



Information for providers of social services funded by Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Social Development

Essential Social Services

25 March 2020

The NZ Government site has comprehensive information on essential services for both businesses and workers.

[Information on essential services on the NZ Government's COVID-19 website](#)

If you have any queries around essential services you can call 0508 377 388 or email essential@mbie.govt.nz

What does it mean if I provide an 'essential social service'?

The expectation is that, to the extent possible and without compromising the safety and wellbeing of those you are working with, you will deliver these essential services in keeping with the restrictions that come with Alert Level 4.

The overriding requirement will be to:

- use the minimum viable workforce
- have maximum hygiene protocols in place

This means that face to face contact will only be used in those circumstances where it is most needed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those you are working with. In all other circumstances you will find other ways of providing support to tamariki and whānau, and those caring for and supporting them.

You will need to establish alternative ways of working to keep employees and the people you are working with safe. This means communicating at a distance using online methods (e.g. Zoom, Skype) and by phone. For your people who do need to continue to engage face to face, you will need to make arrangements that support safety, such as physical distancing, use of personal protective equipment, shift-based working, staggered meal breaks and flexible leave arrangements. The number of people having close contact with each other will need to be kept to the minimum possible.

We advise you to work through the processes you currently use to undertake your contracted services, identify any that would usually require face to face engagement and plan for these in the context of COVID-19 Response Alert Level 4.

If you have questions or feel you cannot provide a service at the level required, please contact your PfO Advisor, contract or relationship manager. We will work with you to address the issues you face.

What does this mean for other providers?

As a sector, we have a shared commitment to meeting the needs of vulnerable tamariki and their whānau. We want to collaborate with you to ensure the people we work with get through COVID-19.

- We want to facilitate the sharing of resources to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are met.

We ask that you let your PfO Advisor, contract or relationship manager know about staff in non-essential services that could be made available to meet the needs of other priority tamariki and whānau. We will then facilitate connections with other service providers in your area who may need to call on this capacity, including Oranga Tamariki service teams. You may already be sharing resources in this way and you should continue to do this without involving us if it is not necessary.

- We want to ensure capacity is retained within the sector for when the alert levels drop.

It is essential that we sustain the capacity of the social sector workforce during this time so that we can reactivate existing services, and provide responses to the emerging needs, as the alert levels drop. If you have capacity after considering the opportunities to share resources, please remember that non-essential services should continue to be provided where they can be done safely and in keeping with the requirements of each alert level.