



Locating students and whānau

Introduction

This guidance is for attendance service providers who are supporting ākonga (students) that are difficult to locate. This may include the ākonga themselves, or those whose whānau cannot be reached despite efforts to find them. It provides a short list of practical suggestions that can be tried to help locate the ākonga.

Even after all reasonable steps have been taken, it may not be possible to locate the ākonga or their whānau, particularly if they have moved out of the area without leaving contact details. This document outlines what you, as an attendance service provider, are expected to do and what support you can expect from Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga | Ministry of Education.

High level overview – ākonga who are not enrolled

When an ākonga becomes unenrolled, the Ministry's Central Investigations Team (CIT) receives a referral. CIT will check the referral before assigning it to an attendance service provider. CIT are also responsible for managing information requests to other agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development and Immigration New Zealand.

The referral will include the ākonga last known address. Sometimes this will be out of date, and you may be unable to contact the ākonga or their caregiver.

What providers are expected to do

You are expected to make all reasonable efforts to contact the ākonga and their whānau or caregivers. For example, your initial investigation might include:

- Talking with the last known school, or previous schools
- Enquiring with known relations and friends, or other contacts
- Talking to the neighbours
- Initiating local agency and community group enquiries
- If they were with another provider before, talk to the case manager there to see if they have any helpful information

If the ākonga cannot be readily located, you can use the Attendance Service case management system to submit an Information Request. Any new information will be returned via the case management system. We currently have agreements with:

- **Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora | Ministry of Social Development**, who advise us if they have different contact details for the ākonga or their whānau.
- **Ratonga Manene | Immigration New Zealand**, who check whether the child has left the country.
- We are exploring setting up similar arrangements with other agencies include, and will update this section as new agreements are confirmed

You should also continue your own enquiries – use your local knowledge and community connections where possible. This includes whānau networks, iwi, marae, churches, sports clubs, or health workers. This may also include multi-agency forums where these exist.

Use the Attendance Service case management system to keep clear records of all contact attempts and actions taken. This helps us understand what works to locate ākonga, how much resource is being used, and where to focus future efforts.

If all options to locate the ākonga have been exhausted — including checking with the Ministry for any updated location or contact information and engaging with multi-agency forums — flag the ākonga’ case as ‘Not located’ in the case management system. Flagging a case as ‘Not located’ will help the Ministry quantify the size of the issue, and determine what further action is required at a national level.

Respecting privacy when locating children and whānau

When trying to locate a child or whānau, providers must follow the Privacy Act. It’s fine to speak with people who might help — like neighbours or community members — but be careful about what you share. Only share what’s necessary and avoid giving out personal details unless it’s clearly allowed.

It’s also important to act professionally and honestly. Providers must not pretend to be someone else or use misleading tactics. Staying respectful helps protect trust and privacy.

See this link for more information: [Standards of Integrity and Conduct - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

If you are concerned about the safety of the ākonga

Any time you have welfare or safety concerns about a child, you should notify Oranga Tamariki or New Zealand Police. We are working with these agencies to provide simplified processes and guidance and will update this section when completed. If you do take this step, update the case management system.

Police in an emergency: [111 Emergency Services | New Zealand Police](#)

Police less urgent: [105 Police Non-Emergency Online Reporting | New Zealand Police](#)

Oranga Tamariki Report of Concern: [Worried about a child? Tell us | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)