

1. Policy Statement:

- 1.1 Tamariki and rangatahi (child or young person) have the right to be safe from abuse and harm (including self-harm), and to be treated with respect and dignity. PSUSI is committed to the protection of the safety and wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi and their whānau and families, and the prevention of child abuse. the welfare and interests of all tamariki or rangatahi shall be the first and paramount consideration.
- 1.2 PSUSI recognises that the primary role of whānau and families in caring for and protecting their tamariki should be valued and maintained, however tamariki and rangatahi safety and wellbeing will be the organisation’s primary consideration.
- 1.3 This policy builds on the overarching policies and protocols found in the Family Works New Zealand National Operations Manual (FWNZ) and the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan guides the actions of PSUSI when there are concerns regarding the welfare and safety of tamariki or rangatahi.
- 1.4 This policy is intended to protect all tamariki or rangatahi kaimahi (staff) may encounter including tangata whaiora (clients), client siblings and tamariki of adults accessing PSUSI services.

2. Scope: This policy relates to:

- 2.1 All PSUSI employees, contractors and volunteers, students and interns.

3. Protocols (FWNZ 3.1)

- 3.1 When working with individuals, couples, whānau and families who have responsibility for the care of tamariki and rangatahi, kaimahi will take into consideration the impact of presenting and underlying issues on tangata whaiora safety and wellbeing. Kaimahi will assess risks and respond appropriately to any concerns identified.
- 3.2 Kaimahi will respond to suspected abuse, and disclosure of abuse and harm in a timely fashion ensuring the immediate and future safety of tamariki and rangatahi. Where there are other tamariki and rangatahi in the home, kaimahi will assess the safety and wellbeing risks to them also and respond accordingly. This includes self-harm and suicidality.
- 3.3 As outlined in PSUSI’s Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics kaimahi will follow safe practice in their interactions with tamariki and rangatahi and work within the parameters of their position description and scope of practice.
- 3.4 PSUSI recognises the harmful effect of family harm towards tamariki, rangitahi and whānau. Kaimahi will continue to assess the risk for all whānau and family members where Family Violence is identified and respond in accordance with PSUSI policy and procedures.

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- 3.5 PSUSI acknowledges that supporting whānau and families through a Report of Concern process is important. Where possible and appropriate, Kaimahi will work in partnership with, whānau, statutory agencies, and other services involved as part of an integrated plan to improve tamariki and rangatahi safety and wellbeing.
- 3.6 PSUSI recognises that physical forms of discipline are illegal and will promote alternatives to physical forms of discipline and punishment. Wherever possible kaimahi will ensure whānau and families can access relevant opportunities to develop alternative skills/ strategies and resiliency to support good parenting and manage their lives.
- 3.7 PSUSI workplaces (including schools, tangata whaiora homes, vehicles and services centres) are safe, and family friendly environments.
- 3.8 Where appropriate, Family Works will support and collaborate with all relevant agencies and community partners in the identification and investigation of child abuse and family violence. Where collaborative interagency responses are in place, Family Works will support and collaborate to assess, triage and respond to risk and harm.
- 3.9 The General Manager Social Services (GMSS) is the designated care and protection manager. In their absence the Canterbury Family Works Managers will fulfil this role. A designated person will be identified within each Family Works team to oversee actions in relation to tamariki and rangatahi safety and wellbeing concerns. This would generally be the service manager or Team Leader.
- 3.10 Kaimahi will discuss with the designated person, any situation where there could be a conflict of interest for them regarding child abuse within a client whānau and family.
- 3.11 Kaimahi must immediately consult with their service manager or designated person if they suspect or learn of child abuse, or other concerns for the wellbeing of tamariki or rangatahi.
- 3.12 All concerns expressed, and information received will be recorded factually as soon as possible in tangata whaiora files and relevant organisational documents. Anything that is an opinion, or a personal concern will be identified and documented as such.
- 3.13 All decisions, actions and associated explanations will be recorded accurately throughout the process of responding to the safety concerns for tamariki or rangatahi.
- 3.14 Kaimahi are expected to maintain their competence and skills in accordance with PSUSI [Professional development & training](#) policy. This includes a mandatory induction at the commencement of employment and adherence to the Family Works training plan. Monthly 1-2-1 meetings with their team leader and clinical supervision are also mandatory.

4. Definitions of Child Abuse

The Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 defines child abuse as "the harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person." It includes:

4.1 Emotional Abuse

When tamariki emotional, psychological or social well-being and sense of worth is continually battered. E.g. criticising, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting and terrorising tamariki.

4.2 **Physical Abuse**

May be the result of a single episode or a series of episodes. Can be a result of excessive or inappropriate discipline or violence within the family whether harm was intended or not. E.g. punching, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, burning, throwing the tamaiti.

4.3 **Sexual Abuse**

Acts of behaviour where an adult, older or more powerful person uses tamariki for a sexual purpose. E.g. any touching for sexual purposes, sexual intercourse, oral sex, adult exposing themselves or seeking to have tamariki touch them for sexual purposes, pornographic activities including using internet and phone to initiate sexual conversations with tamariki or sharing inappropriate photographs.

4.4 **Neglect**

A pattern of behaviour which occurs over a period of time resulting in impaired functioning or development of tamariki. Failing to provide for tamariki basic needs. E.g. Failing to provide food, shelter and warmth, failure to seek and follow medical advice, leaving tamariki in situations without necessary care or intention of returning, failure to provide developmentally appropriate or legally required supervision, unwillingness or inability to provide parental care for tamariki.

4.5 **Spiritual**

Spiritual abuse, including religious or cultural abuse, is the act of stopping tamariki from expressing their spiritual or religious beliefs. This might include not being able to attend worship, or criticising or making fun of beliefs, traditions, or cultures.

Spiritual abuse can also look like using spiritual or religious beliefs to hurt, scare or control mokopuna. It reflects an attempt to exert power and control over someone using religion, faith or beliefs.

5. **Child Abuse Indicators**

- 5.1 See [appendix 2](#)

6. **Responding to child abuse**

- 6.1 [Oranga Tamariki Action Plan](#)
- 6.2 [PSUSI abuse & neglect handbook](#)
- 6.3 See [table 1](#) below for flowchart.

7. **Responding to expressions of intention towards self-harm or suicide**

- 7.1 Where tamariki or rangatahi discloses an intention towards self-harm or suicide the staff member is required to prioritise this risk, ensuring safety over the confidentiality of this information.
- 7.2 A disclosure of intention towards self-harm or suicide needs to be discussed with a parent or caregiver and a safety plan recorded that includes details of who will be

responsible for taking the tamariki or rangatahi to a GP, doctor or other appropriate medical professional.

7.3 If there is not adequate parental support for this to be monitored then the same procedure will be followed as outlined in the PSUSI abuse and neglect handbook for reporting other issues where the safety of tamariki or rangatahi is at risk, and the staff member will contact professionals involved directly and request written confirmation to ensure that information has been received.

8. Culture and Religion

8.1 Tangata whaiora will come from a range of backgrounds, with different cultural, religious and child-rearing traditions and practices. PSUSI acknowledges it is important to be sensitive and respond appropriately to each whānau and family's cultural context.

8.2 Differences in child-rearing practices do not justify child abuse or neglect as it is defined in Aotearoa New Zealand. Kaimahi have a legal responsibility to protect all tamariki and rangatahi in client whānau and families.

9. Safe practice guidelines to ensure a safe, tamariki and rangatahi-friendly work environment

9.1 Kaimahi will be familiar with personal safety information and resources available to tamariki and rangatahi.

9.2 Kaimahi will keep their personal and professional lives separate. The fostering of close personal relationships with tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau and families is not appropriate outside the work environment and is outside the parameters of a children's worker scope of practice.

9.3 It is recognised that kaimahi may come to be regarded by some tangata whaiora as part of their extended whānau and family. In all circumstances staff must be very clear about their role, and the supervision and monitoring of such a relationship is mandatory.

9.4 In child protection cases, kaimahi will ensure they do not work in isolation and must regularly consult on practice and discuss in supervision.

10. Supervision of children at a PSUSI site

10.1 Tamariki under the age of 12 must be fully supervised by a designated caregiver while at any PSUSI site.

10.2 Caregiver may include designated PSUSI kaimahi staff member or an older sibling (over 12 years of age).

10.3 Where supervision is provided by PSUSI kaimahi prior approval by the service manager or team leader is required to ensure this is appropriate, and that kaimahi have the capacity to supervise tamariki.

11. Allegations of child abuse against kaimahi

- 11.1 The same process for reporting suspected child abuse needs to be used. Consult with your manager, GMSS or nga Tumu Whakarae, immediately.
- 11.2 Whilst recognising that the employee must be treated properly and fairly, addressing the needs of the tamariki or rangatahi take priority.
- 11.3 Disciplinary action guidelines will be followed where appropriate (managers refer to disciplinary process)
- 11.4 It may be necessary to suspend the kaimahi while an investigation takes place (managers - refer to suspension process)
- 11.5 All relevant moral and legal obligations need to be considered.
- 11.6 Allegations of suspected abuse towards kaimahi needs to be made in consultation with Oranga Tamariki and the Police to ensure investigations by external agencies are not undermined by internal investigations.
- 11.7 Settlement agreements will not be used to avoid disciplinary action where the allegations have been proven.
- 11.8 Kaimahi receiving and reporting allegations of child abuse by another kaimahi will be supported throughout the process without fear of recrimination.
- 11.9 If staff are alleged to have perpetrated abuse towards tangata whaiora, then the complaints process should be followed alongside consultation with Oranga Tamariki and the police.
- 11.10 Support for whānau will be arranged at the discretion of the GMSS, and will be arranged in consultation with whānau

Responding to Suspected or Actual Abuse of a Child or Young Person

Abuse Suspected

Child abuse or potential child abuse is suspected, witnessed, reported or disclosed.

If the tamariki or rangatahi is in danger or unsafe, act immediately to secure their safety by phoning the police.



Listen, Record and Consult

Listen - and reassure but do not make promises or commitments you cannot keep. Do not formally interview the tamariki or rangatahi - obtain only necessary and relevant facts if clarification is required.

Carefully record any physical or behavioural observations and anything said by the child (use the tamariki or rangatahi own words as far as possible and include date, time, who was present etc)

Consult immediately with a manager or team leader. Discuss and agree on an appropriate course of action, including whether a Report of Concern is to be made. If the Service Manager is not available consult with any Area or Family Works Manager or the General Manager Social Services (designated care and protection manager).



Report Concern

The manager or social worker is required to contact Oranga Tamariki or the police and report the concerns.

If situation is critical contact Oranga Tamariki by phoning 0508 326 459.

Alternatively a report can be made by email: contact@ot.govt.nz using the Report of Concern form.

Consultation will take place to decide who will provide follow up and support.

A debriefing meeting for all staff involved will be held by the service manager or team leader. Additional support will be provided to all staff involved as required. E.g. EAP, external supervision.



Record Keeping

The following information is required to be securely stored:

- The record of the concern; held within the client's file.
- Oranga Tamariki acknowledgement of receipt of notification
- A record of any related discussions (written or verbal)
- A record of any advice received by Oranga Tamariki
- The action PSUSI took including any rationale.
- Managers and team leaders will keep a register of all reports of concern made.
- The same process is to be followed throughout PSUSI regions.

Appendix 1

Supporting Documents

[FW National Ops Manual March 2023.pdf](#)

[Mana_Mokopuna_Child_Protection_Policy.pdf](#)

[Code of conduct 2025.docx](#)

[Abuse & neglect policy and guidelines.docx](#)

[Recruitment policy & process.docx](#)

[426 new employee risk assessment.docx](#)

[Professional development & training.docx](#)

[Cultural policy.docx](#)

Relevant legislation:

[Children's Act 2014](#)

[Oranga Tamariki Act 1989](#)

[Privacy Act 2020](#)

[Family Violence Act 2018](#)

Appendix 2

Child abuse indicators

Indicators for tamariki can be physical or behavioural. The following signs **may** indicate a tamariki is being abused. It is important that the entire situation is taken into account. These signs of abuse are not exclusive and may include others.

- unexplained bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions.
- unexplained burns.
- unexplained fractures.
- wary of adults.
- violent towards other tamariki or animals.
- dressed inappropriately to hide injuries.
- extreme aggression or extreme withdrawal.
- inconsistent explanations of injuries.
- torn, stained or bloody clothing.
- bruises, lacerations, redness, swelling, itchiness or bleeding injury in the genital area.
- blood in urine or faeces.
- sexually transmitted disease.

Younger children

- age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self or others.
- sophisticated sexual knowledge.

- comments e.g. "I've got a secret" or "I don't like Uncle".
- Fear of certain places e.g. bedroom or bathroom.

Older children

- eating disorders.
- promiscuity or prostitution.
- using younger tamariki in sexual acts.
- trying to make self as unattractive as possible.
- bedwetting or soiling without a medical cause.
- frequent psychosomatic complaints e.g. headaches, nausea, stomach pain
- not attaining significant milestones.
- deprived living conditions compared with other members of family.
- severe developmental gaps.
- severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, aggression or withdrawal.
- overly compliant.
- attention seeking behaviour.
- when playing, model or copy negative behaviour and language that is used at home.
- inappropriate dress for the weather.
- extremely dirty or unbathed.
- left alone for unacceptable periods of time.
- inadequately supervised.
- Malnourished.
- severe nappy rash or skin disorders resulting from improper care and hygiene.
- severe lack of attachment to other adults.
- poor school attendance and school performance
- poor social skills.
- may steal food.
- very demanding of affection or attention.
- no understanding of basic hygiene.

Adult behaviours which may indicate child abuse is occurring:

- vague about details or cause of tamaiti's injury.
- may blame accidents on other tamariki, relative or friend.
- aggressive towards tamariki in front of others
- may delay seeking medical attention for tamariki.
- may be overly protective of tamariki.
- jealous of tamariki relationships with others.
- may favour victim over other tamariki.
- may demonstrate affection or physical contact which appears sexual in nature or has sexual overtones.

- constantly calls tamariki names or publicly humiliates tamariki.
- threatens tamariki with physical harm or tamariki are forced to watch physical harm inflicted on another person.
- unrealistic expectations
- involves tamariki in adult issues e.g. separation or access issues.
- keeps the tamaiti at home in a subservient or surrogate parental role.
- fails to provide basic needs e.g. housing, nutrition, medical and psychological care.
- fails to enrol tamariki in school or permits truancy.
- leaves younger tamariki home alone.
- overwhelmed with own problems and puts own needs ahead of tamariki needs.