



**ORANGA  
TAMARIKI**

Ministry for Children

# Working together to support tamariki, rangatahi and their family/whānau

Interagency guide



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# Introduction

Everyone in New Zealand has a role to play in making sure all tamariki and rangatahi are in a loving family/whānau, hapū, iwi and community where they can be safe, strong, connected and are able to flourish.

At Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children, we recognise the need to identify and address signs of need and vulnerability for tamariki, rangatahi and family/whānau as early as possible, so tamariki and rangatahi can be raised with family/whānau connections in a safe and stable environment.

As a professional working with tamariki, rangatahi and family/whānau, you play a valuable role in providing support to family/whānau when needed and helping to keep tamariki and rangatahi safe. We need you to know what to look out for, and how to help tamariki, rangatahi and their family/whānau you may be worried about.

By working together, we can achieve so much more to make sure tamariki and rangatahi are well cared for and thriving as part of their family/whānau and community.

## About this guide

This guide is for people in iwi and community social service agencies, educational providers, healthcare providers and other groups or services who have contact with or work with tamariki, rangatahi and their family/whānau. You may be the first to notice when a family/whānau needs support or when there are concerns about tamariki or rangatahi. You could have an important role in providing support to the family/whānau, or sharing your concerns with someone, while maintaining openness, respect and confidentiality for te tamaiti, rangatahi, parents/carers and family/whānau.

This guide is designed to sit alongside your own Child Protection Policy. It also complements the free one-day 'Working Together' child protection


seminars that we run nationwide in partnership with Child Matters, and the training and eLearning sessions run by Safeguarding Children Initiative.

This guide and the child protection seminars and training sessions aim to help you recognise and understand:

- the importance of early intervention and addressing wellbeing/oranga concerns
- how you can support the safety and wellbeing/oranga of tamariki, rangatahi and their family/whānau
- how to recognise the signs that a family/whānau may need support
- the types of abuse and neglect and what to look out for
- the impact of harm (ill treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation) on tamariki and rangatahi
- when the behaviour of a tamaiti or rangatahi is of concern
- what to do if tamariki or rangatahi talk about abuse
- what to do if you're worried about te tamaiti or rangatahi
- Oranga Tamariki processes and how we respond to information and concerns
- some frequently asked questions
- what you can expect from us, and how to maintain open channels of communication.

To find out more about the 'Working Together' seminars, or to register your interest, go to [www.childmatters.org.nz](http://www.childmatters.org.nz) or contact the team on [info@childmatters.org.nz](mailto:info@childmatters.org.nz)

To find out more about the Safeguarding Children Initiative seminars and eLearning modules, go to [www.safeguardingchildren.org.nz](http://www.safeguardingchildren.org.nz)



“ Take care of our children.  
Take care of what they hear,  
take care of what they see,  
take care of what they feel.  
For how the children grow,  
so will be the shape  
of Aotearoa. ”

– Dame Whina Cooper

## Wellbeing/oranga

New Zealand's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy states, "We want New Zealand to be a place where all children and young people are loved, confident, happy and healthy, and are empowered to reach their full potential".

When we each play our part and work together in looking out for tamariki and rangatahi, we can provide help earlier, support the family/whānau on their journey of improving their wellbeing/oranga, and make sure all tamariki and rangatahi can grow up safe and achieve their full potential.

One way to think about safety is as a part of wellbeing/oranga. If there is a safety issue, then the wellbeing/oranga of tamariki and rangatahi will be affected. But not all wellbeing issues are safety issues.

Culture shapes how people think about the concept of wellbeing/oranga generally, and exactly how wellbeing/oranga looks is different for each tamaiti, rangatahi and family/whānau.

Wellbeing/oranga is dynamic and covers both subjective and objective factors: it includes both how people feel about their lives and their actual material conditions. A good state of wellbeing/oranga enables tamariki and rangatahi to thrive, to feel supported, safe, loved, and have a positive sense of who they are, where they belong and who their important connections are.

Factors that influence wellbeing/oranga can include:

- strong positive family/whānau relationships
- spiritual and cultural connections
- developmental needs met and supported
- education, life skills and self-care skills
- emotional resilience and support
- social and peer groups that are supportive, caring, and positive
- physical and mental wellness

- security – being safe from harm, living in a safe community, having a warm dry home, and having enough food.

## Working with different cultures

We live in a culturally diverse society. What constitutes wellbeing/oranga and resilience factors may look different across cultures. Each culture has its own ways and means of promoting safety and wellbeing/oranga for their tamariki and rangatahi.

Culture is the customs, traditions, and values of a family/whānau, hapū, iwi, family group, community, or society, such as an ethnic group, religious group or nation. Culture is a term that refers to a large and diverse set of mostly intangible aspects of social life and consists of the values, beliefs, systems of language and communication, and practices that people share and that can be used to define them as a collective.

Every family/whānau has a culture or a set of values, beliefs, language, and communication regardless of, for example, their ethnicity or religious beliefs, that influence their interactions with the environment they live in. Simply said, culture is how you were raised. It develops as you grow up.

Some cultures and groups do not see accountability as just an individual responsibility but rather a collective response from family/whānau and others closely connected to te tamaiti or rangatahi. Therefore, to support te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau, we need to consider extended family/whānau, friends and other significant relationships within the community that can enable support and promote safety.

It is important to build an understanding, while appreciating difference and diversity. Try to be aware of how your own values and beliefs may impact on the work that you do. If you feel you do not know enough about the area of concern or working with a particular cultural group, seek advice from colleagues or others within the community.

Regardless of different cultural values and practices, we need to keep the impact of harm and abuse at the forefront of our thinking, while working with families/whānau in a way that respects their culture and ways of caring for tamariki.

**Oranga Tamariki has developed the following free apps, which can be downloaded by anyone.**

- ‘Te Kete Ararau’ supports practice with Māori.
- ‘Talanoa Mai’ supports practice with Pacific peoples.

Both resources were created to increase cultural confidence, knowledge and capability to engage effectively with tamariki, rangatahi and family/whānau.



# Understanding your role in supporting the safety and wellbeing/oranga of tamariki and rangatahi

## The earliest help is the best help

As a community service provider, if you notice signs that te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau may be struggling, you can get involved early by listening to them and offering support. You can put them in touch with other people and services you have partnered with who can help support te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau effectively. It is important to do this early in the process and share relevant information with others for the safety and wellbeing of te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau. (See the Information Sharing section on how you can share information safely and in line with the Oranga Tamariki Act.)

## Ways to help

The sooner you reach out, the sooner te tamaiti or rangatahi or their family/whānau can get help, and you might stop more serious harm from occurring.

Ways you can help include:

- listening, and letting them know you are there to help
- providing encouragement and offering practical support
- talking to te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau about who else they might be involved with so that you can create a strong support base
- linking them with others who can offer the support they need as soon as possible.

The Family Services Directory collates service providers that support families/whānau across a variety of areas ([www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory))

- talking to someone experienced, for a different point of view or ideas of how to help
- seeking cultural advice if you feel this would support your engagement with the family/whānau
- seeking advice – call Oranga Tamariki if you are worried about te tamaiti or rangatahi. You will be able to talk to a trained social worker who will listen to your concerns. Together we can work out what the problems are and whether we need to work with the family/whānau or put them in touch with people in the community who can give them the right support.

### **If you're worried about te tamaiti or rangatahi and want to make a referral or a report of concern**

Call: 0508 326 459

or 0508 FAMILY

Email: [contact@ot.govt.nz](mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz)

### **For emergencies or immediate safety concerns call the Police on 111**

## Information sharing

Sharing information with the right people at the right time can improve outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and their family/whānau by:

- enabling te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau to access the right services and supports
- making sure that those working with te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau have the information they need to undertake the work they are doing
- being able to develop better plans and a more joined-up and transparent approach of those working with te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau.



The Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 information sharing provisions enable those working within the child welfare and protection sector to share relevant, accurate and up-to-date information not only for the safety and wellbeing of te tamaiti or rangatahi but also to support their best interests.

The provisions define:

- the purposes for sharing information
- who you can share information with.

Section 66C of the Oranga Tamariki Act means that child welfare and protection agencies and some independent persons can share information for one of the purposes outlined in the Act, such as to prevent or reduce the risk of harm, ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation for tamariki or rangatahi, having regard to their wellbeing and best interests.

A broad range of agencies and people are covered by the provisions, including:

- government agencies in the social sector such as the Police, Ministry of Education, Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Health, Department of Corrections, and many others
- every school board, early childhood service, and other registered education provider including registered after school care providers
- health and disability practitioners and GPs
- other organisations supplying publicly funded social services such as Whānau Ora and Hauora Services, alcohol and drug workers, Family Start and Social Workers in Schools.

In practice, if you fall within section 66C, you can:

- request information from another person or agency covered by the provisions
- disclose information to those persons or agencies if they request it
- make a decision about what information to disclose when you receive a request

- make a decision to proactively disclose information to a person or agency covered by the provisions. You do not have to wait to be asked to share information if you think it is in the best interests of tamariki or rangatahi.

While your organisation may have its own policy on consent, there is no requirement to gain consent before sharing information under section 66C. However, you are required to consult with te tamaiti or rangatahi, or their representative where appropriate or practicable, before any decision to disclose information using section 66C is made.

The consultation process should help te tamaiti or rangatahi or their representative to understand and have support to:

- understand what will be shared and why
- understand who it will be shared with and who will see it
- ask questions and have them answered
- tell us what they think and feel about sharing that information, including if they agree or not
- have their views on any decisions about information sharing considered.

The Police and Oranga Tamariki can also request information from you using section 66 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 and you are required to comply with the request unless the information is legally privileged. You can ask questions or discuss the request with Oranga Tamariki or the Police if you have questions or worries about disclosing information or are having trouble meeting any timeframes.

Further information, guidance for using the provisions, request form templates and other resources are available on the Oranga Tamariki website: [www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/working-with-children/information-sharing/](http://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/working-with-children/information-sharing/)

# Recognising the signs that a family/whānau may need support

Raising tamariki and rangatahi is a big job and having support can make a significant difference.

Family/whānau from any background and culture can experience situations or factors that result in their tamariki or rangatahi being at risk of abuse or neglect. Parents might feel stressed, there may be extra challenges in the family/whānau, or they might need extra support but are trying to manage on their own or cannot find the support they need because it is not available or suitable.

Tamariki and rangatahi can be exposed to significant risk through a variety of reasons. This can result from their family/whānau environment, their own complex needs and support requirements, or because they have offended.

There are multiple factors that can impact on the ability of family/whānau to manage, and which can increase the likelihood of harm of tamariki and rangatahi:

- higher levels of deprivation, unemployment, or housing issues
- parents/carers who have themselves grown up in a violent or abusive environment
- family/whānau violence in the home
- problems with alcohol, drug, or substance abuse, especially methamphetamine use
- history of offending behaviours
- additional support young parents may need
- cultural or social isolation, particularly during times when there is a relationship breakup, or breakdown in support from extended family/whānau

- problems bonding with te tamaiti or rangatahi
- parents experiencing physical or mental health problems, including depression
- tamariki or rangatahi with a disability
- tamariki or rangatahi with emotional and/or behavioural distress
- unrealistic expectations or understanding of normal child development and behaviour, including viewing tamariki and rangatahi as disobedient or defiant
- tamariki under five – they are more vulnerable and less able to protect themselves.

When a family/whānau experiences any of these factors, it does not automatically mean te tamaiti or rangatahi will be harmed. However, it may be an indicator that the family/whānau needs extra help, or we need to keep an eye out for worrying signs. Sometimes, there will not be any obvious signs, but you might just have a sense they are struggling.

## Under-fives

Tamariki under five can be an invisible group and sometimes they may rarely be seen outside of the immediate family/whānau. It is also easier for parents to become isolated at this time, particularly if te tamaiti isn't attending preschool and they don't have much contact outside of their home. This can make it harder for professionals or others in the community to spot when a family/whānau needs support.

Some key areas to think about with this age group are:

- Vulnerability – very young tamariki are particularly vulnerable as they are dependent on adults, have limited ability to protect themselves and cannot seek help for themselves.
- Visibility – their needs can become lost within the more obvious or vocal needs of older tamariki.

- Relationships – stability helps tamariki form connections to people and places in their lives.
- Brain development – we know that 0 to 6 years of life are a critical time in brain development, so experiences of harm can have a lasting impact.
- Cumulative harm – repeat episodes of harm can have a profound impact on development.

## Disability can increase vulnerability

Disabled tamariki and rangatahi have the same rights as tamariki and rangatahi who do not have a disability. This includes the right to be:

- safe from abuse and neglect
- protected from harm
- supported to achieve their full potential.

Disabled tamariki and rangatahi can be more vulnerable than their non-disabled peers. Disabled tamariki and rangatahi can experience higher levels of abuse if they have:

- communication impairments
- behaviour difficulties
- intellectual disability
- sensory disabilities.

Timely and effective support can reduce the vulnerability of disabled tamariki and rangatahi and enable their family/whānau to provide safe care.

## Indicators that support may be needed

Sometimes tamariki and rangatahi are neglected or harmed when parents or caregivers do not have the skills, knowledge, or resources to care for them appropriately, or are facing their own challenges, or when the family/whānau system is not working well.

Some things to look out for include:

- parents/carers seem stressed or are struggling to cope

- parents/carers do not have friends or family/whānau to help
- isolating, controlling and/or threatening behaviours within the family/whānau
- adults hitting, yelling, or showing aggressive behaviours
- tamariki are left home alone or unsupervised
- physical injuries
- tamariki displaying bullying or aggressive behaviour
- parents/carers have not accessed services that could help them. There may be valid reasons for this such as transport issues.

Indicators that something is not right for te tamaiti or rangatahi include:

- not having basic needs met, such as appropriate clothing, school items, food
- becoming withdrawn and speaking less than normal
- showing signs of distress through behaviours such as aggression and frustration, or other behaviours which are out of character
- not managing normal situations and interactions with other tamariki, rangatahi or adults
- bullying other tamariki or rangatahi
- being bullied by other tamariki or rangatahi
- isolating themselves or being excluded by other tamariki or rangatahi
- running away or hiding from a situation
- physically presenting differently – their clothing may not be appropriate for the season, or their physical appearance may be unkempt
- tearful, distressed, sad
- anxious, nervous, lacking confidence
- taking on adult responsibilities, such as young tamariki bringing younger siblings to school
- trying to tell you something but not having the words to say what is happening
- regression in their development

Every situation is different, and people will experience things differently. It is important to consider the whole situation and environment of te tamaiti or rangatahi, including the context of their different cultural values, beliefs and ways of being. Be aware that tamariki and rangatahi will react differently to significant life events, including: parental separation or divorce, losing a loved one (including pets), the arrival of a new sibling, starting at a new school, breaking up from their boyfriend or girlfriend, or becoming part of a blended family/whānau. It is always helpful to speak to te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau to understand what is happening, and what help or support they feel is needed.

**If you're worried about te tamaiti or rangatahi and want to make a referral or a report of concern**

Call: 0508 326 459 or 0508 FAMILY

Email [contact@ot.govt.nz](mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz)

**For emergencies or immediate safety concerns call the Police on 111**



# Understanding abuse and neglect

As someone working with tamariki, rangatahi and family/whānau, it is important that you have an awareness of some of the signs of abuse and neglect. Regardless of the type of abuse or neglect te tamaiti or rangatahi may experience, all forms of abuse and neglect can cause significant harm and have life-long impacts.

## Physical abuse

Physical abuse is the result of a deliberate act by another person that causes physical harm to te tamaiti or rangatahi. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, biting, poisoning, cutting, strangling or anything else that could cause a physical injury.

Signs to look out for include:

- bruises, welts, cuts, and abrasions:
  - particularly on the back, tummy, buttocks, or the backs of their legs
  - bruising to the head, face, or neck
- fractures or dislocations
- bruising or injuries to babies, who are not moving around enough to accidentally hurt themselves
- scalding or burn marks anywhere on the body – especially burns in the shape of an object like a stove ring, iron, lighter, cigarette or rope burn
- if te tamaiti or their parents/carers cannot recall how the injuries happened, or their explanations change or do not make sense when you asked what happened.

Some cultures see physical discipline as an important part of child rearing. Family/whānau perceptions of discipline are influenced by many things including parental history, religion, the cultural status of children, what constitutes harm and what is criminal.

If you are working with a family/whānau where physical discipline is being used, you should ask them if they would like to be linked to a parenting service or programme that supports parents/carers to learn other behaviour management techniques and alternatives to smacking and other forms of physical discipline.

You can also seek advice from Oranga Tamariki about whether the physical discipline meets the threshold for care and protection assessment and/or investigation.

## Paediatric abusive head trauma (shaken baby syndrome)

Abusive head trauma is serious and can result in severe disability and even death. It is most often caused by shaking, blunt force impact, or a combination of both in infants and young children, which can lead to neurological injury. Symptoms of a head injury may include poor feeding, vomiting, irritability, fits (seizures), drowsiness, floppy presentation, breathing problems and even coma or stopping breathing completely. Note: symptoms may vary.

You may notice symptoms immediately or you may notice some of these symptoms come on gradually. Sometimes a parent/carer may disclose that they have shaken a baby/pēpi (although no injuries are noted). Such a disclosure needs to be taken seriously and urgent medical attention sought. At other times parents/carers may disclose that they felt like they wanted to shake their baby/pēpi – talk with them about what is happening and what supports they need.

## Abdominal or stomach injuries

Abdominal injuries are a common cause of death from abuse and are usually due to a blunt force being applied either accidentally or deliberately. Signs of significant abdominal injury include pain, restlessness, fever, and vomiting. Bruising may not be evident. These signs may also mimic those of a head injury, and you should seek urgent medical attention.

## Bruises or welts

Bruises or welts are often present in abused tamariki and rangatahi. Bruises can be of differing ages, colours, shapes and in different places on the body. Tamariki will accidentally bruise themselves during normal play but when bruises or welts are on the back, buttocks, genitals, back of the thighs, or anywhere around the head these are frequently associated with abuse. Bruising around the neck may be the result of strangulation, which is very serious due to the potential outcome and requires immediate action.

Mongolian blue spots can be easily mistaken for bruises but are natural birth marks and are not a sign of abuse. These marks, typically a slate-grey colour, are found in almost all babies/pēpi with darker skin. They are typically found over the lower back and can cover an extensive area. These marks may or may not fade with time.

## Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse can be any act that involves forcing or enticing te tamaiti or rangatahi to take part in sexual activities, whether or not te tamaiti or rangatahi is aware of what's happening.

Sexual abuse can happen anywhere – within and outside the family/whānau. Most sexual abuse of tamariki or rangatahi is by someone they know.

Sexual abuse can be, but is not limited to:

- contact abuse – touching breasts, genital/anal fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative or non-penetrative contact with the anus or genitals, encouraging te tamaiti or rangatahi to perform such acts on the perpetrator or another, involvement of te tamaiti or rangatahi in activities for the purposes of pornography or prostitution
- non-contact abuse – exhibitionism, voyeurism, exposure to pornographic or sexual imagery, inappropriate photography or depictions of sexual or suggestive

behaviours or comments, sexting, cyber grooming or grooming behaviours.

Signs of sexual abuse include:

- displaying age-inappropriate sexual play or language
- displaying sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge
- refusing to go home (or to a specific person's home) for no apparent reason
- being afraid of a certain person or place
- self-destructive or self-harming behaviours
- displaying extreme attention-seeking behaviours or extreme inhibition
- dressing inappropriately
- displaying signs of being 'groomed', which can include being very secretive about how they are spending their time, having an older boyfriend or girlfriend, and having money or new things such as clothes or a mobile phone that they themselves do not have the means to purchase
- genital injuries and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Non-sexual transmission of STIs is rare except in newborn pēpi up to a few weeks of age.

The detailed assessment of genital injuries or STIs requires specialist skills. If required, Oranga Tamariki or the Police will make a referral to MEDSAC (Medical Sexual Assault Clinicians Aotearoa).

## Pregnancy

As the age of consent for sexual intercourse in New Zealand is 16 years old, you should follow-up pregnancy in girls under the age of 16 years, so the rangatahi has an opportunity to discuss the circumstances around her pregnancy with a trusted person.

You should consult Oranga Tamariki or the Police if the rangatahi shares that the pregnancy is the result of unwanted sexual contact or you believe she has a disability which may impact on her ability to give consent.

Pregnancy out of wedlock may be something that causes great tension in some cultures and family/whānau and this can put the expectant mother and unborn pēpi at risk of harm or abuse. It is important that we help the expectant mother and unborn pēpi get the prenatal care and support they need.

Ensuring the expectant mother is linked in with health professions also enables their important role in advising the rangatahi about the consequences of alcohol use in pregnancy and supporting her to stop drinking if required.

## Neglect

Neglect is the failure to meet the basic needs of te tamaiti or rangatahi. Understanding the context surrounding the neglect is important. It may be a one-off incident or a pattern of chronic neglect. It may involve, but is not limited to:

- physical neglect – not providing the necessities of life like a safe place to live, enough food or adequate clothing
- supervisory neglect – both within and outside the home. Examples include leaving tamariki home alone, letting tamariki wander the streets and enabling access to potentially harmful substances
- emotional neglect – not providing tamariki or rangatahi with the comfort, attention and love they need through play, listening and talking with them and everyday affection
- medical neglect – the failure to take care of their health needs
- educational neglect – allowing chronic truancy, failure to enrol te tamaiti or rangatahi in school, or inattention to special education needs.

Although the effects of neglect may not be as obvious as some other types of abuse, they can be just as serious. Poverty, transience, and housing issues do not mean te tamaiti or rangatahi is being neglected, but the additional pressures these issues place on family/whānau can cause significant stress and they may require support to resolve these issues.

## Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is a pattern of systematic and purposeful harm aimed towards te tamaiti or rangatahi. It can occur between siblings but is more commonly perpetrated by an adult towards te tamaiti or rangatahi.

Emotional abuse is defined by the characteristics of a particular relationship between te tamaiti or rangatahi and the abuser. Emotional abuse is significant when the pattern of abuse is targeted, systematic and purposeful towards te tamaiti or rangatahi.

Emotional abuse in tamariki or rangatahi occurs when there is prolonged aggression and verbal put-downs that result in te tamaiti or rangatahi feeling humiliated and ashamed and there is an absence of positive affirmation, love, and affection for te tamaiti or rangatahi.

Emotional abuse occurs when there is repeated exposure to negative actions by others, including exposure to family violence. It also occurs through deliberately saying things that are nasty and cruel. A one-off experience may be hurtful for te tamaiti or rangatahi but is unlikely to impact on their emotional or social functioning or their development. Repeated experiences can have significant cumulative impacts on te tamaiti or rangatahi. A serious consequence can be described as a broken spirit.

Scapegoating occurs when te tamaiti or rangatahi is singled out for punishment, regardless of their involvement in the problem, by the parents/carers, family/whānau and others in the household including siblings.

Emotional abuse can:

- have significant long-term impacts on mental wellness
- cause stress and distress
- impact on someone's ability to form healthy relationships
- impact physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.

Examples of emotional abuse include:

- patterns of degradation, constant and harsh criticism, or repeated negative comparison to others
- deprivation of contact with people or places significant to te tamaiti or rangatahi
- corrupting, exploiting, or actively scaring and threatening te tamaiti or rangatahi
- a significant period of denying access to cultural, faith or other associations that sustain the sense of normality, identity and self-esteem for te tamaiti or rangatahi
- ongoing exposure to family/whānau violence.

Te tamaiti or rangatahi who is emotionally abused may show the following signs in addition to what you'd expect to see from neglect:

- sleep problems like nightmares or poor sleeping patterns
- bedwetting or soiling with no medical cause
- extreme attention-seeking behaviours or being overly compliant
- frequent physical complaints – real or imagined such as headaches, nausea and vomiting and abdominal pains
- signs of anxiety – including poor self-esteem, being unable to cope in social settings and sometimes obsessive behaviour
- talking about hurting themselves or ending their lives.

## Family violence

Unfortunately for some tamariki and rangatahi in New Zealand, violence in their family/whānau is a common part of their childhood experience. Family violence is defined under the Family Violence Act 2018 as violence inflicted against another person by any other person with whom that person is, or has been, in a family relationship. A family/whānau relationship is defined as a spouse or partner, family/whānau member or household member sharing a close personal relationship.

Family violence covers the range of abuse types – it can be physical, psychological and sexual. It includes:

- yelling and hitting, as well as threatening to harm people, pets or property
- patterns of behaviour that are physically, sexually and/or psychologically abusive. Behaviour may also be coercive or controlling and cumulatively causes harm
- psychological abuse that occurs for te tamaiti or rangatahi when they see or hear the physical, sexual or psychological abuse of a person with whom they have a family/whānau relationship with, or are at real risk of seeing that abuse occurring
- dowry-related violence arising from concerns about gifts, goods, money property or other benefit given to or received by a party to a marriage proposal.

Family violence, no matter the level or frequency, can impact the emotional, psychological, or physical wellbeing of te tamaiti or rangatahi and can have ongoing negative impacts on their health, education and social and economic wellbeing, which can be long lasting. Tamariki might fail to get the love and attention they need because parents are caught up in their own troubles, or they will be frightened and insecure from the violence they're seeing or hearing. They may fall behind in school, bully others, or show a range of other behaviours and warning signs.

Research shows that intimate partner violence and abuse and neglect of te tamaiti or rangatahi often happen at the same time. Tamariki and rangatahi who live in a home where there is violence are known to be significantly more at risk of being the victims of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect than any other tamariki or rangatahi. As well as the tamariki and rangatahi, you may be concerned about their parents/carers. Research shows women and tamariki and rangatahi are the most likely victims of family violence, although men can also be victims. It is important to be aware that sometimes rangatahi use violence against parents/carers and siblings.



Some family violence prevention providers can be found through these networks:

**Pasefika Proud** (<https://www.pasefikaproud.co.nz/assets/Uploads/Support-for-Pacific-women-Sep-20-v9.pdf>)

**Te Kupenga Whakaoti Mahi Patunga (National Network of Family Violence Services)** ([www.nnfvs.org.nz](http://www.nnfvs.org.nz))

**If you're worried about te tamaiti or rangatahi and want to make a referral or a report of concern**

Call: 0508 326 459 or 0508 FAMILY

Email [contact@ot.govt.nz](mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz)

**For emergencies or immediate safety concerns call the Police on 111**



# The impact of harm (ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation) and trauma

## Cumulative harm

Cumulative harm is the outcome of multiple episodes of abuse or neglect experienced by te tamaiti or rangatahi and results in a diminished sense of safety, stability, and wellbeing.

Repeat episodes of abuse can have a profound impact on the development of te tamaiti or rangatahi. A timeline of when abuse happens may be important when considering the impacts of cumulative harm on te tamaiti or rangatahi and helps identify patterns of behaviour and events, over time, that are impacting on te tamaiti or rangatahi. Patterns may show that things are improving but also may indicate a more worrying situation for te tamaiti or rangatahi.

When considered in isolation, each episode of abuse or neglect may not be thought of as being significantly harmful, but the cumulative effect of several incidents may be serious enough to be described as harmful and require further attention.

The cumulative effects of minor harm over time can be detrimental in the same way that a single major event of harm is experienced. Cumulative harm is traumatic because over time, and with many incidents of harm or abuse, even at low levels, the resilience of te tamaiti or rangatahi is diminished and this will have an impact on their self-esteem and development.

Tamariki and rangatahi who have experienced multiple events of abuse, neglect, or exposure to family violence from those who are responsible for their care, protection and nurture can suffer complex trauma. When

complex trauma happens early in life it can disrupt many aspects of the development, attachment and formation of a sense of self of te tamaiti. Therapeutic interventions may be helpful for addressing the impacts of trauma.

## The impact of trauma

Trauma occurs when significant adverse experiences have an impact on the physical development of the brain of te tamaiti or rangatahi, particularly in the first 3 years of their life, and have lasting effects on their self-concept, relationship-building skills and behaviour.

Some useful resources can be found here:

### **Early Years Last Forever**

– **Brainwave Trust website**

[www.brainwave.org.nz](http://www.brainwave.org.nz)

or [practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/resources/promoting-resilience-trauma-informed-practice-approach.pdf](http://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/resources/promoting-resilience-trauma-informed-practice-approach.pdf)

When pēpi and young tamariki are exposed to harm (including family violence) within the caregiving context, brain development may be compromised. Emotional, behavioural or learning challenges may persist, especially in the absence of targeted and trauma-informed interventions.

When parents/carers make pēpi and tamariki feel safe and nurtured, their developing brains can spend more time learning and building essential connections. When pēpi and tamariki feel unsafe or threatened however, their brains shift into survival mode, making learning particularly difficult.

Trauma-induced changes to the brain can result in varying degrees of cognitive impairment and a poor ability to manage emotional responses or keep them within an acceptable range of typical emotional responses. This can lead to a host of problems.

These include:

- difficulty with attention and focus

- learning disabilities
- low self-esteem
- impaired social skills and difficulties with relationships
- substance abuse problems
- self-harming behaviours
- difficulty resolving conflict
- sleep disturbances.

Since trauma exposure has been linked to a significantly increased risk of developing several mental and behavioural health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and substance use disorders, interventions are required to help minimise the neurological effects of abuse and neglect and promote healthy brain development.

If te tamaiti or rangatahi has developmental delays because of harm, it is more common to see delays across several areas, such as delays in:

- speech, language, movement (motor), vision or hearing
- social development, including cognitive thinking

- building attachments to parents/carers
- developing a sense of self-worth.

Te tamaiti or rangatahi may also develop unusual patterns such as in the development of speech or withdraw into a fantasy world. If you become aware of any of these concerns, seek advice and help.



## Harmful behaviour

Tamariki and rangatahi may engage in behaviours that could potentially be harmful to themselves or others. A harmful behaviour is one that is, or is likely to be, harmful to the physical, mental or emotional wellbeing of te tamaiti or rangatahi or to others.

Harmful behaviours can include:

- drug taking behaviour
- harmful or concerning sexual behaviour
- self-harming and suicidal thoughts
- internet or social media activity that is harmful
- verbal or physical abuse by te tamaiti or rangatahi towards another
- alleged offending.

What distinguishes age-appropriate exploration from 'harmful behaviour' is the extent of the behaviour and the impact on te tamaiti or rangatahi. It is therefore important to be clear regarding the actual or potential impact on the safety or wellbeing of te tamaiti or rangatahi, or others, from the behaviours te tamaiti or rangatahi is engaging in.

## Drug taking behaviour

Experimentation with alcohol, drugs or substances is not unusual in rangatahi but excessive use or abuse can be dangerous.

### **The Best Practice Advocacy Centre New Zealand (bpac<sup>nz</sup>)**

website provides good information  
[www.bpac.org.nz](http://www.bpac.org.nz)

Parents/carers may include tamariki and rangatahi in their own drug or alcohol habits, sometimes to gain the cooperation or to encourage illegal activities of te tamaiti or rangatahi. Older tamariki or rangatahi may use

drugs and/or alcohol as a way of expressing defiance and anger, or as a method of escape from a stressful or distressing situation.

## Concerning or harmful sexual behaviour

Many tamariki engage in normal explorative behaviour that does not raise concerns, but sometimes sexualised behaviour of tamariki or rangatahi will need to be followed up. Concerning or harmful sexual behaviour is a term used to describe sexual behaviours that are inappropriate, problematic and potentially abusive to the person engaging in the behaviour and others.

Determining what is harmful or concerning means understanding what normal sexual behaviour is within the individual context of te tamaiti or rangatahi, including their family/whānau background, social experiences, peer group, culture, age and developmental stage, and sexual experiences, as well as factors such as curiosity, puberty, experimentation, acting out and showing off.

We need to explore the following dynamics when considering whether the concerning or harmful behaviour is abusive to others or harmful to tamariki, rangatahi or others:

### **Was there equality in the relationship?**

- Consider physical differences, cognitive and emotional differences, age differences, past exposure or sexual experience along with power and authority.

### **Was the behaviour engaged in with consent?**

- Compliance may not mean consent
  - consent implies full knowledge, understanding and choice. Consider any cognitive, emotional and age differences that may impact on a person's ability to give informed consent.

### **Was force or coercion present?**

- Consider any pressures placed that denied choice, as well as perceptions of power and

authority in the relationship, differences in size or age, whether bribery or trickery was used, whether threats were made such as loss of friendships, whether violence was used and whether nurturance and caring was offered within an exploitive relationship (grooming).

### **Is the behaviour harming te tamaiti or rangatahi (even if they are not harming others)?**

- Consider all sexual conduct including pornography and compulsive masturbation. For some tamariki, it may indicate a need to develop their social skills and ability to form healthy relationships.

Working with tamariki, rangatahi and their family/whānau where there is concerning or harmful sexual behaviour is a complex area of our work that is often fraught with high running emotions within the family/whānau and community. It is important that you respond appropriately, and support family/whānau to manage the behaviour of te tamaiti or rangatahi safely. The treatment sector in New Zealand widely uses:

- ‘Concerning sexual behaviour’ when referring to a perpetrating tamaiti aged 10 years and under
- ‘Harmful sexual behaviour’ when referring to a perpetrating tamaiti or rangatahi aged over 10 years.

If you are concerned about te tamaiti or rangatahi displaying concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, contact Oranga Tamariki. If you have questions or need advice, the following specialist services may be able to assist:

**Stop** [www.stop.org.nz](http://www.stop.org.nz)

**Safe Network** [www.safenetwork.org.nz](http://www.safenetwork.org.nz)

**Wellstop** [www.wellstop.org.nz](http://www.wellstop.org.nz)

**Korowai Tumanako** – Northland and Auckland areas [www.korowaitumanako.org](http://www.korowaitumanako.org)

## **Self-harming and suicidal thoughts**

A history of harm is a risk factor for te tamaiti or rangatahi developing mental health issues, which may include self-harming behaviour or suicidal thoughts. Some signs te tamaiti or rangatahi may be experiencing mental health issues include:

- feeling sad, grumpy or miserable most of the time
- feeling restless or lacking in energy
- crying, or getting angry or upset for no reason
- losing interest in things that they used to enjoy
- self-isolation from friends and family/whānau
- feeling worthless or guilty about things
- losing or gaining a lot of weight
- difficulty sleeping
- self-harming, either intentionally like cutting or reactionary like punching a wall
- thinking about death or having suicidal thoughts.

Suicidal thoughts, actions or self-harm can occur even in young tamariki. They may hint at or talk about thoughts of suicide, or even make a plan. It's okay to talk with them about your concerns for them and to ask them to keep themselves safe until you can get them the support they need.

If you suspect te tamaiti or rangatahi is suicidal get help immediately – contact your local Mental Health Crisis Team/Crisis Resolution Service.

In addition to cultural service providers, some helpful websites include:

**Mental Health Foundation**

[www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

**Clinical Advisory Services Aotearoa**

[www.casa.org.nz](http://www.casa.org.nz)

**The Lowdown** [www.thelowdown.co.nz](http://www.thelowdown.co.nz)

**Youthline** [www.youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz)

## Internet or social media activity that is harmful

Social media is a term for the online platforms that people use to connect with others, share media content, and form social networks.

There are both benefits and risks of social media and online use, but some potentially harmful activities include:

- being exposed to inappropriate or upsetting content, which is malicious, aggressive, violent or contains sexual comments or images
- being exposed to any age-inappropriate content without the understanding or maturity to contextualise it
- accessing sexual content (pornography) which can encourage te tamaiti or rangatahi to engage in inappropriate behaviours
- uploading or ‘sexting’ inappropriate content like embarrassing or provocative photos or videos of themselves or others
- sharing personal information with strangers
  - for example, phone numbers, date of birth or location
- cyberbullying
- exposure to too much targeted advertising and marketing
- computer game addiction.

If you have an opportunity to talk about social

media use with tamariki, rangatahi or family/whānau, this will help raise awareness about potential risks and how to promote internet safety. However, if you are concerned te tamaiti or rangatahi is placing themselves or others at risk, then you should seek advice and support from others.

## Verbal or physical abuse by te tamaiti or rangatahi towards another

There are many different circumstances that can contribute to te tamaiti or rangatahi harming another person.

Tamariki and rangatahi can harm or abuse others both within their own home (for example, violence towards parents/carers or siblings) and outside the home (for example, bullying, dating violence, harassment of others).

Bullying and other aggressive behaviours can have significant and far-reaching negative impacts on those involved. It’s important to notice if te tamaiti or rangatahi is behaving in a way that may harm others so they can be supported to understand that their behaviour is harmful and develop alternative strategies when interacting with others.

The needs of te tamaiti or rangatahi who harms others should be considered separately from the needs of their victim.

You need to consider the nature, extent, and context of the behaviour, including whether it is verbal or physical, when deciding the most appropriate way to respond.

Oranga Tamariki can offer advice if you are concerned that the actions or behaviour of te tamaiti or rangatahi is putting the safety of another person (including another tamaiti or rangatahi) at risk.

## Alleged offending

Tamariki and rangatahi may engage in offending behaviours and, while their actions may cause long-term pain, injury, and emotional trauma to their victims, it's important to remember that they are still tamariki and rangatahi, who need support and interventions to help improve their future outcomes.

There are often complex underlying issues that lead tamariki and rangatahi into offending behaviours and we must look beneath the behaviour so that we can effectively deal with the issues. If the underlying causes of offending are not tackled effectively, then offending may continue and escalate in severity of harm to all parties involved.

Oranga Tamariki has an important role to play in both the youth justice services and custody pathways, with youth justice family group conferences being an important mechanism in both pathways.



# When tamariki or rangatahi talk about abuse

Te tamaiti or rangatahi may try to find different ways to tell you they are unhappy, scared, or unsafe. Talking about what has happened is often scary for them. This means they may try to say things in a way that is tentative, vague or uses other people's names or places.

Sometimes they will say things very quietly or simply make hints. They might act out with dolls or toys or use words that are not appropriate for their age or just do not sound right. They might tell you through artwork, stories, and poems, or by their behaviour. It is important to listen to what they are trying to say, be understanding and take what they say seriously. It is unusual for tamariki or rangatahi to make up situations of abuse.

It is important to be aware of all the ways tamariki may try to tell us about abuse. If you are worried, it is more important to do something about it than understand fully what each type of abuse is. Even if you are not sure, it's important to talk with someone.

**If you're worried about te tamaiti or rangatahi and want to make a referral or a report of concern**

Call: 0508 326 459 or 0508 FAMILY

Email [contact@ot.govt.nz](mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz)

**For emergencies or immediate safety concerns call the Police on 111**

## Guidelines for when te tamaiti or rangatahi tells you about abuse

### Listen and be reassuring

It is really important to make te tamaiti or rangatahi feel safe in telling you about abuse or harm. Listen to them and:

- accept what they have to say (make sure you do not say anything critical like, 'Why didn't you tell me sooner?')
- do not question or be too quick to fill the silences – give them time and space to talk
- let them know it is the right thing they told you about it
- let them know it is not their fault
- let them know it is not okay for things like this to happen
- remain calm yet confident, and keep your voice low and gentle
- tell them you will get help.

### Do not promise confidentiality

The best response might be 'thank you for telling me about that, now I need to talk to someone so we can make sure you're safe'.

### Write it down

As soon as possible, record as accurately as you can what te tamaiti or rangatahi has told you, using the same words they used, and how you responded. Also make a note of how the disclosure came about – for example, by role playing or drawing.

### Do not question or interview te tamaiti or rangatahi

Once te tamaiti or rangatahi has made the disclosure and you have reassured and comforted them, make sure you do not question them further. This may interfere with any further action that needs to be taken. Remember it is not your job to investigate if harm has happened. It is your job to take what tamariki



and rangatahi say seriously and consult with someone about what to do next.

## Key things to consider

If te tamaiti or rangatahi talks to you about harm:

- make sure te tamaiti or rangatahi knows they have done the right thing in telling you
- try to determine if there are any immediate safety or risk issues that Oranga Tamariki or the Police need to know about urgently, but don't ask any leading questions
- refer to your child protection policy if you have one. Some useful information can be found online at: [www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/working-with-children/childrens-act-requirements/child-protection-policies/](http://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/working-with-children/childrens-act-requirements/child-protection-policies/)
- speak to your manager, supervisor, or senior colleague as soon as possible, so they can help you understand what to do next
- ask if there is anyone significant to them and they feel safe with they want you to contact
- do not let anyone who may be involved in the abuse know te tamaiti or rangatahi has said anything to you. You can talk to Oranga Tamariki about how to manage this
- it is important that you respect the sensitivity of the information te tamaiti or rangatahi has shared with you.

**If you're worried about te tamaiti or rangatahi and want to make a referral or a report of concern**

Call: 0508 326 459 or 0508 FAMILY

Email [contact@ot.govt.nz](mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz)

**For emergencies or immediate safety concerns call the Police on 111**



# What to do if you are worried about te tamaiti or rangatahi

As someone working with tamariki or rangatahi and family/whānau you will likely come across difficult situations where you have worries about the safety or wellbeing/oranga of te tamaiti or rangatahi. Usually, your instinct will tell you something is not right, but you may not know what the best thing is to do. Sometimes there are no black and white answers.

Think about the situation from the viewpoint of te tamaiti or rangatahi – what do they need to be safe and well cared for, and who are the people who can help make that happen?

The main thing is that you take notice and act. If you are worried about te tamaiti or rangatahi:

- **Trust your instincts** – if you sense something is happening for te tamaiti or rangatahi, trust your instincts and do not be afraid of getting it wrong.
- **Spot the warning signs** – familiarise yourself with the signs talked about in this resource.
- **Listen** – take notice and listen carefully to what people say. Are you picking up signs that the family/whānau is struggling or trying to ask for help?
- **Talk to other professionals** – are your health and education colleagues working with this family/whānau?
- **Seek advice** – talk to Oranga Tamariki – their social workers are trained to work out what kinds of problems a family/whānau might be having and to find the best ways to help keep their tamaiti or rangatahi safe.

**When you suspect there's serious harm, or risk of serious harm, to te tamaiti or rangatahi call**

Oranga Tamariki on 0508 326 459.

**If you believe te tamaiti or rangatahi to be in immediate danger call the Police on 111.**

## Information you will need when calling Oranga Tamariki

When you call Oranga Tamariki on **0508 326 459**, you will talk with a social worker who will ask questions about what your concerns are for te tamaiti or rangatahi or their family/whānau.

It is often helpful to write down all the information you want to provide, and then check off your list as you talk it through. This might include:

- the reasons why you think te tamaiti or rangatahi is at risk, or experiencing harm
- whether you have spoken to te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau about your concerns, and what their views were
- details about te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau, for example names and address
- details of any specific incidents, including dates. You may have noticed patterns or clusters of signs emerging
- the resources or strengths you are aware of within the family/whānau
- times when concerns were not present or were less problematic. What was happening for the family/whānau at that time?
- who else may be working with the family/whānau or be available to provide support.

Remember, you do not need to know all this information, but the more you know the easier it will be for the social worker to assess the situation.



# How Oranga Tamariki will respond

While assessment is an ongoing process, there are three phases of the Oranga Tamariki assessment process used when responding to reports of concern. If you have made a report of concern, Oranga Tamariki and/or the Police may need more information from you during any of these phases.

## Initial assessment phase

The purpose of the initial assessment phase is for Oranga Tamariki to gather sufficient information to understand the needs and vulnerabilities of te tamaiti or rangatahi. This helps Oranga Tamariki to support the family/whānau with the right level of service, as early as possible. A social worker will develop a chronology and if necessary, speaks with relevant others to determine whether Oranga Tamariki needs to be involved or if an alternative response would best meet the needs of te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau.

## Core assessment phase

Oranga Tamariki works with the family/whānau to assess current and future safety and harm or the likelihood of harm to te tamaiti or rangatahi. Information from other professionals working with the family/whānau is an important component of this phase of the assessment. Oranga Tamariki works with te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau to determine whether there are needs that require addressing and, if so, who is best to provide those services.

A decision is then made about future involvement by Oranga Tamariki, such as a family group conference, no further action (NFA) or referral to other services.

## Full assessment phase

Oranga Tamariki develops an in-depth understanding of the full range of needs of te tamaiti or rangatahi (including long-term physical and psychological safety), family/whānau capacity and capability, and how they might be supported to meet identified needs.

The social worker will collaborate with other professionals and may require specialist assessments to inform this phase of the assessment. This information is used at the family group conference and supports quality planning for te tamaiti or rangatahi.

When abuse or neglect concerns warrant a Police investigation, Oranga Tamariki works alongside the Police, and follows the Child Protection Protocol. However, Oranga Tamariki processes do not depend on the completion of the Police investigation or any potential court outcomes.

You can access more detailed information on Oranga Tamariki processes on the Practice Centre website:

[practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/our-work/assessment-and-planning/assessments/intake-and-early-assessment/](https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/our-work/assessment-and-planning/assessments/intake-and-early-assessment/)

Throughout the assessment phase, the social worker will use the 'Tuituia framework' to guide the assessment and build knowledge and understanding about what is going on for the family/whānau and the best way to help. You can find information about this on the Practice Centre website:

[practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/our-work/practice-tools/the-tuituia-framework-and-tools/the-tuituia-framework-and-domains/](https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/our-work/practice-tools/the-tuituia-framework-and-tools/the-tuituia-framework-and-domains/)

## How Oranga Tamariki will engage with you

If you know te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau or are involved with the services and supports available to them, you may be invited to share concerns, options and solutions, and plan how te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau can achieve safety and wellbeing.

There are several key processes that Oranga Tamariki uses to promote collective information sharing and decision-making:

### Hui ā-whānau and family meetings

Hui ā-whānau or family meetings are used to:

- support and enhance the rights, participation, and decision-making of tamariki, rangatahi and their family/whānau, hapū, iwi and support network as early as possible
- inform the assessment and safety planning for te tamaiti or rangatahi
- hear and understand the family/whānau views about te tamaiti or rangatahi, including how they view the concerns held by Oranga Tamariki
- understand the vision the family/whānau has for te tamaiti or rangatahi.

### Care and protection family group conference

The family group conference is a structured meeting, prescribed by legislation (the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989), where te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau, professionals and other participants who are entitled to attend come together to:

- talk about concerns that are held for te tamaiti or rangatahi
- develop a plan to address the issues.

Professionals play an important role of providing information and advice that will help the family group conference members make decisions, recommendations, and plans. This

includes information relating to the health, education, employment, and training needs of te tamaiti or rangatahi. They would attend the conference as an information provider and usually only for the period needed to present the information and support discussion of that information.

### Youth justice family group conference

Youth justice family group conferences are held when tamariki or rangatahi are alleged to have offended or have charges proven against them. These are convened and facilitated by youth justice coordinators.

### When tamariki or rangatahi need to come into care

Sometimes tamariki and rangatahi cannot live at home. The family/whānau may step in to make their own informal arrangements so that tamariki and rangatahi are safe and cared for. At other times, te tamaiti or rangatahi may need to be taken into the legal custody of the Oranga Tamariki chief executive. When this happens, Oranga Tamariki will always work with the family/whānau to try to keep te tamaiti or rangatahi within their family/whānau, hapū or iwi. When this is not possible, te tamaiti or rangatahi may be placed with an Oranga Tamariki-approved caregiver or in an Oranga Tamariki residence.

### Gateway assessment

If te tamaiti or rangatahi comes into the custody of the Oranga Tamariki chief executive, it is important that those people involved in supporting them understand their health, education, and wellbeing needs. Oranga Tamariki will organise a gateway assessment to obtain this information, from which an interagency plan is developed to address identified needs.

You may be asked to provide information that contributes to a gateway assessment, or you may be involved in helping to address the identified health, educational, social or wellbeing needs.

## **VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai**

VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai is an independent connection and advocacy service designed by and for care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi. VOYCE gives tamariki and rangatahi who are in care a community to belong to. It makes sure their voices and views are heard when decisions are made about their future, and that they have a bigger influence in developing systems. If you are working with te tamaiti or rangatahi in care, make sure they know about this service. Check out the website to find out more: [www.voyce.org.nz](http://www.voyce.org.nz)



# Frequently asked questions

## When is a statutory 'care and protection' response required?

- When there is serious harm or risk of serious harm (ill treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation) of te tamaiti or rangatahi. A single traumatic event can constitute serious harm, for example a violent assault. More often a build-up of events will affect te tamaiti or rangatahi and significantly interrupt their normal development.

## What if I get it wrong?

- Do not be afraid of getting it wrong or try to deal with your worries alone. Sometimes people feel worried about calling Oranga Tamariki, wonder if they are interfering, and try to find other reasons for what they are noticing.
- By referring to this guide and getting to know and understand the signs of harm, you can feel more confident about the actions you need to take, and when.
- Your responsibility is to act in the best interests of te tamaiti or rangatahi, and to talk to Oranga Tamariki if you are worried.
- It is the responsibility of Oranga Tamariki to assess what needs to happen to keep te tamaiti or rangatahi safe.

## Could I make things worse?

- By talking to Oranga Tamariki you are putting the decision about what to do in the hands of experienced professionals who will assess the concerns and make decisions about what needs to happen next.
- If it turns out the family/whānau does not need help, Oranga Tamariki will not stay involved.
- If you feel te tamaiti or rangatahi is being harmed or is unsafe, and your call helps prevent this continuing, you have already made a positive difference to their life.

## Will my call be treated as confidential?

- It is best if the family/whānau are aware of your concerns before you contact Oranga Tamariki. However, if requested, Oranga Tamariki will keep the details of your call as confidential as possible.
- While the law does not guarantee total confidentiality, Oranga Tamariki would not normally release the name of the person making a report of concern.

# What you can expect from Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki is there to help you, and you can talk to them whenever you have concerns about te tamaiti or rangatahi and their family/whānau. Oranga Tamariki can also come to your organisation to talk about ways in which you can best work together to keep tamariki and rangatahi safe.

Oranga Tamariki has policies, frameworks, guidance, and resources which guide the way they work with tamariki, rangatahi and family/whānau. You can find these resources on the Practice Centre website:  
[practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz](https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz)

You can expect Oranga Tamariki staff to:

- provide a courteous and sensitive response to your concerns
- keep your confidentiality wherever possible
- tell you the outcome of your report of concern within 4 weeks (they may be unable to in extenuating circumstances).

While Oranga Tamariki is committed to working with family/whānau to build wellbeing/oranga so tamariki and rangatahi can thrive in their care, this process can take some time. Please do not expect immediate results. You can however phone them anytime to find out what is happening with your report of concern.



# Compliments, complaints, and suggestions

Oranga Tamariki values your feedback – good and bad – and is committed to working with you to resolve any concerns. Feedback helps them understand what is working (and what's not) so they can keep on improving.

The easiest way to sort out a problem or issue is usually to contact your local Oranga Tamariki office. Either talk to the person you have been dealing with or ask for their supervisor or site manager. They will want to be able to address any issues as soon as possible.

Another option is to use the feedback form, available from your local Oranga Tamariki office or online at: [www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/contact-us/feedback/](http://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/contact-us/feedback/). Someone will get back to you within 5 days.

Following the above, if you feel your concern is still not resolved, you can request a review by the Chief Executive's Advisory Panel. To apply for a review, write to:

**National Manager Review Secretariat**  
Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children  
PO Box 1556  
Wellington 6140

If you have a complaint or issue about another social service provider, the first step should be to discuss your concerns with the provider. If you feel your complaint/concern about an accredited provider has not been adequately resolved and is a breach of the Social Sector Accreditation Standards, you can also contact the Social Services Accreditation (SSA) team.

**Social Services Accreditation**  
PO Box 1556  
Wellington  
6140  
[Social\\_Services\\_Accreditation@msd.govt.nz](mailto:Social_Services_Accreditation@msd.govt.nz)

## Other avenues to take a concern

**Social Workers Registration Board**  
Phone: (04) 931 2650

**Office of the Children's Commissioner**  
Phone: (04) 471 1410

**Ombudsman New Zealand**  
Phone: 0800 802 602

# Te reo Māori glossary

**Pēpi** – A baby, infant

**Te tamaiti** – A child

**Tamariki** – Children

**Rangatahi** – A young person or young people

**Oranga** – Wellbeing

**Whānau** – Extended family, family group

**Hapū** – Kinship group, consisting of several whānau

**Iwi** – Tribe, extended kinship group







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