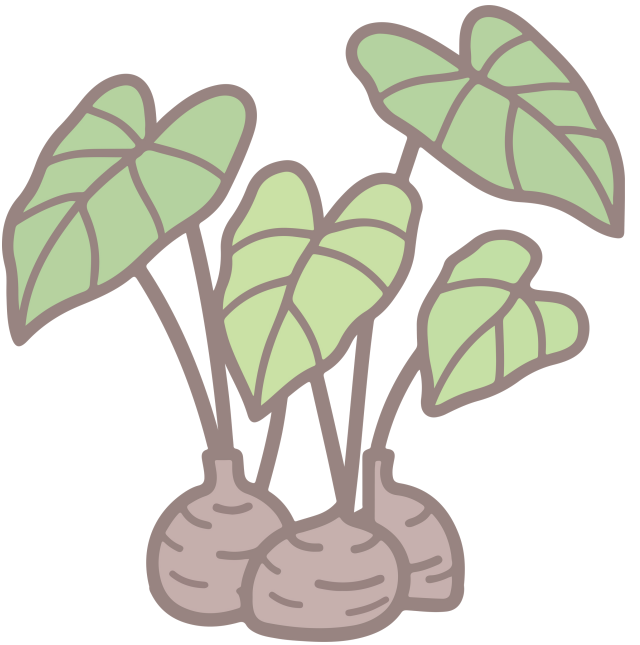
Planning the days ahead



A gentle postpartum guide for families experiencing the loss of a baby

Welcome to Your Plan

Taking care of yourself after losing a baby can be heartbreaking and exhausting. There is no "right" way to feel or grieve. This plan recognizes that your body still needs to heal, your hormones will still shift, and your heart requires time and space to grieve.

This plan was created to help you, your partner, and your ohana care for your body and mind during this time. You do not need to read or fill out everything. Keep this document nearby, take what helps you today, and leave the rest.

Delivery and Birth Wishes

Understanding Your Stage of Pregnancy

Regardless of where you deliver, what happens physically depends on how many weeks along you are:

Under 20 Weeks (Early Loss / Miscarriage):

- What to expect: Delivery may happen naturally over several hours or days, through medication, or via a short medical procedure (like a D&C). You will experience cramping and bleeding as your body passes the pregnancy tissue and your baby.
- Your baby: Your baby will be very small, delicate, and may not be fully developed. If you choose, you are welcome to hold, view, dress, or gently wrap your baby in a small cloth.

20 Weeks and Beyond (Stillbirth or Expected Infant Loss):

- What to expect: Delivery typically involves labor and childbirth (either through induction medication or spontaneous labor) or a C-section. Labor can take 24 to 48 hours or more.
- Your baby: Your baby will be fully formed. You will deliver the baby and the placenta (iēwe). You have full rights to hold, bathe, dress, and spend extended time with your baby.

Bereavement & Loss Doula Support

A loss doula provides non-medical physical, emotional, and practical support during and after your delivery or passage, helping you communicate your birth wishes and capture cherished memories.

Local Resources:

Sweetgrass Collective: (808)-219-3596

The Grieving Well: (808)-291-4745

Home Passage or Home Birth

Questions for Your Doctor or Midwife

- "Is it medically safe for me to complete this delivery at home, and what warning signs mean I should go to the hospital?"
- "What physical symptoms (pain, bleeding, cramping) should I expect, and what medication can I have on hand for comfort?"
- "Who do I contact once the baby is delivered to complete any necessary paperwork or health checks?"
- "How do I safely store and care for my baby's body at home while we prepare our family ceremony?"
- "What should I expect regarding milk production or breast/chest changes, and what options do I have for either suppressing milk or expressing/donating?"

Home Birth Wishes & Comfort Measures

- Creating a Peaceful Space: Setting up a comfortable area with warm blankets, heating pads, soft lighting, and comforting scents or music.
- Support Team: Choosing who will be present with you (midwife, doula, partner, or close family).
- Gathering Supplies: Having clean containers, saline, water, soft cloths, or a small Moses basket/box ready to hold your baby.
- Iēwe (placenta) & Baby Care: Preparing a special place in your home or garden for traditional burial, planting a tree, or performing family rituals.
- Memory Making: Taking time in your own home to capture photos, write in a journal, or create footprint keepsakes in a familiar, unhurried space.

Hospital or Clinic Delivery

Questions for Your Care Team

- "What are my labor/management options, and how long do I have to decide?"
- "What is your policy vs. state law regarding declining procedures?"
- "Can we place a loss symbol or privacy sign on our door?"
- "Can we get a cooling bed (CuddleCot) to keep our baby with us longer?"
- "What release/transport forms do we need if we handle burial or ceremony ourselves?"

Hospital Birth Wishes & Requests

- Environment & Privacy: Requesting dim lights, a quiet room, turning off non-essential fetal monitors/alarms, or limiting staff rotations.
- Support System: Continuous presence of your partner, ʻohana, or a bereavement doula.
- Holding & Meeting Your Baby: Holding your baby immediately or waiting until you feel ready; bathing, dressing, or wrapping your baby in clothing brought from home.
- Iēwe (placenta) Care: Requesting a container to bring home your placenta for traditional burial, planting, or blessing.
- Keepsakes & Photos: Photos, hand/footprints, or a lock of hair.
- Cultural & Spiritual Ceremonies: Space for pule (prayer), oli (chant), honi, or blessings by an elder, chaplain, or family leader.
- Private Time: Uninterrupted hours alone with your baby before discharge.

Caring for Your Baby (Mālama) & Guidance in Hawai'i

Caring for your baby's body and iēwe (placenta) connects your family to spirit, lineage, and 'āina. You have the right to honor your baby according to your traditions without being rushed.

Spending Time (Mālama & Aloha)

- Unrushed Goodbyes: Take all the time you need to hold, dress, wrap, and spend quiet hours with your baby before making any decisions.
- Preserving Comfort: In a hospital or clinic, ask for a cooling bed (CuddleCot) or ice packs so your baby can stay comfortably in your room while your 'ohana visits.

Sacred Care of the Placenta (Iēwe)

- You have the legal right to take your iēwe home from any birth setting. Ask your care team for a transport container if you plan a traditional burial or planting ceremony.

State Guidelines & Final Arrangements

- Under 20 Weeks (Early Loss): No birth/death certificate is required by the state. You do not need a funeral home and may legally bring your baby home for private family burial or ceremony.
- 20 Weeks & Beyond (Stillbirth/Infant Loss): Hawai'i state law requires a Certificate of Fetal Death (handled by hospital/midwife). You may choose funeral home services or request state transport release forms if handling family-directed care.

Your Birth Plan

Healing Your Body

Hospital Stay Logistics:

Healing Supplies (To be prepared ahead of time):

- Rice bag or heating pad for after pains, cooling pads/Padsicles for the perineum
- Comfortable, extra-large, dark-colored panties/lounge clothes.
- Other Essential Supplies:

_____

- Pelvic floor therapist: _____

Milk Management (If Applicable)

Chosen Path (Circle One)

- Path A: Suppression (Goal: Stop milk production immediately)

- Path B: Donation/Expression (Goal: Express milk for donation or keepsakes)

Lactation provider to support me on my chosen path:
Sweetgrass Collective (Oahu): info@sweetgrasscollective.org
Pacific Birth Collective (Maui): navigator@pacificbirthcollective.org
Kalauokekahuli: info@kalauokekahuli.tv

Other: _____

Understanding "Empty Arms" (Physical Grief)

After losing a baby, it is very common to feel a heavy, physical ache in your arms, hands, or chest. This is often called Empty Arms Syndrome. Your body prepared to hold and comfort your baby, and when you cannot, that grief can feel overwhelmingly physical.

- What you might feel: Heavy or weak arms, a tight or aching chest, restless hands, or an intense, physical aching to hold something close.

- Gentle ways to cope:
  - Hold something weighted: Holding a heavy pillow, a warm weighted blanket, or a special memory bear against your chest can offer physical comfort to your arms.
  - Rest your arms: Let your arms rest on pillows beside you so you aren't holding tension in your shoulders and chest.
  - Gentle touch: Massage your own arms with lotion, or ask your partner or a loved one to rub your hands and arms.
  - Validate the feeling: Remind yourself: "My body is grieving the baby I love. This physical ache is a normal part of loss."

N.E.S.T.S
Daily Wellness Plan

Healing physical bodies and hearts requires daily care.
Use this simple framework to protect your basic needs each day:

N – Nutrition & Hydration:

- Focus on warm, nourishing foods, high protein, and plenty of water.
- Comfort foods or easy go-to snacks to keep on hand:

  _____
- Dietary needs / allergies to communicate to others:

  _____

E – Exercise & Gentle Movement:

- Start very small (a slow walk outside, gentle stretching, or sitting in the sun).
- My simple daily movement goal:

  _____

S – Sleep & Rest:

- Prioritize rest, even when sleep is hard. Rest without screens still heals.

T – Time for Self (5 Minutes Counts):

- Small moments of rest, fresh air, pule (prayer), or stepping outside.
- My 5-minute daily reset:

  _____
- Partner's 5-minute daily reset:

  _____

S – Support Network:

Ohana and friends:_____

Therapist / Counselor: _____

Hawaii based mental health therapists specializing in perinatal loss. Statewide, virtual, insurance accepted.

- Nurture Mental Health: 808-320-4186
- Ho'omana Counseling: 808-774-7401
- Mana Mental Health: 808-755-2866
- Heather Heintz: 808-936-9590

Support Groups

- Let Grace In (O'ahu & Statewide): (808) 451-3660- Free therapeutic family gatherings, grief support, and sibling support
- Compassionate Friends: (808)-333-6556- Provides a supportive community for parents, grandparents, and siblings who have experienced a loss.
- Kids Hurt Too Hawaii: (808) 545-5683 -Free grief support groups for children, teens, and families.
- Postpartum Support International: https://postpartum.net/get-help/psi-online-support-meetings-Free online groups

Other Supports

- Comprehensive list of services in Hawaii: www.theirisfund.org/hawaii
- Pacific Birth Collective: navigator@pacificbirthcollective.com- Support groups, bereavement and postpartum doulas, resources.
- Kalauokekahuli: info@kalauokekahuli.tv - Statewide culturally grounded services to support Native Hawaiian Pasifika families.
- WAO We Are Oceania: (808) 913-1364 - One-Stop Center provides services to support the success of the Micronesian community.

Emotional Health

Grief can bring deep waves of sadness, anger, confusion, and numbness. These are natural responses to loss. However, if symptoms become overwhelming, help is always available.

Warning Signs to Watch For

Reach out to a doctor, religious leader, cultural practitioner, clinic, or hotline if:

- You cannot sleep at all for multiple days, even when exhausted.
- You cannot eat, drink, or leave bed for several days.
- You feel intense panic, severe fear, or see/hear things others do not.
- You have thoughts of hurting yourself or feel unsafe.

When Grief Feels Overwhelming

1. Practice Hā (Sacred Breath) & Grounding
   - Connect to Hā: Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose, hold gently for a moment, and exhale completely. In Native Hawaiian culture, hā is the life force that connects us to spirit, ancestors, and the present moment. Focused breath restores calm to your body and spirit.
   - 5-4-3-2-1 Reset: Name 5 things you see, 4 you can touch, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, and 1 slow hā (breath).
2. Reach Out to Your Safe Person
   - Name _____
   - Phone: _____
   - Safety Code Word / Text: Send "_____" so they know to call or come over immediately, no questions asked.

Hormonal Shifts

You may experience intense hormonal fluctuations as your body returns to its non-pregnant state. These shifts can mimic severe mood swings or depression.

- Acknowledge: I acknowledge that sudden, intense sadness, anger, or anxiety are hormonal and are not a reflection of a failure to cope.
- Action Plan: When these hormonal peaks occur, I will contact my safe person, ohana, or therapist for grounding and support.

Finding Help

Emergency & Crisis Support (Free, 24/7, Private)

- Hawaii Crisis Line (Hawaii Cares 988): Call or Text 988 (Directly connects to local Hawaii crisis counselors)
- National Maternal Mental Health Hotline: Call or Text 1-833-852-6262 (Support in 60+ languages)
- Emergency: Call 911 or visit your nearest hospital emergency room.

Other

- Nurture Mental Health- Hawaii based therapy group with specialized training in pregnancy and infant loss.
  - Visit our website: https://www.nurturementalhealth.com/
  - Call/text: 808-320-4186
  - Virtual, statwide, insurance accepted
- Postpartum Support International Directory https://psidirectory.com/

Memory Making and Farewell Logistics

A Note for ʻOhana: The parents should not have to coordinate these details alone. Please assign a designated support person to handle each item below on their behalf.

Memory Making Checklist

- Photography:
  - Contact Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep (NILMDTS—free professional photo sessions), a private photographer, or ask family to take photos.
  - Support Person: _____
- Prints & Keepsakes:
  - Collect ink prints, clay hand/foot molds, or a small lock of hair.
  - Support Person: _____
- Special Items:
  - Gather hospital bands, blankets, clothing, or lei to preserve.
  - Support Person: _____
- Iēwe (Placenta) Care:
  - Confirm hospital release forms or transport container if taking home.
  - Support Person: _____
- Other_____

Final Arrangements & Ceremony

- Service Details:
  - Choice:
    - Private Home Ceremony
    - Funeral Home / Cemetery
    - Cremation
    - Hospital Services
  - Funeral Home / Contact:
    _____
  - Service Type & Cultural Ceremonies (Pule, Oli, Blessings):
    _____
- Paperwork Check: Ensure you have hospital release/transport forms and (if 20+ weeks) the Certificate of Fetal Death paperwork before leaving your birth setting.

Community & Financial Support

- Financial Assistance / Fundraiser:
  - Setting up a GoFundMe, meal train, or community support fund if needed.
  - Designated Support Person:
    _____
- Obituary / Announcement:
  - Writing or sharing an announcement with loved ones when the family feels ready.
  - Designated Support Person:
    _____

Asking Family, Extended 'Ohana & Friends for Help

You do not have to carry everything alone. Choose trusted family, elders, neighbors, or friends to take on specific roles:

Communication Lead (Updating Relatives): Sends texts/calls to update family and friends so you do not have to repeat your story. Directs people to meal sign-ups, registry updates, or boundary requests.

- Support Person: _____

Logistics Manager: Cancels appointments, manages mail/billing, handles baby gear.

- Support Person: _____

Watching Older Children: School runs, routines, and childcare.

- Support Person: _____

Food & Meals: Coordinates meal drop-offs and groceries.

- Support Person: _____

Rides & Errands: Prescriptions, store runs, and transport.

- Support Person: _____

Household & Chores: Cleaning, laundry, and maintaining the home space.

- Support Person: _____

Communication and Boundaries

- Preferred language to use for the baby: (Baby's Name) is my Son/Daughter.
- Preferred way to talk about the event: (Example: 'It was a stillbirth' / 'The baby died'):
- Insensitive Comment Boundaries: If an insensitive comment is made, I give myself permission to (Hang up, Leave the room, Say 'That is not helpful right now'):
- Other Boundaries:

Simple Texts to Set Boundaries

- *Thank you for reaching out, I would appreciate a visitor today.*
- *Thank you for reaching out, I would appreciate a visitor today but not talk about my birth or baby.*
- *Thank you for reaching out, I need a little quiet time today and would appreciate you checking in tomorrow.*
- *Thank you for reaching out, would you be willing to help with the house/pets today?*
- *Thank you for reaching out, I would love to talk but not right now. I will be in touch when I'm ready.*
- *Thank you for offering to help. This is the link to our meal train which also offers gift cards and delivery services for people who live far away:*

Older Keiki Plan

Navigating a perinatal loss with older children requires clear, age-appropriate honesty, emotional validation, and stable routines. This section of the plan helps lay out logistics for your older child and ways to help with understanding what happened as they are beginning to grieve.

Logistics

Labor & birth plan for older children:

Person in charge of children during Labor/Birth (Name, Contact):

Support team for older children (Postpartum):

School/Child Care (Name, Number):

Morning/Drop-off care (Role, Name, Contact):

Afternoon/Pick-up care (Role, Name, Contact):

Homework/Playdate help (Role, Name, Contact):

Favorite meal/snacks:

Favorite shows/games/books:

Hospital Visits & Meeting the Baby

If siblings are meeting the baby, designate a trusted support person (grandparent, aunt/uncle, or friend) whose sole job is to care for them during the visit.

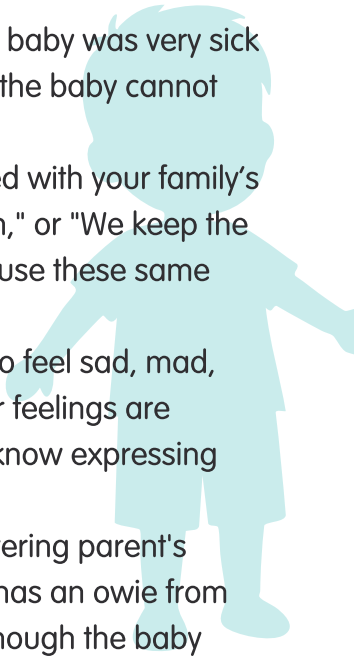
Prepare them before entering the room:

- What the baby looks like: Explain in simple terms that the baby will be very quiet, still, and cold to the touch, and describe any visible physical differences.
- What adults are doing: Let them know adults might be crying, very sad, or quiet, and that it is okay.
- Holding & touching: Let the child decide if they want to touch or hold the baby (e.g., holding a tiny hand or touching a blanket). Never force interaction.
- Saying goodbye: Give them a clear, gentle signal for when it is time to say goodbye and leave the room with their support person.

Older Keiki Plan

Core Conversations & Clear Language

Children need simple, honest words. Avoid phrases like "went to sleep" or "went away," which can cause fear around bedtime or travel.



- Honesty About Loss: Use clear terms: "The baby was very sick and died. Their body stopped working, so the baby cannot come home to live with us."
- Share Your Beliefs: Use terminology aligned with your family's faith or values (e.g., "The baby is in heaven," or "We keep the baby in our hearts"). Ensure all caregivers use these same words.
- Validate All Feelings: Tell them: "It is okay to feel sad, mad, confused, or even feel like playing. All your feelings are okay." Cry openly in front of them so they know expressing grief is safe.
- Explain Physical Healing: Explain the recovering parent's body needs rest: "Mommy/Parent's body has an owie from birth and needs lots of rest to heal, even though the baby isn't here."
- Keepsakes & Rituals: Let siblings draw a picture for the baby, pick a small toy or blanket to leave with them, or light a candle at home.
- Reassure Their Routine: Reassure them that they are safe, loved, and that their daily routine (school, meals, bedtime) will stay as steady as possible.

Books for Older Siblings

- Something Happened: A Book for Children and Parents Who Have Experienced Pregnancy Loss — Cathy Blanford
    - A compassionate, simple story that helps young children understand miscarriage or stillbirth without overly complex medical terms.
- My Sibling Still: For Those Who've Lost a Sibling to Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant Death — Megan Lacourrege-
    - A reassuring picture book that honors the lasting bond between siblings while validating a child's feelings.
- We Were Gonna Have a Baby, but We Had an Angel Instead — Pat Schwiebert
    - Written from a child's perspective, this book uses simple, comforting language to explain infant loss to young kids.
- Katrina Villegas Children's Series (Our Baby Died / Our Baby is Going to Die / The Baby Before You Died / Remembering Our Baby)
    - An accessible series addressing unique sibling experiences, including medical termination, impending loss, and growing up after a prior loss.
- My Many Colored Days — Dr. Seuss
    - A colorful, non-intimidating picture book that helps young children identify and express big, changing emotions (sadness, anger, quietness) through colors.

Pet Care Plan

This section ensures the needs of your family pets are met consistently during the postpartum adjustment period.

Pet/s Names:

Labor & Birth Plan for Pets (If applicable):

Pet Care during Labor (Name, Number):

Support Team for Pets (Postpartum):

Daily Walks/Exercise (Task, Name, Number):

Feeding/Watering (Task, Name, Contact):

Litter Box/Waste Management (Task, Name, Number):

Veterinarian Name & Phone:

Feeding Routine (Type/Time):

Bathroom/Walk Routine:



Books

Books for Parents & Caregivers

- Empty Arms: Coping with Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant Death — Sherokee Ilse- A gentle, classic guide offering practical advice and comfort in the immediate days following a loss.

- Empty Cradle, Broken Heart: Surviving the Death of Your Baby — Deborah L. Davis- Comprehensive support for navigating intense grief, physical healing, and the emotional journey of baby loss.

- Grieving Dads: To the Brink and Back — Kelly Farley & David DiCola-Honest perspectives and shared experiences specifically for fathers and male partners navigating loss.

- When Hello Means Goodbye — Pat Schweibert & Paul Kirk- A small, accessible booklet designed for the sensitive period right after loss, helping parents make meaningful decisions and memory-making choices.

Developed by

Nurture

Postpartum, Reproductive, and Maternal Mental Health

Call or text for support

808-320-4186