



**ORANGA
TAMARIKI**
Ministry for Children

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS IN CARE

What you can expect





If your child has been placed in our care, it's important that you know why it's happened, what will happen next and how you can continue to be part of their life.

This brochure explains what happens when your child comes into care, and how we involve you every step of the way.

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

WHAT DOES 'IN CARE' MEAN?

Tamariki come into care when they're not safe with their own whānau or their behaviour is harming themselves or others – and there's no other way to keep them safe.

When a child is 'in care' they are in the custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki. This means we're responsible for keeping them safe and protected, whether they're living with relatives in their extended whānau or with other caregivers.

Of course, we want all tamariki to be safely at home with their parents and siblings. With this in mind, we work closely with parents to help them make the right choices and changes, so that their tamariki can return to safe, stable and loving homes.

WHY DID MY CHILD GO INTO CARE?

Most children who come into our care have been part of a 'family group conference', where their whānau have agreed that their tamariki need our help to be protected and safe.

However, in very serious situations parents might not get any warning. This usually happens when:

- a social worker receives an order from the Family Court to bring tamariki into care
- the Police has good reason to believe that the tamariki are at an immediate risk of harm. In this case they don't need a court order to bring them into care.

If this happens to you, you'll be told about it as soon as possible, and given information on why your child has been brought into care and what's going to happen. You'll be able to have your say on this as part of the Family Court process.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

While your child is in our care we'll work with you to:

- make any changes needed to help you provide a safe and secure home for your child. If you don't want to or can't make the changes, we'll find whānau or a trusted friend to take care of them and keep them safe. If there's no-one available, we'll ask a caregiver to provide the care your child needs. You'll be an important part of the decision-making on this.
- we'll hold a family group conference where you, your child, whānau and any others you invite will, together with us and other professionals, make a plan for your child's safety and care.

HOW WILL YOU CARE FOR MY CHILD?

While your child is with us we'll give them the best possible care.

- Your child will have their own social worker. They'll talk with your child about what they want (now and in the future), listen to them and make sure their needs are met.
- With your consent we'll make sure they get a health check-up so that we understand their needs and give them the right support. This might include visits to a dentist, a doctor or a counsellor.
- We'll let their school know what's going on and make sure they get extra help if they need it.
- We'll provide school uniforms and any other clothing they need.
- To help your child settle in to their new environment, we'll let the people who live there know about their needs, habits and hobbies. The social worker will need your help in gathering this information.

“The social worker gave me heaps and heaps of support and I'm really proud I got my daughter back.”

Mother

CAN I STAY IN TOUCH WITH MY CHILD?

Every decision we make is about keeping your child happy and safe.

It's important to stay in touch and visit your child if possible. We'll work with you to find the best way for everyone.

The social worker will suggest that you send letters, cards, emails or photos to your child. This will help them stay connected with you and your whānau while they're in our care.

“A mother of a girl I was caring for made up a photo board of their family and gave it to her daughter. She said, ‘This way I’ll always be with you, even though you’re not living with me.’ It’s important to have photos that the kids can look at when they feel sad about being away from their whānau.”

Caregiver





HOW CAN I GET MY CHILD HOME?

If you can and want to, talk to the social worker about the changes you'll need to make to get your child home.

This may include taking part in programmes that will help you to change the way you take care of your child, better manage life at home, and stop violence if it's a problem.

The plan you agreed to at the family group conference will identify what needs to happen and by when, and who'll help you.

“I had to work hard to make changes, but the social worker helped me see that our family has heaps going for us.”

Mother