

23 April 2025

OIA-CE-2025-02877

s9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your email, received on 24 March 2025, to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) requesting information on child deaths in Oranga Tamariki care. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Oranga Tamariki staff work to improve children's lives and prevent harm. The death of a child is extremely distressing and tragic. Our people feel it very deeply if a child we have or are working with passes.

Oranga Tamariki do not have the mandate to confirm the cause of death of any child in our custody and are reliant on the Coronial process to confirm cause of death. Cause of a death is unable to be determined and reported on until the matter has been before the Coroner's court. Therefore data reporting can be delayed outside of the year of death if there is still to be a Coroners determination.

Please also note the numbers provided in response to your questions are based on data held in the Oranga Tamariki system and extracted in order to respond to this question. It is possible additional information relevant to this period had not yet been entered into the Oranga Tamariki system at the time the data was extracted.

Please see our responses to your queries.

*How many children have died in Oranga Tamariki care since its inception in 2017?*

The term "Oranga Tamariki care" is defined as children and young people in the custody of the Oranga Tamariki Chief Executive.

In between 1 April 2017 and 1 April 2025, 37 children and young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki have died. Please note the greatest proportion of deaths of children and young people in care are due to natural causes and health complications.

*What were their ages?*

*How many were with Oranga Tamariki approved caregivers?*

*What year did these occur?*

Please see the table below for this information.

Year	Number of children in care passed away	Ages of the children
2017	4	0, 4, 8, 14
2018	5	1, 11, 15, 17, 17
2019	9	0, 5, 8, 12, 12, 13, 14, 14, 16
2020	1	2
2021	6	12, 15, 16, 16, 17, 17
2022	6	0, 1, 7, 10, 14, 17
2023	3	13, 15, 15
2024	2	0, 16
2025	1	13

We have interpreted “Oranga Tamariki approved caregivers” as non-kin caregivers as either:

- non-kin caregivers who have completed a caregiver assessment undertaken by Oranga Tamariki and been approved to care for children in the care of Oranga Tamariki or approved contact
- caregivers working for a provider approved under s 396 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 to provide Partnered Care.

By this measure, eight of the 37 children were placed with non-kin Oranga Tamariki approved caregivers at the time of their passing.

Other placement types include living with parents, whānau caregivers, independent living, interim placements, and health/disability-related placements.

Please note all placements for children in care are assessed and approved in some way. For example, whānau caregivers go through the same caregiver assessment process as Oranga Tamariki approved caregivers do, including completing Police checks, an interview and a home visit. An updated assessment report and frequent visits are required for return home placements, while robust caregiver assessment requirements for providers are set out in contracts and service specifications. You can find the policy and guidance setting out the steps required to complete a caregiver assessment, and the requirements for a return home placement, in the links below:

[Caregiver and adoptive applicant assessment and approval | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

[Caregiver and adoption assessment framework | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

[Transitions within care | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

[Returning tamariki and rangatahi safely home | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

*How many homicides were by the caregiver?*

*How many were by a household contact?*

*How many were by a parent?*

IN-CONFIDENCE

None of the deaths of the children in Oranga Tamariki care during this period have been ruled by a Coroner as a homicide by a caregiver, household contact, or parent. While I am unable to provide numbers or details for privacy reasons, I can confirm that deaths of children in care by homicide, manslaughter or suspected abuse are extremely rare. Disability or health issues are the single most common cause of death for children in care.

Oranga Tamariki may make the information contained in this letter available to the public by publishing this on our website with your personal details removed.

I trust you find this information useful. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise them with Oranga Tamariki. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Information about this is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by contacting them on 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Rachel Leota  
**Deputy Chief Executive Tamariki and Whānau Services**