



**ORANGA
TAMARIKI**
Ministry for Children

CARE AND PROTECTION

Family Group Conference





A care and protection family group conference (FGC) is a formal meeting where we, you, your whānau and others like your child's teacher, come together to talk about our concerns for your child and make a plan to take care of them.

This brochure provides information to help you prepare for and get the best possible result from your FGC. Please feel free to contact the care and protection coordinator if you have any questions.

Contact
Oranga Tamariki—
Ministry for Children
0508 326 459
contact@ot.govt.nz



WHAT IS 'CARE AND PROTECTION'?

'Care and protection' is all about ensuring that your child is well cared for and protected from harm or danger.

In a 'care and protection family group conference' (FGC) we ask you:

- is your child in need of care and protection?
- do you need help to keep your child safe and protected?

If you need help, we:

- work with you and your whānau to help you keep your child safe
- might find others who can take care of your child while you get the help you need.

WHO ORGANISES THE FGC?

A care and protection coordinator is responsible for organising the FGC (including inviting all the participants) and will be your key contact person from start to finish. They'll:

- explain the FGC process
- give you information to help you and your child get the most out of the FGC
- answer any questions or concerns you may have.

They'll also ask you:

- when you'd like to have the FGC
- where you'd like the FGC to take place
- who you'd like to invite, including whānau and other people who are important to you
- whether you'd like to include special things such as a karakia
- whether you'd like the FGC to be run in a particular way or at a certain place – such as on a marae.

WHO CAN GO TO THE FGC?

The people who are allowed to attend the FGC and have a say in what happens with you and your child are:

- your child or children
- you and the child's other parent
- members of your extended whānau (who can support you and your child)
- the care and protection coordinator
- your social worker
- a lawyer if one has been appointed for your child.

There may also be people there who provide specific information, such as a doctor, a teacher or someone else involved with you and your child.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE FGC?

At the FGC we, you, your whānau and, if relevant, the other people involved with your child, talk about your child's situation. If we agree that there are concerns, we all try to come up with a plan to make sure they're safe and well cared for, and that you get the help you need.

Everyone at the FGC is there to help you give your child a safe and loving home. They all agree to set aside any differences and focus on doing what's best for your child.

The FGC will be unique because you and your whānau have contributed to how it will be run and who will attend. Generally though, an FGC has four parts:

1. We share our concerns about your child

The Oranga Tamariki social worker explains:

- why they think your child is at risk (or 'in need of care or protection')
- what they've already done to try to help you and your child
- what's worked so far and what hasn't.

If the FGC includes other people involved with your child, they also provide information – and of course you can ask questions and share your views too.

2. We agree on the care and protection concerns

You and your whānau are asked whether you agree that your child needs care and protection to keep them safe. This is an important step, as everyone must agree before we go any further.

3. You and your whānau have some time to yourselves

You and your whānau have some time on your own to talk about the concerns and what can be done to make things better. As you're the people who are closest to the child, we value your ideas for keeping them safe and well cared for.

4. Together, we come up with a plan

You and your whānau share your ideas with the others at the FGC, then as a group we come up with a plan specifically for your child. This process can take some time, as it's important to get it right.

The plan is likely to cover:

- the support that your whānau will provide
- other help that your child and your whānau need, and who'll provide it (it could include counselling, help with parenting and caring for your child)
- schooling for your child.

The plan we come up with will:

- be clear about what's required for your child's care and protection
- have realistic goals
- describe what has to be done to achieve these goals
- detail who'll do the tasks and when they need to be done by.

If we can't agree on a plan, the social worker will meet with you again to discuss the options, which might include applying to the Family Court.





SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Sometimes it can be hard to talk about things at an FGC, but we want you and your child to have your say. Remember an FGC is a private and confidential meeting.

As part of your planning, it might be useful to ask yourself:

- What worries do I have about my child?
- What are my hopes and dreams for my child?
- Who in my whānau can help and how?

Your child might also like to express how they feel by:

- writing a letter
- drawing a picture or a poster
- writing a song or waiata.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE FGC?

After the meeting:

- you will get a copy of the plan
- everyone does what they've agreed to do in the plan
- we follow up on the plan to make sure it's working – and if it isn't, we might hold another FGC. You'll be involved in that decision and any others we make.