

29 March 2023

9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe **9(2)(a)**

Thank you for your email of 3 January 2023 to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki), requesting information around Shaken Baby Syndrome. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

You have requested:

In the past ten years how many investigations have Oranga Tamariki undertaken, after concerns a child had been shaken, or was thought to have shaken baby syndrome? Could this be displayed by year, and region investigation took place?

Of those investigations how many concerns a child had been shaken, or had shaken baby syndrome were substantiated? Could this be displayed by year, and region investigation took place?

Of those investigations how many resulted in a child being removed from a home? Could this be displayed by year, and region investigation took place?

I am specifically looking for cases involving shaken baby syndrome. I am referencing the Mayo Clinic definition of 'Shaken Baby Syndrome', therefore I am wanting data on "brain injuries due to probable child maltreatment".

Babies and tamariki aged five years and under are a particularly vulnerable group and require special attention and focus. Recognising the inherent vulnerability of children this age requires whānau, community, and anyone else involved in the life of te tamaiti to be extra vigilant.

We know that the first five years in the life of tamariki is a critical time in brain development. Disruptions can have long term impacts. Repeat episodes of abuse can have a profound impact on the development of a tamaiti.

Under section 15 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, any person who believes that a tamaiti has been, or is likely to be, harmed, ill-treated, abused (whether physically,

emotionally, or sexually), neglected or deprived, or who has concerns about the wellbeing of tamariki or rangatahi, may report the matter to Oranga Tamariki or the New Zealand Police. Oranga Tamariki will then determine the best course of action to protect te tamaiti from further harm. These are referred to as Reports of Concern (ROC) by Oranga Tamariki.

Information contained on a ROC is then entered into our case management system, CYRAS. Structured data recorded in CYRAS, does not include specific diagnoses or conditions, such as shaken baby syndrome. Oranga Tamariki records the broad outcomes of investigations under the headings of 'not found', 'physical abuse', 'sexual abuse', 'emotional abuse', or 'neglect'. Where an investigation found that a child had been shaken, the outcome of that investigation would be a finding of physical abuse. It is not possible from our system to distinguish those children who have a finding of physical abuse as a result of being shaken as distinct from those who have experienced other forms of physical abuse. This information would be contained in individual assessment case notes and not specifically categorised in our systems.

As such, we are unable to answer how many investigations have been undertaken, how many concerns have been raised, or the number of tamaiti who have been removed from their parents' care due to shaken baby syndrome, as Oranga Tamariki does not hold this specific information in a way that is retrievable from our systems. To provide you with this information, our staff would have to manually review thousands of individual case files. Therefore, we are refusing this information under section 18(f) of the Act, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

We have compiled a list of policy, guidance, and tools from our Practice Centre that direct and guide practitioners in their work with tamariki and whānau. Please see the following links for further information:

- [Child Protection Protocol \(CPP\) | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)
- [Responding to non-accidental injuries – multi-agency safety planning | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)
- [Ensure safety and wellbeing | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)
- [When urgent action is needed to secure the safety of pēpi, tamariki and rangatahi | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)
- [Physical abuse | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)
- [Assessment | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)
- [Intake and early assessment | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)
- [Building safety around children and young people | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

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- [Strengthening our response to unborn and newborn pēpi | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

Oranga Tamariki intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public shortly. We will do this by publishing this letter on our website. Your personal details will be deleted and we will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

I trust the information provided is useful. I encourage you to raise any concerns about this response with us directly by contacting OIA_Requests@ot.govt.nz. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman by contacting them on 0800 802 602 or www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nicolette Dickson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nicolette Dickson

Deputy Chief Executive, Quality Practice and Experience