

Oranga Tamariki Update for Providers and Partners: COVID-19 edition #2

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Contents

What is an essential social service?	1
Your questions answered:.....	2
How can the people I work with get help with essential costs?	2
What support is available for tamariki and whānau Māori?.....	2
Can I operate in flexible ways to meet the needs of tamariki and whānau?	3
Will Oranga Tamariki continue to carry our contract monitoring during this time?	3
What about Police checking and vetting if we use staff from other agencies?.....	3

Kia ora koutou

An announcement was made yesterday that New Zealand is moving to COVID-19 Alert Level 4 – Eliminate. This update has information on what this may mean for your organisation. You can also visit the NZ Government site for more information about the Alert Levels.

[NZ Government's COVID-19 website](#)

What is an essential social service?

Alert level 4 includes limiting business to essential services. These include welfare and social services that maintain the wellbeing of people. We want to provide you with some further clarity on what type of social services are essential. This is a preliminary list and will be subject to review.

Essential social services for the purpose of our COVID-19 response Alert Level 4 are those that meet one or more of the following four criteria:

1. Where the social service is the only way for people accessing food and other goods they need to survive (eg, money management (but not budget advice), food banks, and other delivery of essential goods)
2. A social service that provides and supports a place for someone to live (eg, Family Homes, remand homes, foster carers of children in state care, Supported Accommodation, Housing First, Residences, Bail Hostels, Night Shelters, resettlement services for recent migrants and refugees)
3. Crisis support for people who are unsafe (eg, Funded helplines, refuges and family violence services, foster care support services, sexual violence crisis services)

4. A social service that supports disabled people to maintain critical wellbeing (eg, disability services for those with high needs or very high needs, and excluding disability employment services)

For the next two days (until 25 March 2020), essential social services also include Out of School Care and Recreation for children of essential workers.

We will be providing updated information about essential service through a further update later today. It will also be posted, along with other up to date information, our website.

[Oranga Tamariki website](#)

We will continue working with organisations to ensure that these essential services are available and delivered in a way that maintains everyone's health and safety and continues to be culturally responsive.

For those services not covered above you will need to work within your Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plans to determine what services will stop and what services your staff can continue to deliver from home.

To provide some certainty over the next six months, the Ministry of Social Development and Oranga Tamariki will not withhold or seek to recover funding if their contracted delivery of services is impacted by COIV 19. If affected providers have to reduce services temporarily due to COVID-19, we will seek to maintain current funding levels for the period of the contract.

If you have questions related to the above, please contact your dedicated PfO Advisor, contract or relationship manager, as your primary point of contact with Oranga Tamariki. They know your organisation well and will be able to provide responses that are most relevant to your circumstances and locality. Many of our staff are now working from home and they are still able to access all of the information they need to serve you well. If they are not able to work for any reason, alternative arrangements will be included in their email or telephone 'out of office' messages.

Your questions answered:

From the questions you have been asking, we can see that you are concerned about the well-being of the tamariki and whānau you work with, as well as your people and colleagues. We share these concerns with you, and this is a clear demonstration of the core value that drives the work we do – aroha.

How can the people I work with get help with essential costs?

If someone you work with is experiencing hardship MSD has a lot of different types of support that can help. An information sheet is available on the MSD website that explains what help people may be able to receive.

[Access information for people who need help with essential costs](#)

What support is available for tamariki and whānau Māori?

We all want tamariki and whānau Māori to be provided with appropriate support during this time. The Te Puni Kōkiri website has guidance available including:

- Tips on self-isolation
- COVID-19: Tikanga and gatherings

[Te Puni Kōkiri website](#)

You can also download the following resources in Te Reo Māori:

- [Information on Unite Against COPVID-19](#)
- [The Ministry of Health poster on protecting yourself against COVID-19](#)

The Government has also announced a support package for Māori communities and businesses through COVID-19.

[Access information on the support package for Māori communities and businesses](#)

Can I operate in flexible ways to meet the needs of tamariki and whānau?

We recognise that our non-government organisation partners will be changing how they deliver services to reflect the Government guidance with a move to alert level 4. We recognise and support the innovation shown by our partners as they continue to get support to people who need it while staying safe and healthy themselves.

To support collaborative responses, we will work with MSD and other agencies to facilitate discussions between organisations at a local level, or by type of service, to discuss how we can work together to meet local needs. This is likely to include regular phone and/or online forums where we can come up with responses together.

We are also looking at how we can work collectively as government agencies to provide access to additional funding and support so that you can help families that might need extra support at this time. We will provide information on this as soon as we can.

Will Oranga Tamariki continue to carry our contract monitoring during this time?

No. As a result of the change in alert levels, monitoring visits will not take place until further advised. This decision has been taken to ensure that our interactions with you do not divert attention away from providing important support to tamariki and their whānau.

It is still important for us to know how you are managing and to understand the issues and challenges that you are facing. As we have been already, we will continue to make contact with you directly and offer our support.

What about Police checking and vetting if we use staff from other agencies?

In situations where provider partners are collaborating to provide shared community responses (maybe as a result of an agency closing), it will be important to ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable tamariki and whānau.

For this reason, it will be critical for provider partners to ensure that recent vetting has occurred for all people directly delivering a service, even though the vetting may not necessarily have been managed through the provider that is taking the lead on delivering the service. Email confirmation from the provider that undertook the vetting originally is sufficient.