



QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CENTER
ON ENGAGING YOUTH IN
FINDING PERMANENCY

Program Implementation Primer

Hawai'i: Pilina Circles

Program Implementation Primer

Pilina Circles

The Quality Improvement Center on Engaging Youth in Finding Permanency (QIC-EY) Program Implementation Primer introduces *Pilina Circles* and serves as a comprehensive guide for child welfare agencies considering its implementation. Designed for agencies ready to make a meaningful impact, this guide goes beyond a simple overview. It shares the insights and tools needed to assess interest, to ensure infrastructure readiness and to navigate implementation with confidence. It includes the following:

- **Logic Model:** a framework that illustrates how program resources and activities lead to intended outcomes
- **Core Components:** the essential functions and practices that need to be delivered consistently and with fidelity to ensure effectiveness
- **Program Delivery:** the amount and intensity of participant engagement necessary for achieving program success
- **Implementation Supports:** foundational resources that enable high-quality delivery (such as staffing, training, policies, supervision, partnerships and data systems)
- **Evaluation:** systematic measurement of fidelity in program delivery and of outcomes, performed to monitor progress and to demonstrate program impact
- **Implementation Lessons Learned and Tips:** common barriers to implementation and practical strategies for overcoming them
- **Additional Program Materials:** practical aids — program manuals, logic models, fidelity checklists, scripts and other resources — that support consistent and effective delivery

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1. Program Overview

Youth engagement in case and permanency planning is a critical factor in achieving meaningful and lasting permanency outcomes. When youth engage in these discussions, they gain decision-making skills; they develop a sense of connectedness; and they become more likely to share information about their preferences that can support achieving cultural, relational and legal permanency (Augsberger, 2014). However, many youths have neither participated in case and permanency planning discussions nor have known how to advocate for what they want to meet their needs for safety, permanency and well-being.

Adapted from the E Makua Ana Youth Circle process of EPIC 'Ohana, Inc., the *Pilina Circles* program makes youth voice central to the development of case plans and permanency plans. In the native Hawaiian language, E Makua Ana means “becoming an adult” and pilina (pronounced pee-lee-na) means “relationship or connection.” The program incorporates youth-driven, action planning through the collaboration of youths with their caseworkers and other persons whom the youths have identified as part of their circles of support. Discussions in Pilina Circles cover topics including case direction, educational stability, health, cultural and spiritual and social capital, housing, placement, family connections and legal permanency.

By equipping youths ages 14 through 17 with the knowledge, skills and support they need to participate meaningfully in their own case planning, permanency planning and legal processes, this program provides a structured way for these youths to

- learn in detail what goes into their case and permanency plans,
- explore and express their wishes for their case and permanency outcomes, and
- develop strategies for sharing their voices in Pilina Circle gatherings.



“It really opened my eyes to how much our youths go through, how resilient they are, and how many services they have to support them...It was so impactful for our youth to see a literal circle of people supporting them.”

- community member

Successful implementation of the *Pilina Circles* program relies on collaboration among child welfare staff members in key roles. The facilitator leads coordination of each youth's Pilina Circle meeting, guides group discussion in a way that centers on youth voice and helps the group to identify clear action steps. The youth peer support specialist builds a trusting relationship with the youth, supports the young person's preparation for the Pilina Circle and provides encouragement and support before and after the meeting. The recorder documents key points, decisions and next steps discussed during the Pilina Circle. Following the meeting, the facilitator and the recorder share responsibility for preparing a written summary that captures the goals expressed by the youth as well as actions that participants have agreed to take and responsibilities of each participant.

The table in *Figure 1* shows the persons invited to the Pilina Circle from a youth's support team. It also shows the case planning outcomes that can be measured as a result of participation in a *Pilina Circle* and the values integrated into the Pilina Circles program's process.



Figure 1. *Pilina Circle Case Planning Model*

2. Program Goals

The overall hope for the youths who participate is that the *Pilina Circles* program will benefit them with all of the following:

- a greater sense of well-being in their placements
- self-determination of their legal permanency goals
- self-identification of their spiritual connections
- social capital
- meaningful engagement in court hearings
- linkages to helpful resources
- participation in community events
- attendance at training sessions

"I got to know how my goddaughter was and is doing, I got to meet the team members that have her best interests at heart, and had the honor of being there for [the youth's] rough-drafted welfare plan."

- youth relative

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

As a result of participating in the program, each youth will have

- a better sense of one's own voice being heard in the case planning process,
- a greater sense of readiness to participate in permanency discussions,
- increased self-advocacy skills,
- a case plan that has the youth's approval because it reflects what the young person wants,
- needs met for cultural and relational well-being,
- a plan to increase and to improve communication with support team members,
- more natural supports and increased social capital, and
- information about court hearings and preparation for participating in them if the youth chooses to do so.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

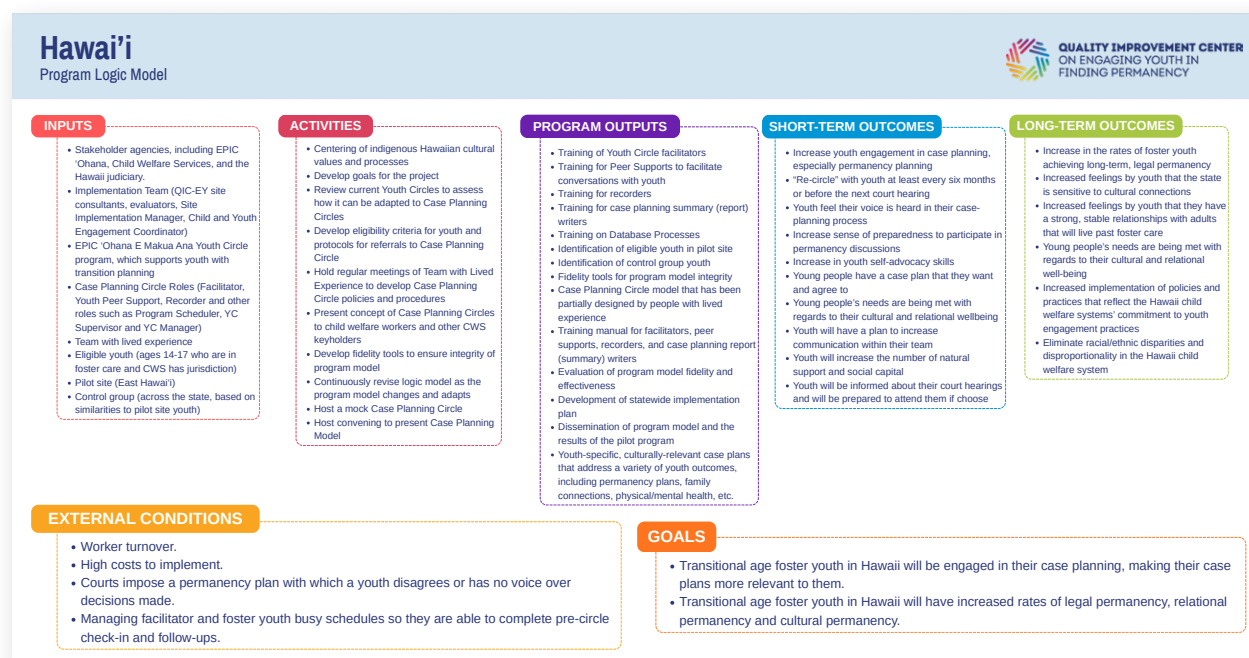
The program also aims to contribute over time to increases in each of the following:

- rates of legal permanency
- presence and quality of relational and cultural permanency
- overall well-being
- implementation of policies and procedures that reflect child welfare systems' commitment to youth engagement
- stable permanence

3. Logic Model

A logic model illustrates how to achieve expected outputs and outcomes of a program through implementation of its core components and activities. A logic model needs to explain clearly how specific activities and services are expected to produce or to influence their associated short- and long-term outcomes.

Agency resources, goals and other factors will impact the logic model. The Additional Program Materials section of this primer includes an example of a logic model, which can be modified to fit a particular agency's specific approach to implementation.



4. Core Components

Core components are critical to the identity and the aim of each program. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (Education Development Center, 2018), “Core components are the most essential and indispensable components of an intervention practice or program.” The core components of the *Pilina Circles* program include the following:

REFERRAL PROCESS

The program uses a structured process through which youths, their caregivers and other partners may request participation. This referral component ensures accessibility and promotes inclusivity, allowing all eligible youth the opportunity to engage in planning to set their own case and permanency goals.

PILINA VISITS

Youths accepted into the program attend two preparatory meetings that build their readiness and capacity to participate meaningfully in their Pilina Circle meetings. These meetings focus on establishing trust; explaining the purpose and structure of the Pilina Circles; and preparing youths to share their preferences, strengths and goals in a supportive environment.

COORDINATION

Planning and logistical support enable smooth execution of Pilina Circle meetings. This includes scheduling, inviting participants, providing necessary accommodations and ensuring that all aspects of the Pilina Circle environment align with the program’s values and youths’ needs.

FACILITATED PILINA CIRCLE

Trained facilitators provide guided support during Pilina Circle meetings by centering discussion on youth voice, encouraging youth engagement and maintaining a safe and respectful environment. Attendees in a Pilina Circle meeting include a facilitator, a youth, the youth’s caseworker and members of the youth’s support team selected by the youth. The facilitator guides the conversation, integrates strengths-based approaches and ensures that the youth’s perspective drives the planning process.

RECORDING AND SUMMARY WRITING

Engagement continues with each youth after the initial Pilina Circle meeting to monitor progress, to provide support and to schedule subsequent Pilina Circle meetings, called “Re-Circles,” if they are needed. This component reinforces youth voice over time, ensures continuity in permanency planning and allows for adjustments to case plans based on each youth’s evolving needs and circumstances.

5. Program Delivery (Intensity and Duration)

Pilina Circle meetings can happen several times per year, as often as requested by a youth. Each one after the first is referred to as a “Re-Circle.” The youth determines whether to convene a Re-Circle and the total number of them to hold. Four or five Pilina Re-Circles in one year is the upper range for a youth. A Re-Circle before each court hearing would be beneficial; court hearings usually occur every three to four months.

The overall delivery plan includes the following:

- The facilitator reviews background information about the youth, prepares questions for the caseworker to gather additional information about the youth’s case and arranges a date for the Pilina Circle meeting in coordination with all those who will be participating.
- The facilitator contacts the youth, the caseworker and the youth’s other support persons and prepares them for the Pilina Circle process.
- The youth and the young person’s caseworker attend the Pilina Circle. (If the caseworker is unavailable on the scheduled date, the Pilina Circle must be rescheduled because the caseworker’s attendance is essential.) Other attendees are optional and are chosen by the youth.
- Each Pilina Circle generally lasts 2 to 3 hours. This includes time to visit, to take breaks and to eat food served during the meeting.
- After each Pilina Circle or Re-Circle, a peer support specialist follows up with the youth to debrief the meeting and to schedule the next Re-Circle, as needed.

Estimated Total Contact Time:

- **Facilitator and Peer Support Specialist:** approximately 7 to 8 hours across the preparatory visits, the Pilina Circle meeting and the debriefing stages. Time per follow-up visit is estimated at 1 hour but depends on each youth’s needs.



Program Timeline

STAGE	ACTIVITY	ESTIMATED DURATION	FREQUENCY	TYPICAL TIMING
1	Visit 1 to Prepare for Pilina Circle*	1-1.5 hours	Each time	Month 1
2	Visit 2 to Prepare for Pilina Circle	1-1.5 hours	Each time	Month 1
3	Pilina Circle	2-3 hours	Each time	Month 1
4	Debriefing After Pilina Circle	1 hour	Each time	Month 1
5	Follow-up Visit	1 hour	As needed	When requested to meet a youth's evolving needs, usually in Months 2 to 6

*Note: The number of preparatory visits before a Re-Circle may vary. Some youths may need only one.

6. Implementation Supports

Staffing

Effective program delivery requires qualified administrative and program staff who have the skills to support youth engagement, to facilitate orientation activities and to manage logistics. To implement this program effectively, child welfare agencies need to determine the necessary number of staff members, to consider staff-to-youth ratios and to plan for recruitment and retention. They also need to anticipate potential barriers to implementation, such as turnover, limited expertise and competing responsibilities.

The staffing needed to support Pilina Circles includes the following positions:

FACILITATOR

The facilitator leads each Pilina Circle or Re-Circle and coordinates the process of arranging it. The facilitator carries out the following additional kuleana (Hawaiian for “responsibilities”):

- Conduct the first preparatory visit along with the peer support specialist to establish early engagement with the youth.
- Uphold ground rules and case planning values for the *Pilina Circles* program.
- Assign volunteers from the youth’s support team who will attend the Pilina Circle, and schedule the date for the meeting.
- After the Pilina Circle, follow up with the youth and the other participants regarding next steps.
- Prepare the written summary of each Pilina Circle. (This is a shared kuleana between the recorder and the facilitator.)

Individuals in this position need strong facilitation skills, including the ability to reframe and to redirect conversations to make them focus on solutions.

YOUTH PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST

The peer support specialist, an individual with lived experience in the child welfare system, assists the facilitator in the coordination process and in engagement with the youth. The specialist carries out these additional kuleana:

- Work alongside the facilitator to plan the first preparatory visit.
- Build a trusting and supportive relationship with the youth by establishing rapport.
- Support building of rapport between the youth and the young person’s support team members.
- Support the youth in preparing for the Pilina Circle meeting at which case planning will be the main topic.
- Attend the Pilina Circle.
- Debrief with the youth after the Pilina Circle.
- Communicate often with the facilitator about upcoming contacts with the youth.
- Provide updates via email to the young person’s support team members.
- Walk alongside the youth while the young person is navigating through next steps.
- Enter all communications about the youth’s Pilina Circle into a database.
- Debrief with the facilitator prior to the next Pilina Circle or Re-Circle.

RECORDER

The recorder is highly trained to capture notes (in person or virtually) to support writing of Pilina Circle summaries. The recorder carries out these additional kuleana:

- Communicate with the facilitator and the peer support specialist about the youth's food and drink preferences.
- Set up the meeting room with chairs in a circle, and arrange food service.
- Provide easel paper and markers for the meeting.
- Capture in detail in writing the next steps determined during the Pilina Circle meeting.

Training and Coaching

Effective implementation of a program requires both training and coaching to ensure program fidelity and optimal quality. Plans for training need to describe the program's curriculum and to detail who will be trained, who will conduct the training, the length of the initial training and any booster sessions, plus certification requirements that may apply. Coaching and supervision provide support for staff members as they apply the model in practice; they also maintain adherence to program standards. Coaching may include individual or group sessions scheduled at regular intervals. These sessions need clearly defined start and end times. Agency leaders need to determine the structure and frequency of coaching sessions to ensure that their staff members receive support consistently while delivering the program as intended.

Staff members need specific training and coaching to make sure they understand the core components of the *Pilina Circles* program and can deliver each element with fidelity. A program-specific training developed for key staff members reviews the core components, includes time for staff members to practice applying their implementation skills and strategies, and builds their self-confidence for facilitating youth engagement. Trainees practice their skills during

Mock Pilina Circles, following the Pilina Circle agenda. Trainees for facilitator, peer support specialist and recorder roles receive coaching feedback on their practice performances, including their processes for preparing summaries and meeting evaluations after conducting the Mock Pilina Circle. Staff members may receive more training through job shadowing, mentoring, reading relevant materials and viewing videos, reviewing train-the-trainer guidebooks and attending conferences and other trainings offered through EPIC 'Ohana or various other child welfare service providers.

Staff members may need additional training to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to support effective engagement. For example, the QIC-EY's *Transforming Engagement: Keeping Children and Youth at the Center of Our Work* (QIC-EY, 2025) training provides practical strategies for achieving authentic engagement with youth. It equips caseworkers and other staff to support youth participation in permanency planning and decision-making.

Policies and Procedures

Clear policies and procedures are essential to support implementation of a program and to ensure fidelity in its delivery. This includes documentation of any adaptations required to integrate the model into existing agency practices. It also includes identification of potential barriers that could hinder implementation. Establishing formal guidance helps staff members to understand expectations, promotes consistency across the intervention group and supports successful delivery of the selected model.

The program must be supported and integrated within the agency's overall policies and practice expectations. It is important to consider whether policy modifications or additions are needed to administer this program.

Detailed procedural guidance for the program can be found in the Program Manual, located in the Additional Program Materials section of this primer. Some general considerations are noted below.

EPIC 'Ohana has co-created a policies-and-procedures manual for the *Pilina Circles* program with input from the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative's Youth Leadership Boards. (HI H.O.P.E.S. stands for "Hawai'i Helping Our People Envision Success.") The manual includes guidance on all of the following:

- the referral process
- preparatory visits
- coordination
- locations for conducting Pilina Circles
- use of interpreters
- food and beverage arrangements
- role of facilitator
- role of peer support specialist
- agenda and procedures for Pilina Circles
- recording and summary writing
- follow-up visits and Re-Circles
- database documentation
- case closure
- quality assurance
- reimbursements
- training

For proper implementation of the *Pilina Circles* program, policies and procedures may be adapted to fit the local context.

Fidelity

To ensure implementation of this program as intended, fidelity measurements and protocols are used to assess whether practitioners are delivering the core components of the model. Fidelity tracking needs to include forms to capture key details about each session and meeting, such as start and end times, who delivered the program, the delivery format (in person, virtual, hybrid) and the time spent preparing for and following up after the session.

Documentation of delivery of the program's core activities may require checklists or similar

tools. These also help to maintain fidelity across the program's preparation, intervention and postintervention stages, which include the following:

- Visit 1 to Prepare for Pilina Circle: The facilitator and the peer support specialist hold their initial meeting with the youth. They get to know the youth, to explain what Pilina Circles are and to inquire about the young person's supports.
- Visit 2 to Prepare for Pilina Circle: The peer support specialist meets again with the youth (possibly accompanied by the facilitator). Together, they prepare for the Pilina Circle and review the list of persons selected by the youth to attend it. The peer support specialist learns the youth's food and beverage preferences.
- Pilina Circle: The meeting begins with an opening welcome and introductions of the participants. Then the youth shares recent happenings, including experiences that made the youth feel good. Participants point out the youth's strengths. A discussion about case planning and permanency planning follows. Participants develop a communication plan, assign responsibilities to team members and determine next steps. At closing, participants conduct an evaluation of their meeting.
- Debriefing After the Pilina Circle: The peer support specialist follows up with the youth. They debrief what went well, what changes are needed, what worries the youth may have. They confirm what the youth understands about the case plan and clear up any misunderstandings.
- Follow-up Visit: The peer support specialist gives the youth a case planning summary, and they review it together. They discuss whether and when to schedule a Re-Circle.

Data Systems

Data systems are necessary to support program implementation and to ensure accurate monitoring of fidelity and outcomes. Effective data systems require clear processes for collecting and managing information about the delivery of core components as well as indicators of program impact and satisfaction. Necessary modifications to hardware, software and data format should be identified early, along with potential barriers to timely implementation (e.g., limitations of system flexibility or competing priorities of information technology staff). Well-defined expectations and technological tools promote consistent data collection, strengthen accountability and support continuous evaluation of the selected model.

Data to capture about delivery of the program's core components include the interactions of youths with their designated support persons, participation in preparatory visits, youth engagement during *Pilina Circles* and follow-up activities. Evaluation data also needs to be analyzed and stored to track fidelity, youth satisfaction and effectiveness of the *Pilina Circles* program model.

Program Experts

Each program expert brings specialized knowledge, experience or both in the design, implementation and ongoing delivery of the program. Experts may include the model developer, the model purveyor and other individuals who can provide guidance regarding program fidelity, best practices and effective strategies for implementation. Experts also may support adaptation of the program to fit local contexts, including cultural considerations and relational permanency practices. Experts help to ensure that the program is delivered as intended and that the needs of youth and their families are met.

Developers of the *Pilina Circles* program based it on the EPIC 'Ohana E Makua Ana Youth Circle process with adaptations. The Youth Leadership Boards of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative were integral to the development of *Pilina Circles*.

These boards are composed of youths ages 14 through 26, currently or formerly in foster care. HI H.O.P.E.S. has Youth Leadership Boards in O'ahu, Kaua'i, Maui and East and West Hawai'i.

EPIC 'Ohana, Inc., has trained staff members who facilitate *Pilina Circles*. For more information, please go to the website at <https://www.epicohana.org/contact-us> or inquire directly to Kamaile Miyasato, Site Implementation Manager, at kmiyasato@epicohana.org.

Partner Systems and Community Linkages

Successful implementation of a program by child welfare agencies relies on strong partnerships with external systems and collaborators, such as mental health providers, educational institutions, courts, substance use treatment providers and other relevant organizations. Child welfare agencies need to identify partners already engaged with them as well as those to be brought on board. Agency staff also need to determine the strategies, resources and support necessary to engage effectively with these partners. Strong collaboration ensures coordinated services, expands program reach and supports positive outcomes for youth and their families.

Key partners for the *Pilina Circles* program include young persons with lived experience in the child welfare system, child welfare supervisors and their staff members, judges and other legal personnel, kinship caregivers and parents who are fostering.

Program staff members keep partners informed via communications such as email updates, informational events, regular monthly meetings and question-and-answer sessions. The staff also provide concise summaries of program goals and activities. Periodic updates, such as briefings during routine meetings with service providers and distribution of one-page summaries, help to keep partners aware of progress and expectations throughout the program's implementation.

Other Resources (Meeting Space, Materials, etc.)

Implementation of a program often requires access to tangible resources, including space for orientation sessions and other meetings, materials and supplies for activities, plus technology for virtual or hybrid delivery. Additional considerations may include travel expenses, meals or snacks for participants and help with logistics that contribute to a welcoming and functional environment for staff and youth. Availability of these resources is essential for smooth program operation and participant engagement.

Materials needed for implementation of the *Pilina Circles* program include the following:

- a video for youths, their families and community members that introduces them to the Pilina Circle process, including its purpose and structure, and prepares them by explaining expectations for their participation
- easel chart paper and markers
- food and beverage chosen by the youth
- facilitator guidebooks (train-the-trainer materials) for program staff that contain structured guidance on *Pilina Circles* program implementation, facilitation techniques, strategies for youth engagement and fidelity to the program model
- evaluation surveys

7. Evaluation

This program was implemented and rigorously evaluated in Hawai'i, based on a logic model, a theory of change and the following question:

Will youth in Hawai'i involved in case planning circles have improved permanency and well-being outcomes compared with youth who receive case planning services as usual?

To answer this question, a research team carried out a study with a quasi-experimental design in which an intervention group received implementation of the program model and a comparison group received services as usual. The team collected fidelity data from workers in the intervention group to measure and to understand better the delivery of the model. Baseline and follow-up surveys of youth outcomes, case review forms and administrative data were collected from both groups to learn how the program impacted actual outcomes. The research team also conducted youth focus groups to collect open-ended feedback from youths about their experiences in the program. Finally, a cost evaluation was performed to understand the cost of implementing and delivering the program. Highlights of these evaluation results can be found on the QIC-EY website: www.qic-ey.org.

8. Implementation Lessons Learned and Tips

Successful implementation of the *Pilina Circles* program requires thoughtful planning, coordination and clear communication. The following guidance is organized into two parts:

1. **Program Planning and Preparation:** overarching lessons learned related to setting up the program
2. **Stage-Specific Lessons Learned and Tips:** practical guidance for implementing each stage of the program, from the referral process through follow-up visits and Re-Circles

Program Planning and Preparation

Begin by establishing a strong foundation to ensure smooth execution of the program. Do this by obtaining buy-in from partners and youths themselves. The Youth Circle Program, established prior to *Pilina Circles* and familiar to all partners statewide in Hawai'i, was key to implementing *Pilina Circles* because of its similar process. However, the *Pilina Circles* program has the different goal and agenda of promoting youth voice and choice to support well-being and permanency for young persons in care. Another key foundation is a partnership between EPIC 'Ohana and child welfare agencies to connect with youths eligible for the *Pilina Circles* program. Their shared agreement allows EPIC 'Ohana to connect directly with youths in foster care and their caregivers.

FORMATION OF A PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Lessons Learned

- Persons who have lived experience provide critical insights about meaningful engagement with youth. These individuals need to be included from the start of program planning.
- Community champions such as judges and child welfare leaders play vital roles providing endorsement and influence for the launch of the *Pilina Circles* program.
- Planning for data collection and analysis and for program evaluation needs to begin early so these elements can be incorporated into the implementation process.

Tips

- Engage early, connect often and follow through on commitments.
- Develop a plan for evaluation that is feasible to implement.
- Connect with program experts and persons who have lived experience in the child welfare system, and compensate them for their time.

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY PARTNERS

Lessons Learned

- Successful implementation depends on bringing together youths, state child welfare leaders and their staff members, guardians ad litem (GAL), judges, attorneys, kinship caregivers, parents who are fostering and other key community members to establish collaborative partnerships.

Tips

- Convene community gatherings to inform key partners about the Pilina Circles program. During these meetings, receive guidance and feedback; build relationships; gain trust; establish community support; and create a shared vision.
- Clearly communicate how the Pilina Circles program supports existing roles in child welfare and improves engagement with youth.

PLAN FOR PROGRAM OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

Lessons Learned

- Planning and design of program operations and logistics require the active involvement of youths from the beginning, not only as participants but also as co-creators of the process.
- Effective implementation requires an organization grounded in shared values and practices, including ongoing reflection to ensure that decisions and program adaptations remain aligned with support for youth voice and choice.
- Strong, trust-based relationships are essential for successful implementation. The Pilina Circles program relies on connections and collaboration among child welfare staff members, their partners and youths themselves.
- Successful implementation requires a strong organizational foundation, including clear processes, internal alignment and support across roles such as leadership, supervision and administrative functions.

Tips

- Co-create an implementation team that keeps team members aligned across various organizations and the contexts in which they operate.
- Engage youths in planning processes and logistics from the beginning. They are the most important partners!
- To establish a youth-driven, youth-centered approach, continuously self-assess and reflect on how well the team is supporting youth engagement. Make changes as needed to ensure that engagement with youth remains central to implementation.
- Every staff member on the team needs to be well-trained, trauma-informed and genuinely dedicated to engaging with youth.
- Effective implementation of the Pilina Circles program requires strong leaders who are able to think "outside the box" and to get creative, as needed.

Stage-Specific Lessons Learned and Tips

STAGE 1: VISIT 1 TO PREPARE FOR PILINA CIRCLE

Lessons Learned

- Create a welcoming space that helps the youth to feel comfortable and ready to share personal experiences and feelings.
- Allow the youth to guide the conversation. Honor the young person's priorities and perspectives.
- Focus on the youth's strengths. Reinforce the youth's self-confidence and efficacy.

Tips

- Use tools such as the stories of revered Hawaiian community leader Auntie Pua (Auntie Puanani Burgess) to support youth engagement. Share the story of your own name, community and gift (innate talent).
- Focus on building pilina (Hawaiian for "connection, relationship"). Briefly share your own life story, why you have arranged the meeting and what you hope to have achieved after the meeting. Listen to learn more about the youth's life story. Help to meet the youth's needs through the Pilina Circles program's process.
- Meet in an environment meaningful to the youth because the young person feels a connection to it.
- Explain the Pilina Circles program. Let the youth know why it is important for young persons in care to understand what is happening in their cases and how to express themselves to influence decisions about their futures.
- Ask about the people in the youth's community who make the young person feel supported (e.g., individuals, clubs, groups). These can become persons to invite to the youth's Pilina Circle. Ask the youth for their contact information.

STAGE 2: VISIT 2 TO PREPARE FOR PILINA CIRCLE

Lessons Learned

- Coordinating logistics and scheduling a time and date mutually convenient for all participants are some of the most challenging aspects of preparing for the youth's Pilina Circle meeting.
- Preparing the youth and the other participants for courageous conversations during the Pilina Circle, while maintaining a safe and supportive environment, is essential.

STAGE 2: VISIT 2 TO PREPARE FOR PILINA CIRCLE (CONT...)

Tips

- Share updates with all those on the youth's support team regarding detailed plans for the youth's Pilina Circle, including date, time, confirmed participants, food and transportation arrangements.
- Review the Pilina Circles program's process and agenda with the youth. Discuss the young person's hopes and dreams for each stage. Check for any worries or concerns that the youth may have.
- Ensure that the youth is prepared for the courageous conversations that will occur during the Pilina Circle meeting. Make sure that the youth's peer support specialist will be present to offer guidance and reassurance.
- Ensure that all participants understand the purpose of the Pilina Circles program. Explain that the process emphasizes support for youth voice and choice in permanency planning.
- Address any concerns prior to the Pilina Circle meeting. Anticipate difficult conversations that may arise so there will be no surprises during the meeting.

STAGE 3: PILINA CIRCLE

Lessons Learned

- Effective facilitation is key to creating and maintaining a safe, supportive environment where the youth feels comfortable engaging in courageous conversations.

Tips

- Build pilina within the team by encouraging the youth and the other participants to share their stories about their names, communities and gifts.
- Reframe the discussion as needed to keep it focused on the youth's strengths and capabilities and on solutions to ensure a successful future for the young person.
- Integrate the youth's voice and preferences into ongoing case planning. Ensure that the youth's inputs directly inform next steps and decisions.

STAGE 4: DEBRIEFING AFTER PILINA CIRCLE

Lessons Learned

- The youth may experience nervousness or anxiety after participating in a Pilina Circle. Debriefing provides an important opportunity to help the young person process those feelings and experiences.

Tips

- Let the youth choose a preferred method of participation, whether that is observing silently, speaking or providing written input. Support the youth's choice.
- Review court procedures with the youth.
- Listen actively to the youth. Validate the youth's experiences. Reinforce the importance of the young person's voice in the case planning process.
- Use role-play or other techniques for the youth to practice sharing one's own thoughts and preferences to feel prepared and confident for participating in future discussions.

STAGE 5: FOLLOW-UP VISIT

Lessons Learned

- The youth may need support processing outcomes of the young person's case and emotional responses following a Pilina Circle meeting.
- Balancing words of encouragement with realistic expectations is essential to help the youth navigate through the next steps in the case planning process.

Tips

- Stress the importance of youth voice. Explain how the youth's inputs will continue to shape planning for the young person's future.
- Connect the youth with the supports and resources needed to carry out the young person's plans.
- Review the Pilina Circle summary with the youth. Explain that it either has been submitted at the youth's latest court hearing or will be submitted at the next one.
- Document conversations and follow-up actions to ensure continuity and clarity for the next steps of permanency planning for the youth.

9. Additional Program Materials

Find program materials that
support implementation here:

SCAN HERE



CLICK HERE



References

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