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*The Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution Newsletter
State of Hawaii, Judiciary*



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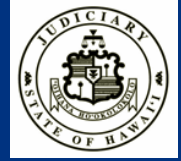
Forum Summary — Kupuna Pono: Helping Families Talk and Develop Plans to Support Elderly Family Members



Summary of the August Forum: Tracey Wiltgen, Executive Director of [The Mediation Center of the Pacific](#), discussed [Kupuna Pono](#), a program designed to help families discuss difficult issues and develop plans to support elderly family members. She explained that while families happily plan for the beginning of life, they are often reluctant to address end of life concerns. As Hawaii's population ages, and the incidence of Alzheimer's increases, families need to plan end of life issues with their elderly family members, or kupuna. Kupuna Pono uses Family Conferencing, Guardianship Mediation and mediation to empower kupuna to make their own decisions so their wishes and values are upheld as they age. During the process, family members and kupuna design a plan that best meets their needs.

Wiltgen described Family Conferencing as a process designed to bring family members and the kupuna together to identify a family's strengths and values. She emphasized the need for the family to plan and prioritize key issues before the meeting, including medical and care issues and family concerns about kupuna. During the meeting, the facilitator ensures that everyone participates, provides discussion time, and captures the group memory to help the family plan the next steps. Participation in Family Conferencing process promotes family identity, collaboration, and cooperation, as family members acknowledge their strengths, discuss issues, accept care responsibilities, and make plans to access additional resources as needs change. Family members gain an understanding of each other's perspectives and concerns as they make decisions.

Family Conferencing may also address the needs of the caregiver, including "burn-out," and help the caregiver communicate the scope of the experience to other family members. Wiltgen advised updating plans to address changing from a vulnerable kupuna to a dependent kupuna, and finally to requiring plans for end-of-life care. Because the framework is already in place, Wiltgen explained that family members can revise the plan throughout the aging process and continue to balance independence and safety needs of the kupuna.



If conflicts escalate between family members, a face-saving and culturally sensitive model of mediation is available. A mediator meets with the family members both individually and together to help them listen to one another and come to a mutually agreeable resolution. Wiltgen explained because mediators are neutral, when family members listen to the mediator they are really listening to each other but in a different way that allows them to truly hear the other person's concerns. If an agreement is reached, it is written out in the participants' words for the family members to keep and use. Wiltgen explained that mediation and Family Conferencing help family members focus on the kupuna rather than their differences and allows them to return to planning for kupuna care.

Currently, 15 experienced mediators are leading the Family Conferencing process. Wiltgen added that the goal is to promote outreach through successful Family Conferences and to train people from communities throughout Hawaii to offer services. Additional information is available at [The Mediation Center of the Pacific](#).

We welcome your input: Please send us ideas for topics for upcoming forums and issues of the *ADR Times*. We also welcome insights from your experiences in mediation, facilitation, negotiation, and other ADR processes to share with our readers. We look forward to hearing from you and to providing a forum for the exchange of ideas.

*"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view."
Harper Lee*

