

**Kia hiwa ra, kia hiwa ra
Kia hiwa ra i tēnei tuku, kia hiwa ra i tērā tuku,
kia tū, kia oho, kia mataara!!¹**

Maintaining mana tamaiti, whakapapa and whanaungatanga practice during COVID-19

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THIS IS INTERNAL GUIDANCE FOR ALL SOCIAL WORKERS, SUPERVISORS, PRACTICE LEADERS, LEGAL SERVICES STAFF AND MANAGERS

Oranga Tamariki provides essential services to tamariki and their whānau and we need to keep doing this in a way that keeps everyone safe and well and is in line with the Ministry of Health guidelines. That includes the way that we engage with whānau during this period of isolation in order to limit the spread of COVID-19 to tamariki and their whānau to ensure they are not increasing the risk of exposure to them and the wider community.

In all of our engagement with tamariki and whānau we need to be first guided by our values and how we will ensure the safety and wellbeing of tamariki. This guidance will help you to modify our usual social work practice approach of maintaining mana tamaiti, whakapapa and whanaungatanga in the context of the current restrictions required to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. Please be mindful our current COVID-19 health and safety guidance must be followed when applying this guidance. You should also take into account our existing practice guidance and operational policy where it does not conflict with the specific guidance provided here.

This guidance will be updated as required. If you need more information, discuss with your supervisor or manager or contact COVID19response@ot.govt.nz. Daily updates can be found on Te Pae.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Māori

COVID-19 is having a huge impact on all whānau we work with and there are some key factors for us to consider in how we adapt our approach to practice with tamariki and whānau Māori at this critical time.

Māori are at greater risk from pandemics than many other ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand for a range of reasons, including underlying social and economic disadvantage, greater burden of chronic diseases that increase risk of more serious outcomes and poorer access to health and other services.

¹ There are two whakataukī embracing this guidance for working effectively with tamariki Māori and their whānau. The first whakataukī at the beginning of this guidance signals a clear warning of imminent danger and cautions us to be vigilant.

COVID-19 household isolation (bubbles) reduces whānau Māori ability to practise tikanga and whanaungatanga responsibilities in the usual ways to provide resources and protective factors for tamariki and their wider whānau.

Māori access to protective factors within extended whānau collectives and external supports – Māori social structures of whānau, hapū and iwi mean many of the usual daily protective factors exist within extended and intergenerational whānau collectives, relationships, practices and resources. Sometimes these are located within one household but more commonly they are spread across a number of households.

For those who are disconnected from extended whānau, their supports may be provided by other external networks such as Māori/community NGO service providers. At this time they will be more isolated from these supports that are protective for tamariki.

Disparities for Māori – Many whānau Māori we work with experience disparities, they live in circumstances of high deprivation and face additional barriers that increase tamariki and whānau vulnerability. This requires us to think differently about how we provide extra support through these times of increasing isolation with limitations on our ability to engage person to person. These disparities increase risk for tamariki during the COVID-19 response.

History shows Māori experience and coping strategies through pandemics

Whānau isolation has been used before to tiaki (protect, safeguard) Māori communities through pandemics, such as the 1918 influenza pandemic, the tuberculosis epidemic in 1940 and polio epidemics during the 1950s.

Rāhui & Tapu are Māori mechanisms for isolation – For Māori, whānau isolation to provide safety is not a new concept. It is understood through cultural constructs such as 'rāhui' (temporary ritual prohibition on an area) or 'tapu restriction' (separation from contact of a person, place or thing) and are actively used both historically and in today's society to maintain safety through specific circumstances.

Adapting kawa and tikanga – During these times 'kawa' (cultural protocols) and 'tikanga' (cultural practices) will be adapted to maintain processes that are important to Māori ways of life, for example tangihanga, birthing and others. Some guidelines have been developed in relation to funerals and tangihanga during the COVID-19 response.

[COVID-19 funerals and tangihanga – Ministry of Health](#)

Learning from the past – Many whānau Māori have stories of resilience and trauma through experiences of pandemics and world wars that provide examples and strategies to be considered now. We must be aware that these stories may also be retraumatizing at this time and may mean they are scared within the current environment.

The role of iwi, hapū and marae – Iwi have whakapapa responsibilities to their people and kaitiakitanga responsibilities to those within their iwi boundaries. Many iwi, hapū and marae will have plans and information in place and have created communication pathways that focus on Māori populations using Māori engagement methods such as reo Māori and

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universal 'slangs' or body language gestures, such as raising the eyebrows without the use of words to say hello. Connecting with these will assist us in our work with whānau Māori.

Working effectively with Māori within COVID-19 environment

While we are in Alert Level 4 self-isolation, there is a heightened vulnerability for tamariki/rangatahi and whānau Māori at this time and it is important that our practice is 'mana-enhancing'. Mana tamaiti, whakapapa and whanaungatanga provide a unique cloak of cultural support (he korowai whakaruruhau) to effectively work with tamariki Māori, their whānau, and wider support networks and are still foundational to our work through COVID-19.

While it may be challenging to find different ways of engaging and understanding the context for Māori during this time, it is important that this crisis period doesn't drive us into using a 'one size fits all' practice approach for Māori that undermines the core values and principles of mana tamaiti, whakapapa and whanaungatanga:

[Practice for working effectively with Māori](#)

[Working with Māori: Te Toka Tumoana](#)

[Oranga Tamariki Māori cultural framework](#)

- Stop and ask yourself what are you able to do to become more familiar with the impacts and context of COVID-19 on tamariki and whānau Māori that is different from others to inform your practice and responses.
- Think about engagement and decision-making processes for Māori and how you are able to maintain the use of te reo, facilitate collective forums for decision-making, maintain tikanga within virtual hui and other practices.
- Start with the premise that whānau Māori have a plan in place, explore how they are adapting their daily routines and how we can support them to find their own solution to issues arising from household isolation that is normally addressed across multi-households.
- Facilitate discussions that assist them to consider how they maintain their own practices of mana tamaiti, whakapapa and whanaungatanga and support them to do so.
- Consider how you will practise more closely with iwi/Māori NGOs and marae community initiatives.

Mana Tamaiti

Support the participation of tamariki, whānau, hapū and iwi in decisions affecting them at the earliest opportunity to enhance their wellbeing and safety by using technology and innovative means.

- **Engage calmly with tamariki and rangatahi** – their day-to-day lives are upside down and they may feel scared. They may be isolated from loved ones, have had lots of changes to their usual routines and be aware of the worldwide situation of illness and death. Explore how they are understanding what is happening.
- **Maintaining healthy activities** – explore if they have someone who will take them for a walk or exercise outside and who will help them understand the rules of proximity/distance to others to maintain their safety and the safety of others during these times. They may also be a part of waiata, kapa haka and other chat and messenger groups that give them things to do each day as a group with others.
- **Have inquiring conversations** – talk with te tamaiti/rangatahi about what is happening for them during this time, any worries and challenges they may have, what they may have done in the past to deal with a worry and how they can adapt that now. Use open questions to:
 - explore their key relationships (whakapapa and others) and ensure they are able to maintain these
 - ask about whether they have a quiet space to go to within their household if things become difficult for them
 - explore if they have someone they can call/connect with and if they have the means to do so.
- **Check their online safety** – talk with te tamaiti/rangatahi about what they know about using social media safely and what safety rules are in place for them at home. They can search for information about staying safe during COVID 19.

[Advice for young people – Netsafe](#)

Connect whānau with local networks of support. Strengthen and assist whānau Māori to care for their tamaiti or tamariki to prevent the need for their removal from home into care or a Youth Justice response.

[Remote safety planning](#)

[Hui ā-whānau](#)

- **Staying connected with their supports** – enquire with tamariki/rangatahi about who is in their bubble and who are the people not in their bubble that they miss. Check with them if they have an online means of keeping contact with the people who are important to them and who they could share any worries with.

www.kidsline.org.nz 0800 376 633 | www.whatsup.co.nz 0800 942 8787

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Preference placements with whānau, hapū, iwi or family group who are able to meet their needs if removal from home is necessary.

[Kairaranga ā-whānau](#)

[Practice standard: See and engage whānau, wider family, caregivers and when appropriate victims of offending by tamariki](#)

[Managing new entries to care during Alert Level 4](#)

- **Whānau searching** will bring results. Check first with tamariki, rangatahi and whānau about who could possibly support them if tamariki must be removed from home.
- **Iwi support** – Many iwi have responded to COVID-19 with special platforms set up to support whānau. Utilise all the search functions available to you including marae and iwi links (listed below).
- **Kairaranga ā-whānau** support – Kairaranga and other senior Māori practitioners may be able to assist you too.

Strengthen identity, belonging and connection for tamariki Māori to whānau, hapū and iwi by utilising resources such as social media, iwi pages etc.

- **Talk with tamariki and rangatahi** – continue to use te reo me ōna tikanga when engaging with tamariki. Find out what they may already have in place to support their identity, waiata etc. Work with them to understand their needs and how these could be met at this time – check out the iwi websites for potential solutions.

[Talking with tamariki and rangatahi about COVID-19](#)

Whakapapa

During these times connection to whakapapa (significant genealogical ties to people, places and values/beliefs) is important. We must remain strongly committed and continue to engage appropriately and provide whakapapa whānau networks with good information and active participation in decision-making for their tamariki.

Dynamics of whānau and whakapapa obligations – whānau know how their own dynamics and extended whānau networks and relationships work (both healthy and unhealthy). Whānau Māori are strongly influenced by key whakapapa roles (such as kaumatua/kuia) who are more at risk at this time and whose availability may be more limited.

Many whānau members will be worried and concerned about their more vulnerable members at this time and in particular their elders and tamariki mokopuna who are now isolated (whānau bubbles). Whānau disparities such as lack of finances, substandard housing, adult behaviours and others are amplified during this time. Under normal circumstances they may have members within their extended whānau networks who would be providing active daily protective supports to their household who are no longer able to.

Increased risk for tamariki

- **Adult behaviours such as drugs and alcohol use** – there may be increased tamariki risk factors as a result of known adult behaviours within individual households in isolation such as drug and alcohol dependency or whānau violence that under normal circumstances may have been moderated/ mitigated by whānau or other adults' visits to the home. These are no longer in place during this time of household isolation. As adults who have regularly being able to access drugs and alcohol, the enforced lockdown may now exacerbate adult behaviour to those inside their immediate whānau (bubble) creating further risk to others in this (bubble)
- **Crowded housing affects whānau behaviours** – living in sub-standard housing and/or overcrowding may create stress on healthy whānau physical space, dynamics and behaviour.

Multi-household support networks for Māori are often so ingrained that whānau Māori are likely to consider their household isolation (bubble) as continuing across households (not physically but in the maintenance of daily whānau practices), such as ensuring tamariki are talking with nannies and significant whānau members to de-escalate situations and gain advice.

Whakapapa obligations of protection can mean they will consider enacting measures to ensure the safety of individual tamariki/rangatahi by leaving their own self-isolating (bubble) for the collective benefit of the wider whānau. **We do not promote or support this** but it is important to understand that for many whānau Māori it is seen as a protective responsibility, not as non-compliant or obstructive.

Maintaining and re-establishing whakapapa connections

- **Whānau strategies**

- **Extended networks** - explore what they have in place to maintain their connection to wider whakapapa networks of support across various households, with hapū and others, not just immediate whānau within their self-isolation bubble. Do they have the resources and technology that enables them to do so? How do they want us to maintain engagement with them through this period?
- **Access to basic needs** - Understand how household isolation has impacted their ability to access informal extended whānau networks of supports and resources from other households that assisted them in daily practical ways. For example, money for necessities such as extra kai as they are home all day and going through kai more quickly and are unable to go fishing, or get money from whānau for extra internet data to stay connected, taking tamariki mokopuna out to give parents a break (adhering to physical distancing) and relieve stress on whānau dynamics and others.
- **Whānau leadership roles** - Explore if whānau have a significant person who carries the responsibility of maintaining whakapapa connection and who advocates on behalf of whānau and what their contingency plan is if they become unwell as a result of COVID-19.

- **Re-establishing connection** - During COVID-19 tamariki and whānau we work with may want to reconnect with whānau members that they have not had contact with for some time. For some tamariki who have had whakapapa relationships stopped or disconnected because of abuse, neglect or violence it may mean they want to reconnect with those whānau members. We need to support them to consider these relationships carefully, ensure they are safe and assist with reconnection if this is asked of us. It may mean we need to consider a restorative cultural process (using technology) to reconnect. You may need to get expert cultural support to do this from Kairaranga ā-whānau or iwi/Māori social service providers.

[Kairaranga ā-whānau](#)

Accessing tikanga knowledge and skills – Engage with your local site Kairaranga ā-whānau, local iwi/hapū or Māori service provider, local Whānau Ora provider, local iwi/Māori Care and Protection Resource Panel iwi members or site senior Māori practitioners to assist with current local iwi tikanga and kawa practices in place for COVID-19.

Whanaungatanga

Identifying, engaging and maintaining useful, positive whanaungatanga relationships are key for whānau at a time like this and useful to support our practice with whānau Māori. It is really important to adapt our engagement practices to consider how we are able to continue to support, facilitate and strengthen these relationships during household isolation.

- **Engage and talk early** - with whānau, identify and confirm what whanaungatanga supports already exist or are in place.
- **Maintaining whānau tikanga** - whānau Māori are high users of social media and are using creative ways of maintaining regular whānau tikanga processes through social media, for example using group Facebook messenger video sessions to have daily group karakia, sing waiata, kōrero te reo and check in with each other.
- **Multi-generational household isolation bubbles** - be mindful that the support 'bubble' for Māori will be different than for non-Māori. Whānau Māori are likely to have made plans for COVID-19 that include not just the household bubble but the wider whānau collectives, hapū, and iwi using innovative means. It may include more than one discrete household and be providing key support to several generations. For example some whānau have combined households for the COVID-19 lockdown household isolation period to include elderly whānau members and/or tamariki and mokopuna who don't usually live there. This can create more stress as they are not used to living together.
- **Access to technology** - Not all whānau will have access to the mediums for non-contact communication such as cell phone coverage, WIFI or readily available computers or mobile phones. Systems for connection will be different in rural areas than in urban centres.

Maintaining engagement with whānau Māori who are in isolated communities and hard to reach hapori/communities

- **Diversity of whānau** - We need to take time and ensure we understand the current environment for some of our tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori as many live in hard to reach and isolated communities.
- **Relational practice** – When our whānau are already difficult to engage what are the best ways to work with others who may have established a trusting relationship to work with whānau so they don't have too many people involved or to enable us to gain access? Work closely with our iwi/Māori providers and decide who may be best to connect with whānau for what purposes during these potentially stressful times.

Other:

- **CYRAS** – check contact information for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori. Ensure that it is up to date and correct. This can assist with whakapapa and whānau connection.
- **Other resources** - Here are some useful links to assist with obtaining information for whānau Māori and/or where whānau Māori may be connecting with to obtain information about COVID-19:

<http://www.tkm.govt.nz/>

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<https://www.teaomaori.news/>

<https://whanauora.nz/>

<https://www.waateanews.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/tekareremaorinews/>

<https://www.facebook.com/maraetv/>

Recording

Ensure that you record in CYRAS a casenote that explains what we are doing and why. Use a heading in the casenote: COVID-19 engaging and speaking with the tamaiti and whānau. Record any views shared with you by tamariki, whānau and caregivers and any actions you have taken in response. For tamariki in care or custody, update the Tamariki All About Me Plan and Caregiver Support Plan, to reflect what you have agreed with tamariki, caregivers and whānau will be in place during COVID-19, if it is appropriate and practicable to do so.

He toka tūmoana, he ākinga nā ngā tai.²

² At the end, the second whakataukī heralds the importance of holding steadfast to 'mana enhancing practice' in this perilous time.