similarly, in Enhanced 'Ohana Connections a fidelity check of inclusionary and exclusionary criteria, randomization processes and data collection processes was independently conducted by Tracey Yadao. Tracey Yadao found that the processes were faithful to the research design, and cases were properly selected for the study. The number of searches, the kind of work performed and the numbers of family members found is documented in the attached final reports.

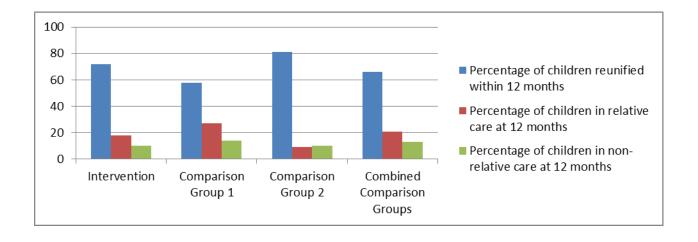## C. Outcome Evaluation Results

Early 'Ohana Intervention

The most significant evaluation issue became apparent as Comparison Group 1 and Comparison Group 2 were separated. As cases were referred by the Department of Human Services to EPIC 'Ohana, cases were assigned randomly to either a Comparison group or the Intervention group. All families and children were offered 'Ohana Conferencing services, but the Intervention group received immediate Family Finding and family engagement services within 24-72 hours of possible placement. Comparison Groups 1 and 2 were to be separated as families received voluntarily referred 'Ohana Conferencing services. When the final analysis of the data began, it was apparent that Comparison Groups 1 and 2 were very different.

A conclusion that can be drawn from the differences between these groups is that 'Ohana Conferencing, as an embedded practice in Child Welfare Services, is effectively used when children are in care. For those cases in which the child is never removed or was quickly returned because the safety issues were resolved, Family Finding and 'Ohana Conferencing were generally not used.

Looking at children who were in care for even a day, the following descriptors emerge:

	Intervention	Comparison 1 with OC	Comparison 2 without OC	Combined Comparison 1 & 2
Number of children removed	109	156	79	235
Number of children reunified within 12 months	78	91	65	156
% of children reunified within 12 months	72%	58%	87%	66%

	Intervention	Comparison 1 with OC	Comparison 2 without OC	Combined Comparison 1 & 2
Number of children removed	109	156	79	235
% of children in <u>relative</u> care at 12 months	18%	27%	9%	21%
% of children in <u>non-relative</u> care at 12 months	10%	14%	10%	13%

Children who were removed and whose families received the Early 'Ohana Intervention service, were more likely to be either reunified or placed with a relative/kin than those children who did not receive those services. In addition, the findings show that the sooner an 'Ohana Conference happens in a case, the time a child spends in out of home care is significantly reduced.

An important trend in the data when examining Comparison Group 1 (the group that had an 'Ohana Conference but not an Early 'Ohana Intervention) is that there is a direct relationship between the length of time before the 'Ohana Conference, and the length of out-of-home stay. In other words, the shorter the length of time before the 'Ohana Conference, the shorter the length of stay in out-of-home care. The longer the length of time before the 'Ohana Conference, the longer the length of stay in out-of-home care. A correlation of these two variables indicates a statistically significant finding.

Correlations

		Ohana Conference Referral	Days out of home
Ohana Conference Referral	Pearson Correlation	1	.259**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	347	347
Days out of home	Pearson Correlation	.259**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	347	347

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Early 'Ohana Intervention Satisfaction Survey Results

Participants in Early 'Ohana Intervention meetings and 'Ohana Conferences reported a high level of satisfaction in the services received. For the Intervention group, 510 of the 524 fully completed surveys were positive (97.3%). For the Comparison Group 1, 680 of the 695 fully completed surveys were positive (97.4%). Responses from the client surveys are summarized quantitatively in the attached evaluation reports. Here are some highlights of themes and comments received in the Early 'Ohana Intervention project.
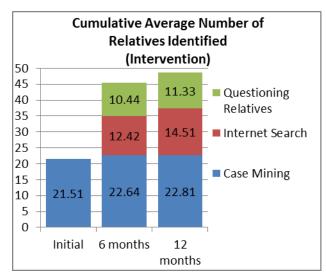
- An 'Ohana Conference helps clarify the situation and is informative

  • It was good to clarify in the presence of all parties what is happening, options, and what is best for [the youth].

  • We all got on the same page

  • It was informative and helped us know what to expect

- An 'Ohana Conference is useful because it is helpful to have a neutral 3rd party involved to address sensitive issues

  • We were able to come together in a neutral, nonjudgmental manner to discuss these issues with one another that would have been difficult if we tried to do this on our own; and I felt that everyone had a chance to be heard and our opinions valued/taken into consideration

  • Thorough discussion of case in supportive atmosphere. Difficult topics were not avoided, but acknowledged and fully discussed

  • Allowed us to see face to face other family of the children that have been in our care for the past 6 years. Very loving and supportive family for all the children

- The conference provided valuable information / helps to understand different roles of agencies involved

  • All questions were answered, or person was told where to get question answered

  • Connection of service was explained in detail to clear up the roles of the different agencies with Comprehensive Counseling and Support Services

  • It lets both parents & CWS know how much family means in times and situations like this

  • … family members came out to support both [father] & [mother]. We were able to hear what was going on and how we, as a family, could help out in time of need
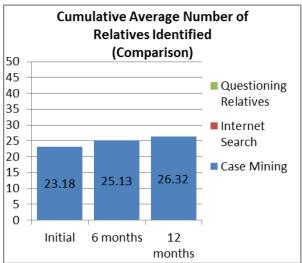
As with the Early 'Ohana Intervention, detailed results of the data analysis are attached. Included here are highlights that lead to conclusions that:

- Intensive Family Finding efforts and search methodologies are effective in identifying additional family members as potential supports to the child;

- Enhanced 'Ohana Connections did widen the connections circles of the children in the Intervention group; and that

- The quality of the interactions, that is the number of direct vs. indirect contacts, was enhanced as well.

The charts below highlight the efficacy of Intensive Family Finding efforts when the methodologies of case mining, internet searches, and questioning relatives are used in a blended fashion or as building blocks for achieving the goal of identifying a greater number of relatives with whom the child can build connections. These charts account for maternal, paternal and other kin relatives.

A cursory read of the data could suggest that certain Family Finding methodologies were more effective in yielding results when applied toward specific searches for maternal, paternal, or kin relatives or siblings. The next few paragraphs will explain how Family Finding was completed for the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections cases and how it may impact the outcome of the data.

First, it is important to clarify that case mining, internet searching, and questioning relatives were search methodologies used in a blended fashion regardless of whether the search was for a maternal, paternal, or kin relative or sibling. The reason for this is that there was rich information to be gleaned from each search type when used as building blocks upon the other. For example, "case mining" was performed first in all Enhanced 'Ohana Connections cases to establish a baseline of information on the family members known and involved in the child's life. In many cases, contact information was not available in the case mining records but only names of family members identified. Thus, in order to have contact with the relatives, obtaining contact information was needed. After case mining was completed, "internet searches" would be conducted in order to find contact information for the identified family members and for possibly identifying additional names of relatives. Once contact information was obtained, phone calls would be made to the family member and "questioning relatives" was used to verify information on the family regarding relationships, relative whereabouts, contact information found via internet search, level of support, etc.

Second, the timing of when each search type took place needs to be understood. Case mining was completed on all intervention and comparison cases at baseline, or when the case was first brought into the grant. Case mining involved looking at the CPSS records and the EPIC database and all information on family was recorded in terms of number of family identified and

number located or with contact information. The baseline data reflects only case mining results as it was used to give a snap shot of where each child was starting from in terms of family connections upon entry into the grant. Therefore, it was not until the 6 and 12 month anniversaries that data on internet search and questioning relative results was recorded.

Third and last, the numbers attributed to case mining was muddied due to some cases having previously had Family Finding services. For these cases, search efforts were made via case mining, internet searching and questioning relatives prior to their entry into the grant. All previous data was recorded onto a "Family List" and preserved as a read only document on the EPIC database. When these cases received a second round of Family Finding under the grant, this document was used during the baseline assessment to account for family members found through the case mining process even though the information on the Family List was obtained through all search types. Therefore, attributing greater or lesser success to each search type is problematic due to the necessity of all methodologies building upon the other, the timing of when each search type took place, and the difficulty of correctly separating out data provided through each search type.

The structure of the previous grant evaluation reports sometimes combined Family Finding/Connection efforts and goals in Enhanced 'Ohana Connections and Early 'Ohana Interventions. It is important to understand that the efforts and the goals are very different in the two projects. For Early 'Ohana Interventions, Family Finding takes place in order to engage family in the 'Ohana Conference process and to find possible placements when necessary. In Enhanced 'Ohana Connections, the effort is made to enrich the connections of the youth for lifelong family connections. Because these strategies and purposes are different, it is important

to evaluate them separately, yet because the work is woven together so tightly, some efforts to dissect the work is also artificial.

The chart and table below highlight the results of focused attention on Family Connections. The 12-month assessment reflects a greater number of family members willing to be involved in the child's life for Intervention participants than the Comparison participants as well as an increase in family members willing to be involved since the 6-month assessment.

Family Willing to be Involved per Participant					
	Group	**Assessment**	**Maternal**	**Paternal**	**Other**
			Mean	**Mean**	**Mean**
Family Members Found and Willing to be Involved	Intervention	6-month	8.64	5.98	1.75
	(*N* = 120)	12-month	10.13	6.80	2.15
	Comparison	6-month	3.48	1.91	0.61
	(*N* = 120)	12-month	3.54	1.98	0.71

Our outcome measurements contemplated foster care stability as a positive outcome measurement. The chart below indicates that the final outcomes for the children in the Intervention group were more positive with more children reunified or in permanency at the 12-month period. This indicates that the movement experienced by the children was movement out of foster care and into permanency.

Placement Outcomes								
	6-Month				12-Month			
	Intervention		Comparison		Intervention		Comparison	
Outcome	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reunification	13	10.8	11	9.2	22	18.3	20	16.7
Permanency Established	10	8.3	5	4.2	29	24.2	19	15.8
Permanency in Process	23	19.2	24	20.0	32	26.7	33	27.5
Remaining in Care	74	61.7	80	66.6	17	30.8	28	40.3
Total:	120	100.0	120	100.0	120	100.0	120	100.0

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections Satisfaction Survey Results

Participants in Enhanced 'Ohana Connections services were highly satisfied with the services they received. For the Intervention group, 81 of the 95 fully completed surveys were positive (85%). Quantitative analysis of the client satisfaction surveys is provided in the evaluation report attached. Here are some of the themes and comments received as an example of the response from all stakeholders in the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections project.

- It is important to have a program that focuses specifically on family connections
  • Keep this program going. Finding (or even just knowing) family members is important because it gives young people support & healing that they may need

  • This program was very helpful - I hope it continues on. It was helpful having a neutral person to talk to - I felt comfortable sharing

- It is useful to know there are ways to keep children in care connected to family in a safe environment
  • I was very impressed with the extent that a family list was created for [Child]. It helps to know that there may be some way for us to help her feel connected to her family, heritage, culture. Thank you!

  • Although we didn't need to access many services, we feel it's very important for children to remain connected to their birth families in a safe environment

- It is important to have a program that focuses solely on family connections because line workers do not have time for this work
  • • thank you for your close follow up in this case, + your patience in educating us about the importance of family connections

  • Family connections services are very helpful to us social workers because working toward establishing and/or maintaining family connections can be very time consuming and the family connections service allows the social workers more time to devote to helping the children and families with other services that are just as important

  • Family Finding is a valuable tool and asset for all parties (the children, the families, DHS, service providers). It was extremely helpful to have the Family Finding specialist coordinate with all the parties

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The Department of Human Services of the state of Hawaiʻi sought to advance the knowledge base of Family Group Decision Making and Family Finding by enhancing and further embedding promising improvements to already successful practice. Because ʻOhana Conferencing and Family Finding were already a part of best practice in Hawaiʻi, the enhancements in this project were somewhat subtle but are nevertheless important and significant. Through the collaborative work of the Department of Human Services, EPIC ʻOhana, and the community, both initiatives accomplished their respective goals, and many of the practices are now sustained through an automatic referral process.

Early ʻOhana Intervention brought Family Finding and Family Connections work and an immediate family engagement intervention to the earliest stages of the case. We strove to embed frequent and early usage of both ʻOhana Conferencing and Family Finding. The initial process development and implementation for Early ʻOhana Intervention was much more difficult than for Enhanced ʻOhana Connections. First, developing an intake system that was systematic, consistent and allowed the random assignment of cases was challenging. Establishment of the system required cooperation from extremely busy crisis workers. Set upon the context of deep fiscal and personnel cuts, adding a random utilization of the Early ʻOhana Intervention required patience and good humor from the social workers.

It is clear from the data that when the Intervention group is compared with the combined Comparison groups, the cases receiving an Early ʻOhana Intervention fared better. The children were less likely to be removed from home, more likely to be reunified quickly, and if taken into care were placed with relatives.

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We learned that 'Ohana Conferencing is indeed embedded in Child Welfare practice with most of the cases when we observed the differences in the makeup of Comparison Groups 1 and 2. Comparison Group 1 elected an 'Ohana Conference. Comparison Group 2 did not. There appears to be a significant correlation between the timing of the conference and the length of out-of-home care. The earlier the 'Ohana Conference, the shorter the out-of-home stay.

Enhanced 'Ohana Connections clearly shows the efficacy of Family Finding efforts and the importance of working with the child/youth and family to enhance the lifelong connections that can support a young person's adulthood and well-being. By studying the breadth and depth of the family connections in both an Intervention and a Comparison group, very rich data was collected and analyzed. The short term and long term outcomes are important.

First, in looking at the efficacy of various Family Finding efforts, we learned that each methodology is blended and dependent upon other methodologies. In other words, although we studied the efficacy of each methodology (case mining, questioning relatives, internet searches) we have also developed through this grant a blended practice in which the methodologies build, like building blocks upon one another. By utilizing all methodologies in a natural order, a rich family picture emerges.

Through the use of respectful, caring, solution-focused work with families and with teams of professionals working with the children/youth and families, effective family connections can be built. We learn from the data that:

- Intensive Family Finding efforts and search methodologies are effective in identifying additional family members as potential supports to the child;

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- Enhanced 'Ohana Connections did widen the connections circles of the children in the Intervention group; and that

- The quality of the interactions, that is the number of direct vs. indirect contacts, was enhanced as well.

The Department of Human Services, and the Children's Bureau, value the importance of family connections for the support of the long term well-being of young people. This grant is based upon a premise that perhaps one of the most important factors in promoting the well-being of children in the foster care system is to help them connect to caring adults who can provide lifelong support. This study shows that Family Finding and Family Connections methodologies improve the quantity and quality of family connections for children.

The permanency outcomes of the Enhanced 'Ohana Connections project are also promising. At twelve months, fewer children remained in care in the Intervention group (31%) than in the Comparison group (40%). By finding family and nurturing connections, children were more likely to be placed on a path of lifelong permanent family.

The data analyzed for this grant was analyzed through the lens of the outcome measurements contemplated in the design of the project, and catalogued in the Evaluation Protocol. What was collected was very rich, and may contain valuable insights into Family Group Decision Making and Family Finding practice beyond the original evaluation design. Even though all of the evaluation questions were fully explored in the two Evaluation Reports attached, more analysis at a later date could reveal other important findings supportive of the practices of Family Group Decision Making and Family Finding.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Early 'Ohana Intervention proves to be a valuable process for early engagement of family. Faster reunification and placement with family or kin indicates that by attending to Family Finding and family engagement when the Department of Human Services first works with a family, a promising opportunity to put cases onto a better long term path is presented. The practice of an Early 'Ohana Intervention was not, however, a part of a more comprehensive look at how those first encounters are managed and serviced. This project provides valuable evidence that a more comprehensive practice model improvement for these first encounters, coupled with a family engagement and Family Finding component, could provide strong positive improvements to practice.

The Department of Human Services may find that sharing the data about the relationship between an earlier 'Ohana Conference and a shorter out-of-home stay may encourage social workers to hold conferences earlier in the life of a case. With the establishment of an automatic referral process, social workers are assisted in setting up conferences as soon as a case begins. Historically, the actual timing of the first 'Ohana Conference was sometimes delayed as the social worker establishes relationships and begins working on the case. The findings of this grant may help social workers shift this practice to an earlier timeframe.

Our work with Enhanced 'Ohana Connections will continue under the collaborative relationship between the Department of Human Services and EPIC 'Ohana. However, the full scope of services is not currently funded. Though the practices are promising, when children are in care for a longperiod of time they often present with more challenging multi-system issues. Utilizing the Family Connections work to enhance earlier 'Ohana Conferences, working with multi-agency teams, and also working with transitioning youth to strengthen their connections

before and after emancipation all promise to be important opportunities to utilize the strengths of

Family Connections work to enhance and strengthen existing practice.