

Quarantine arrangements for tamariki who are confirmed or suspected to be COVID-19 positive

Prepared by: Incident Management Team in consultation with the Professional Practice Group, Youth Justice, Legal Services, HR, Health and Safety, Transitions Services, Care Services and Partnering for Outcomes

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This is new guidance for all alert levels and provides details about how we support any tamariki we are involved with if they, or someone in their household/living arrangement, tests positive for COVID-19 and are required to enter quarantine. This includes when we:

- are in Intake and Early Assessment
- have a Family Group Conference plan (for care and protection and youth justice)
- have a section 91 Support Order
- have care or custody of tamariki (including where tamariki are return/remain home or those who are in youth justice custody or within care and protection or youth justice residences)
- are supporting rangatahi who are preparing to transition from care or who have transitioned to independence

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

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 how we assess any care and support arrangements for tamariki we are engaged with who are confirmed to have COVID-19 or are living in a household with someone who is confirmed to have COVID-19. In order to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the community, social workers will need to work closely with health personnel to identify the best option for that tamaiti if they are required to enter quarantine.

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. 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.

Overview

If te tamaiti or their usual parent or caregiver have been tested and are confirmed as having COVID-19 there are new requirements to ensure the household members are in an appropriate quarantine arrangement. These arrangements need to be approved by a Medical

Officer of Health¹. This guidance covers when we working with te tamaiti and their family and whānau during assessment/safety planning, Family Group Conference plans (care and protection and youth justice), care or custody (including where tamariki are remain/return home or within a care or protection or youth justice residence) or support orders.

It is important to recognise our roles and responsibilities will look different depending on the nature of our involvement. In situations where we do not have custody, we play an important role in advocating for and in some cases providing appropriate support to ensure these arrangements remain focused on the needs of te tamaiti. In situations where we have custody, we remain responsible for the day-to-day care of te tamaiti and therefore the suitability of any care arrangements.

When making decisions around ongoing care arrangements for tamariki in these circumstances, the decisions must be made in the context of the following considerations:

- the needs, safety and wellbeing of individual tamariki
- the minimisation of opportunities for COVID-19 transmission within communities
- the safety, wellbeing and capacity of our workforce and the caregivers who provide support to tamariki.

Follow the guidance set out in the [Working in a pandemic environment – advice for Oranga Tamariki staff](#) document (staff resource) when making decisions around care arrangements in these circumstances. This guidance will need to inform your interactions with other professionals, bubble members, wider whānau and tamariki. As part of your decision-making you will need to assess the risk of exposure to COVID-19. To do this, use the [COVID-19 screening tool](#) (staff resource) (DOCX 67KB) we have developed for this purpose.

During this period, social workers will need to work closely with health personnel to respond to any COVID-19-related health concerns, including quarantine requirements, that may impact on current safety plans or care arrangements for tamariki. If tamariki are in care or custody, the social worker for te tamaiti and the caregiver social worker will need to work with health personnel to assess whether care arrangements for te tamaiti need to change due to quarantine requirements. These decisions will need to balance the best interests of te tamaiti, the safety and wellbeing of our caregivers, and the need to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

Parents and caregivers must let us know if anyone in the house has potentially been exposed to COVID-19

It is important that parent/s and caregivers advise us as soon as possible if they are concerned that someone in the household is suspected of having COVID-19, we discuss testing with them and that we ask that they advise the outcomes of any results. Refer to the guidance on [testing tamariki for COVID-19](#).

¹ Medical Officers of Health exist within each DHB and may exercise powers relating to the diagnosis, isolation and quarantining of individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 and these powers apply to both tamariki and their parent/s and caregivers.

We are maintaining close contact with caregivers during this time, which will provide an early opportunity to detect and respond to concerns regarding COVID-19 exposure of anyone in the household, including tamariki.

Requirements when making decisions around care arrangements

All decisions around ongoing care arrangements must be made in consultation with health personnel. We will not move tamariki in care out of their current care placement unless we have to.

If COVID-19 is confirmed for either te tamaiti, their caregiver or someone else living in the home **you must consult** with your local Medical Officer of Health about how the household will be managed to isolate or quarantine.

Engagement with the Medical Officer of Health should be undertaken through the Executive Manager in your region. If your Executive Manager is unclear how to make contact with their local Medical Officer of Health, they should request Operation Support to access contact details through the Ministry of Health. The Executive Manager² will facilitate and be part of the discussion with yourself and the Medical Officer of Health.

Wherever possible seek the consent of te tamaiti and the caregiver to discuss their personal information with health personnel. If, however, at any time you have concerns that te tamaiti or someone in their household bubble has/is suspected to have COVID-19, but they are not taking the necessary steps to get tested or to ensure safety for themselves or others, the Privacy Act authorises you to use or disclose information where it is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious threat to public health or safety.

Additionally, while we are in a state of emergency, the *Civil Defence National Emergencies (Information Sharing) Code 2013* effectively enables agencies to disclose COVID-19-related health information to health personnel if it is for purpose of helping to prevent transmission of COVID-19.

There may be media interest or social media commentary around what's happening in specific communities and locations – if there are any concerns around media or social media, let the Executive Manager know and identify what, if any, support or plan may be required.

Assessment to inform decisions around care arrangements to support quarantine

You need to have a good awareness of the current needs of te tamaiti and plans in place to support them. Work with the Executive Manager and the Medical Officer of Health to confirm whether the household can be supported to remain at home in quarantine or whether they are required to enter a Government Quarantine facility. The Medical Officer of Health can ensure the full range of considerations are discussed and wrap-around supports identified. We should make every effort to support te tamaiti and their caregiver or parent (in remain/return home situations) to remain in their usual home. Take into account the following factors:

² If there are high numbers of cases that one Executive Manager is supporting, please seek additional support from the Incident Management Team and Operational Support.

- Who is in the household and what is the current involvement of Oranga Tamariki? Consider there may be a number of living arrangements including for tamariki in care, any of the caregiver's own tamariki.
- Does te tamaiti have any health conditions that make them more vulnerable to serious illness if they are confirmed/exposed to COVID-19? Seek advice from the GP and other health professionals (e.g. mental health teams) who are involved with te tamaiti on the supports they may need if during a period of quarantine.
- Does te tamaiti have any current assessed needs that might impact on their safety and wellbeing while in quarantine (e.g. suicide/self-harm; challenging behaviours; harmful sexual behaviours; high risk of absconding)?
- Does the caregiver or parent have any assessed needs that might impact them while in quarantine? Consider the implications of additional pressure of being in a quarantine environment on the safety and stability of the household.
- If the caregiver or parent is unwell because of COVID-19, are there other safe adults within their home who can provide care for te tamaiti while they are in quarantine?
- Is the caregiver willing to continue to care for te tamaiti if te tamaiti has tested positive for COVID-19 and the household is required to quarantine?
- Is there additional support that Oranga Tamariki could provide to ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of te tamaiti and their caregiver or parent while they are in quarantine? Consider how whānau connections can be maintained and how local community supports (e.g. church or cultural) could be supported (e.g. online services).
- What supervision, oversight, security or additional support arrangements might be needed to assure the Medical Officer of Health that the quarantine will not be breached?
- How well does the parent or caregiver and te tamaiti understand COVID-19, the reasons why quarantine is required and how these arrangements will differ from usual caregiving arrangements?

Consult with your Supervisor, Site Manager and Caregiver Recruitment and Support Manager and if unsure about how best to proceed, please seek additional practice support.

The day-to-day care of tamariki in quarantine

Wherever possible, we will work with the Ministry of Health to support tamariki and their caregiver or parent/s to remain in their usual home but with agreed quarantine arrangements in place.

Always consult with health professionals and seek to tailor the quarantine environment to support the individual care needs of te tamaiti, taking into account factors such as their age, language, cultural needs and mental and physical health status.

Talk with the caregiver or parent, and where appropriate te tamaiti, to help them understand the requirements while they are in quarantine. Reassure them that they will have access to all the things they need on a day to day basis (e.g. groceries; medications; nappies; formula) and access to appropriate medical advice and support in respect of COVID-19 exposure.

If the Medical Officer of Health allows, more than one caregiver/carer should be with te tamaiti in a quarantine arrangement to give support to each other.

The caregiver/carer may be unfamiliar with te tamaiti, and te tamaiti with them. The care arrangement is likely to be an intense and challenging start to a new adult/child relationship, therefore significant support is required to ensure the wellbeing of both tamaiti and caregiver/carer.

Consider how we can ensure the household has a suitable WiFi plan – if it is not going to meet their needs during quarantine, can we support this to be increased? Ensure that tamariki and parent or caregivers have access to at least one computer or other digital device. Where they do not have one already, ensure this is provided – if there are a number of tamariki in the home, how can we support access to multiple devices (this could minimise opportunities for stress). This will enable te tamaiti to remain in education through distance learning and provide a source of activity and connection to wider whānau.

Agree a plan with te tamaiti and their parent or caregiver about how we will support them remotely during their time in quarantine. Maintain regular contact with the GP for te tamaiti, wider health team and anyone involved in the provision of health care to te tamaiti during the period of quarantine. Include, where known, the frequency of visits/access by medical professionals, who will monitor the health status of household members and undertake the required testing and re-testing of COVID-19. Ensure the plan addresses what the parent or caregiver will do in the situation where the health of someone who has or is likely to have COVID-19 deteriorates quickly including access to emergency and after-hours medical advice.

If there will be additional supervision, oversight or security in place to assure the quarantine environment, make sure that caregivers, parent/s and tamariki are aware of what this will be, why it is in place and reassure them.

The day-to-day care of tamariki in a Managed Quarantine facility

There may be circumstances where tamariki and their caregiving household need to move into a managed quarantine facility.

Always consult with health professionals and seek to tailor the quarantine environment to support the individual care needs of te tamaiti, taking into account factors such as their age, language, cultural needs and mental and physical health status.

Talk with the parent or caregiver, and where appropriate te tamaiti, to help them prepare to move into the quarantine environment. Reassure them that they will have access to all the things they need to a day to day basis (e.g. medications, nappies, formula) and that their meals and WiFi will be provided and they will have access to appropriate medical advice and support in respect of COVID-19 exposure.

Ensure that tamariki and their parent or caregivers have access to at least one computer or other digital device. Where they do not have one already, ensure this is provided. Depending on how many people are in the household, consider assisting with additional devices. This will enable te tamaiti to remain in education through distance learning and provide a source of activity and connection to wider whānau.

Agree a plan with te tamaiti and their parent or caregiver about how we will support them remotely during their time in quarantine. Maintain regular contact with the GP for te tamaiti, wider health team and anyone involved in the provision of health care to te tamaiti during the period of quarantine.

If rangatahi are involved with Youth Justice, including in a community remand home or residence

In addition to the above considerations, if we are working with rangatahi under either a Family Group Conference plan or in Youth Court (but don't include custody), consider the supports we may be able to provide while they and their household are required to be in a quarantine environment.

If rangatahi are in custody and are either in a community remand home or in a residence, discuss with the Medical Officer of Health what might be required to support them to quarantine either in their existing location or in a managed quarantine facility.

Rangatahi who are or have transitioned from care

In addition to the above considerations, if we are working with rangatahi who are preparing to transition from care or who already transitioned from care, discuss their living arrangement and explore with them what quarantine arrangement might best meet their needs (particularly if they are young parents or have other specific support needs) and what supports we may be able to provide. Consider advice and financial assistance that they might need during this time; if they are engaged with a Transition Worker, how can they provide support during this time and if not who else can provide them with support?

If the usual parent or caregiver is unable to provide care while in quarantine

We may need to support tamariki in a range of situations (e.g. FGC plans; care or custody) with their quarantine arrangement and there may be circumstances when their usual parent/s or caregiver/s are unable to care for them. Making a plan that causes the least disruption for te tamaiti and provides the maximum support for the person caring for them needs to be our focus.

In the first instance an approved caregiver should be sought to provide care, ideally from within the whānau, wider family group or natural network. Consider who can be [provisionally approved as a caregiver](#) quickly to care for te tamaiti.

If this is not possible to identify an approved caregiver, then an emergency carer (e.g. resource worker) may be required from within Oranga Tamariki casual workforce or from a care provider. It is important that the person chosen has the skills and knowledge to manage this stressful situation safely.

A support plan **must be provided** to the emergency caregiver/carer that includes all supports to be provided, not only by Oranga Tamariki but also Health, Education and other providers, including what learning resources will be provided to the caregiver/carer to help prepare and support them during the quarantine arrangement.

The AAMP **must be provided** and both plans discussed with the carer to ensure they understand what is required of them and what support they can expect to receive.

Where hospitalisation is required

There may be times when the medical professionals caring for te tamaiti and their caregivers or parents advise us that hospital level care is required. This decision rests with health personnel. If the usual caregiver or parent requires hospitalisation and there is another adult in the home, discuss what additional supports may be required for te tamaiti to remain safe and supported within the home.

Where there is no other adult already within the quarantine environment, you will need to develop an alternative care arrangement which meets their specific needs. Consult with your supervisor, practice leader, Caregiver Recruitment and Support Manager and Executive Manager who will liaise with your local Medical Officer of Health.

Tamariki who need to be moved into a hospital will usually still need us to ensure and support their day-to-day care as these environments are unlikely to be set up in such a way to meet the needs of tamariki who are unattended. The arrangements will need to be tailored to the individual care needs of te tamaiti, taking into account factors such as their age, language, cultural needs and mental and physical health status.

In these instances, unless you are satisfied that additional care support is not required (usually in the case of an older rangatahi), care may need to be provided by either the current caregiver of te tamaiti, a care partner or another provider, or one of our social workers. If it is the caregiver who is providing this, discuss whether this additional care support would impact on their ability to provide care for other tamariki in their home. Where we need to use our own social workers, please consult with the social worker about their ability to provide this care. If you have any questions about the social worker's role in this regard, consult with HR.

Caregivers and staff must also be issued with, use, and safely dispose of protective equipment to reduce the risk of infection. This equipment will be provided by hospital staff. Follow the guidance in the staff resources [Working in a Pandemic Environment and Health and Safety guidance](#) and any additional instructions from health staff. These caregivers and staff must be provided with ongoing advice and support to help them maintain safe practices from ourselves and/or health staff.

Social workers must maintain regular contact with the GP for te tamaiti, wider health team and anyone involved in the provision of health care to te tamaiti during the period of hospitalisation.

Consulting with and keeping parents/guardians informed

Every effort must be made to keep parents, guardians and whānau of tamariki in care informed about their COVID-19 status including any screening or testing undertaken, if there is a positive result, and any change in care arrangements that may need to be made because of COVID-19 in their household.

This will be a deeply distressing situation for parents and tamariki alike, particularly if tamariki are very unwell, and is an important time to maintain open and ongoing communication with the parents and guardians to consider how engagement can occur between tamariki and whānau in a safe way without person to person contact. Consider if contact can be increased using remote means during this time.

It will be important to advise parent/s and guardians that they will not be able to have in-person contact during this time in order to minimise the spread of COVID-19.

Work with Legal Services to ensure counsel for child and counsel for the parents are kept up to date.

If parents or guardians do not support a decision to test te tamaiti or to place them in quarantine or they request te tamaiti be removed from a placement due to COVID-19 exposure, we must consider their views. Ultimately, however, decisions around placement need to be made in accordance with the approach set out in this document.

Where health personnel have made a decision that quarantine is required, but the parent(s) do not support this decision, you will need to refer this issue to your local Medical Officer of Health.

Recording

Document the quarantine plan, as developed and agreed with te tamaiti, caregivers or parent/s, the Medical Officer of Health and the Executive Manager. A copy of this will need to be provided to any relevant health professional supporting the quarantine arrangement. Ensure this is recorded in CYRAS.

Ensure that you record in CYRAS a case note that explains what we are doing and why. Use a heading in the case note: *COVID-19 Care arrangements for tamariki in care arrangements for confirmed/suspected COVID-19*. Record any views shared with you by tamariki, whānau, caregivers or health personnel and any actions you have taken in response. Update the Tamariki All About Me Plan and Caregiver Support plan, to reflect what you have agreed with tamariki, caregivers, health personnel and whānau will be in place during Alert Level 3, if it is appropriate and practicable to do so.

Ensure that your recording addresses any requirements needed to enable contact tracing.

[Contact tracing \(staff resource\)](#)

Returning to normal care arrangements

If te tamaiti has COVID-19, make sure you update your assessment with any health-related needs they may have as a result, record this in Tuituia and update their All About Me Plan.

If the day-to-day care of te tamaiti has changed, resuming the normal care arrangements must be a priority. Make sure you include the Caregiver Recruitment and Support team in planning, as they can support the caregiver to ensure any COVID-19 related supports are in place.

If the day-to-day care of te tamaiti included being in hospital or a quarantine environment, health personnel will advise when they and their parent or caregivers can return to their home or their household can exit quarantine.