

Oranga Tamariki Child Protection Policy Standard Operating Procedure

November 2025

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This standard operating procedure is part of the Child Protection Policy and outlines processes for recognising and responding to concerns for the oranga, including safety, of tamariki or rangatahi. It is important that the processes that underpin the Child Protection Policy are consistently followed to ensure appropriate and timely responses to concerns.

1. Objective

- 1.1. This Child Protection Policy Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) sets out the responsibilities for all kaimahi (including secondees and contractors) employed or engaged on any basis by Oranga Tamariki for responding to oranga, including safety, concerns for tamariki or rangatahi. The objective is that all kaimahi understand and take action to respond to any concerns they have about the oranga, including safety, of any tamaiti or rangatahi.
- 1.2. The SOP does not set out responsibilities for contracted service providers; these are set out in their own child protection policies.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Ensuring the oranga, including safety, of tamariki and rangatahi, is the responsibility of all kaimahi employed by Oranga Tamariki, this includes:
 - doing no harm
 - safeguarding their rights
 - protecting them from harm
 - taking action in response to suspected harm
- 2.2. Kaimahi must follow the processes below if they have concerns about the oranga, including safety, of a tamaiti or rangatahi.
- 2.3. All kaimahi should understand the definitions of abuse and indicators of serious harm and know what to do when harm is suspected or identified.
- 2.4. Kaimahi are required to respond:
 - if they believe that a child or young person has been, or is likely to be, harmed, ill-treated, abused, (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), neglected, or deprived, or they have concerns about the well-being of a child or young person
 - if they are unsure about oranga or safety matters and require further guidance or wish to discuss the issue further.

3. Considering concerns about the oranga, including safety, of tamariki or rangatahi

3.1. Oranga Tamariki considers oranga under the following six dimensions:

- Waiora – environmental wellbeing
- Whānau – family wellbeing
- Ngākau – emotional wellbeing
- Wairua – cultural wellbeing
- Hinengaro – mental wellbeing
- Tinana – physical wellbeing.

3.2. Concerns about the oranga, including safety, of tamariki or rangatahi can include concerns about any of the dimensions of oranga.

3.3. Concerns can differ for each tamaiti or rangatahi depending on the behaviour and actions causing concern, the context they occur in, and the characteristics of the individual tamaiti or rangatahi. Concerns may result from what someone else does, or fails to do, to, for, or with the tamaiti or rangatahi. A key consideration is the impact or potential impact on the tamaiti or rangatahi.

3.4. Concerns can include behaviour of the tamaiti or rangatahi that is harmful to themselves or others, including offending behaviour.

4. Responding to concerns

4.1. If any kaimahi employed by Oranga Tamariki is concerned about a tamaiti or rangatahi they must:

- act promptly to ensure the immediate safety of the tamaiti or rangatahi, take what they have heard or observed seriously
- advocate for tamariki and rangatahi by raising concerns when they are worried about their oranga, including safety
- discuss any concerns with their manager and/or a kaimahi identified as having child protection expertise
- call the National Contact Centre on 0508 325 459 (0508 FAMILY) to discuss their concerns if they are not sure about whether they need to be worried
- call the National Contact Centre on 0508 325 459 (0508 FAMILY) to make a report of concern if they believe that a tamaiti or rangatahi has been, or is likely to be, harmed, ill-treated, abused, (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), neglected, or deprived, or if they have concerns about the well-being of a tamaiti or rangatahi (as per section 15 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989)
- immediately contact the Police on 111 in any situation where they believe a

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tamaiti or rangatahi is in current or imminent danger

- get support from their immediate manager or the Employee Assistance Programme, if needed.

4.2. When a tamaiti or rangatahi makes a disclosure that they or another tamaiti or rangatahi has been harmed, kaimahi should:

- Listen to the tamaiti or rangatahi. Disclosures by tamariki or rangatahi are often subtle and need to be handled with particular care, including an awareness of cultural identity and how that affects interpretation of their behaviour and language. Consider if the tamaiti or rangatahi has a disability or needs other support with communication and respond accordingly.
- Reassure the tamaiti or rangatahi. Let the tamaiti or rangatahi know that they are not in trouble and have done the right thing.
- Seek only essential information. Avoid questioning or interviewing the tamaiti or rangatahi. Discussion should be limited to finding out general information about the concerns.
- Stop questioning once information has been gathered. Sometimes simple, open ended “what/ where/ who” questions can help a tamaiti or rangatahi give fuller answers. These should only be asked until clarification is achieved. Check back with the tamaiti or rangatahi to ensure correct understanding.
- Focus on the information at hand. Focus attention on what they have heard and observed rather than making assumptions about what is happening.
- Be honest and realistic. Don’t make promises that can’t be kept, e.g., “I will keep you safe now” or “I won’t tell anyone about this”.
- And follow the steps set out at 4.1, 4.4 and 4.5.

4.3. It is not the role of kaimahi receiving a disclosure from a tamaiti or rangatahi to determine whether serious harm has occurred. Their role is to get the right help.

NOTE: Social work kaimahi on site who believe that a tamaiti or rangatahi has been, or is likely to be, harmed, ill-treated, abused, neglected, or deprived, or if they have concerns about the well-being of a tamaiti or rangatahi must directly create a report of concern in CYRAS.

NOTE: Enabling Communities and Commissioning and Investment kaimahi must, in addition to making a report of concern, advise their local Social Service Accreditation Assessor along with their own manager if the concern involves a tamaiti or rangatahi a partner is working with. This can occur via email, or a conversation supported by an email.

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Deciding on the next steps

4.4. When contacted about concerns for tamariki or rangatahi, Oranga Tamariki National Contact Centre social work kaimahi will listen and follow established processes to determine whether the worries are serious and how best to respond. They may:

- provide advice about support available to the person reporting the concern or contact whānau or family to offer help
- refer the matter to other social services who are better equipped or already have a relationship with the whānau or family
- make a referral to a local agency or community agency who would be better placed to support
- determine that a section 17 investigation or child and family assessment is required.

Recording

4.5. Where a kaimahi believes that a tamaiti or rangatahi has been, or is likely to be, harmed, ill-treated, abused, (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), neglected, or deprived, or if they have concerns about the well-being of a tamaiti or rangatahi they must make a written record of:

- anything that is said by the tamaiti or rangatahi
- the date, time, location
- names of any people that may be relevant
- what has led to their concerns (for example, observations of incidents or worrying behaviours)
- the action they have taken
- any other information they consider relevant.

4.6. The written record must be securely stored (e.g. in a locked drawer), scanned by the kaimahi and emailed to themselves to guide a conversation with the National Contact Centre to seek advice or make a Report of Concern, and then securely destroyed. The written record must only be accessible to kaimahi with a legitimate business purpose.

4.7. Consideration should be given to including any other relevant information which may inform any future actions.

Storing relevant information

4.8. Kaimahi must consider the sensitivity of this information when storing:

- the record of the concern
- a record of any related discussions (including copies of correspondence where appropriate)

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- a record of any advice received
 - a record of the action taken (including any rationale such as what led to them making the Report of Concern at this time if the notification is based on an accumulation of concerns rather than a specific incident).
- 4.9. Consideration should be given to the importance of records to assist in identifying patterns that lead to a concern.
- 4.10. Consideration should be given to limiting access to records to only those kaimahi with a legitimate business purpose, as inappropriate use or disclosure could breach privacy and cause emotional and/or physical harm.

5. Understanding harm

- 5.1. All kaimahi should be familiar with the definitions of abuse and neglect and indicators of harm: [Definitions of abuse, neglect and harm](#).
- 5.2. All kaimahi must undertake the child protection training as detailed in the Child Protection Policy.

6. Responding to concerns about harm related to an Oranga Tamariki kaimahi

Kaimahi responsibility

- 6.1. If a kaimahi becomes aware that concerns have been raised that they have harmed a tamaiti or rangatahi, including involvement in family violence (in their professional or personal capacity, regardless of whether the tamaiti or rangatahi is involved with Oranga Tamariki), the kaimahi must:
- tell their manager (as soon as practicable)
 - participate in any safety plan put in place while the concerns are worked through.

Investigating social worker responsibility

- 6.2. When a social worker undertaking a care and protection investigation or child and family assessment becomes aware that there is an allegation that relates to a kaimahi, they must escalate to their Delivery Advisor who will alert the manager National Support Services and the manager of the kaimahi to ensure they are fully aware of the investigation or child and family assessment.

Manager's responsibility

- 6.3. When the manager becomes aware that concerns have been raised that a kaimahi has harmed a tamaiti or rangatahi, they must:

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- maintain the confidentiality of the kaimahi and te tamaiti or rangatahi
- alert the National Support services about the allegation via a Serious Event Notification
- put in writing how they will respond to concerns raised and where they determine that a report of concern is not appropriate, provide a written rationale for their decision. (NOTE, where this relates to tamariki or rangatahi who Oranga Tamariki is involved with, this must be recorded as a case note in CYRAS)
- following consultation with the Employment Relations Team, advise the kaimahi (in writing, whether or not this is also done verbally) of the allegation and inform them that this may initiate an employment investigation
- consider how this affects the kaimahi continuing to perform their current functions and work with the Employment Relations Team to put a written plan in place to ensure safety where required
- consider what support the kaimahi may require
- ensure that the kaimahi is assisted to access support through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), if required.

Employment relations team responsibility

- 6.4. The Employment Relations team will contact the manager of the kaimahi. If the manager does not hear from the Employment Relations team, the manager must contact them.

Joint responsibility to establish a plan to respond to the concerns

- 6.5. Together the investigating social worker, the manager National Support Services, the manager of the kaimahi and the Employment Relations team will consider what needs to be put in place to ensure safety for all concerned while the concerns are investigated and whether any interim employment process will be initiated (e.g. alternative duties or a proposal to suspend) and develop a plan.

Protected disclosure

- 6.6. This policy requires kaimahi to respond to genuine concerns for a tamaiti or rangatahi. If a kaimahi believes that another kaimahi is involved in 'serious wrongdoing' involving harm to a tamaiti or rangatahi, regardless of whether the tamaiti or rangatahi is involved with Oranga Tamariki, they can make a protected disclosure in accordance with the Protected Disclosures Act 2000. For guidance, see the Oranga Tamariki Te Pae page Protected Disclosures (Whistle Blowing) Policy.

Standards of integrity and conduct (Standards of Conduct)

- 6.7. Te Kawa Mataaho, Public Service Commission Standards of Conduct state that we must act lawfully and objectively and we must avoid any activities, work or non-work that may harm the reputation of our organisation Standards of Integrity and Conduct - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission.
- 6.8. Allegations about kaimahi may be seen as a breach of the Standards of Conduct and an employment investigation may occur.
- 6.9. Allegations about kaimahi behaviour may have a negative impact on the reputation of Oranga Tamariki or may impact on other kaimahi.
- 6.10. Allegations that suggest criminal offending in relation to a child will be referred to New Zealand Police and a joint investigation undertaken in line with the Child Protection Protocol.

Potential employment investigation

- 6.11. The Employment Relations team will work with the manager of the kaimahi of concern. If an employment investigation is required, the Employment Relations team will advise the next steps and continue to provide advice and assistance to the employee's manager until the matter is concluded.
- 6.12. Where possible and as necessary, the manager of the kaimahi concerned and the Employment Relations Advisor must work with kaimahi investigating the Report of Concern and/or the Police investigating the allegation of abuse, to ensure that their respective investigation processes are not compromised.
- 6.13. Legal Services is also available to provide advice to managers (via People and High Performance) as required.

Confidentiality and information sharing

- 6.14. Legal and Employment Relations teams will advise on issues or concerns regarding confidentiality with regard to the employment investigation.

Support for kaimahi

- 6.15. Kaimahi can expect to be supported by their manager and can access EAP for further support if required. Click on the link for further information on [EAP](#).

Reporting to other relevant agencies

- 6.16. Oranga Tamariki will advise the Social Work Registration Board if it considers that a registered social worker may be unable to adequately perform the functions required to practice social work satisfactorily, although a cautious approach should be taken to reporting allegations that have not been investigated/substantiated. Section 47A of the

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Social Workers Registration Act 2003 requires reporting if an employer “believes on reasonable grounds that a social worker has engaged in serious misconduct”.

- 6.17. Managers must seek guidance from People and High Performance before advising the Board to help manage issues/risks of over disclosure/breach of privacy.

7. References

This Standard Operating Procedure should be read in conjunction with The Oranga Tamariki Child Protection Policy.

Appendix 1: Other relevant resource material

Below is a list of existing Oranga Tamariki policies and procedural information related to the Child Protection Policy. It also refers to existing legislation and sources of further information.

The Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 relates to tamariki who are in need of care or protection, or who offend against the law.

[Oranga Tamariki Act 1989](#)

The Oranga Tamariki and New Zealand Police Child Protection Protocol, Joint Standard Operating Procedures defines the roles of each organisation and sets out processes for working together when responding to situations of child abuse that may constitute a criminal offence.

[Child Protection Protocol](#)

The Children’s Act 2014 protects tamariki and help them thrive. It supports the Government in setting priorities for improving the wellbeing of tamariki and ensures that agencies work together to improve the wellbeing of tamariki.

[Children’s Act 2014](#)

The Family Violence Act 2018 aims to stop and prevent family violence.

[Family Violence Act 2018](#)

The Safer Organisations – Safer Children guidelines, developed under the Children’s Action Plan, outline what a good child protection policy should contain along with links to supporting resources. They are intended to build on existing expertise and give organisations an opportunity to reflect on their current policies and practices.

[Safer-Organisations - Safer Children](#)

The Care of Children Act 2004 promotes children’s welfare and best interests, and facilitates their development, by helping to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for their guardianship and care and the rights of children are recognised.

[Care of Children Act 2004](#)

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Victims' Rights Act 2002 aims to improve provisions for the treatment and rights of victims of offences.

[Victims' Rights Act 2002](#)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human rights treaty that sets out what is required to implement existing human rights as they relate to disabled people.

[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) is a United Nations treaty that defines the rights of children under 18, including civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

[Convention on the Rights of the Child | UNCROC](#)

Mana Mokopuna - Children's Commissioner is an independent advocate for all 1.2 million mokopuna aged under 18 in Aotearoa and care-experienced mokopuna aged up to 25.

[Mana Mokopuna](#)

The Privacy Act 2020 promotes and protects individual privacy.

[Privacy Act 2020](#)