



# Making Referrals to Oranga Tamariki for Chronic Absence at School

This guidance supports Attendance Service Providers (ASPs) to make referrals to Oranga Tamariki if they have care and protection concerns about ākongā with chronic absence.

The Ministry has an information sharing protocol which enables safe and timely referrals to Oranga Tamariki using s19 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.

## When to Refer

You should make a referral to OT for chronic absence when:

- A student keeps missing school despite plans and support being in place; and
- When your concerns meet the grounds of the legislation as set out in section 6 of the protocol.

## How to Referral

An ASP or a school can make a referral to Oranga Tamariki if:

- The ākongā is enrolled at a school.
- You and the school have discussed other actions to support the ākongā and their whānau to improve attendance.
- You have informed the ākongā and their whānau that a referral is being made.
- A representative from the school with authority to make decisions is identified.

Before you make the referral, check you have all the information Oranga Tamariki require. A check list has been provided later in this document.

All referrals must be sent to [contact@ot.govt.nz](mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz) using the Oranga Tamariki s19 Referral Form.

## The Family Group Conference

The Family Group Conference (FGC) is a formal meeting facilitated by the Care and Protection Coordinator. Ākongā, their whānau, a school representative, ASP, other agencies, and community organisations attend. Before attending the FGC, you will need to prepare by meeting with the school to decide who will talk about the concerns at the FGC.

The role of the school and / or you during the FGC is to explain your concerns and contribute to the development of a plan that will address the concerns.

## The FGC Plan

At the end of the FGC everyone who attends should agree the actions documented in plan meet the needs of the ākongā and their whānau to support regular attendance. The organisation responsible for implementing each action will be negotiated and agreed at the FGC.

### Monitoring the Plan

It is likely that either you or the school will be best placed to monitor the plan. This will be agreed at the meeting. A review date will also be set as part of the plan. If you need to review the plan earlier, you can make a request to the Care and Protection Coordinator.

### Changes to Enrolment Status

If ākongā become non-enrolled at any time through the FGC process you as the ASP will become responsible for attending meetings, monitoring the plan, and attending reviews in place of the school representative.

### Keeping a Record of the Plan

You will receive a copy of the plan from the Care and Protection Coordinator. This must be added to the AS-CMS. You must also document progress towards achieving actions in the plan in the AS-CMS. Keeping a full and accurate records of this information will support you to report back on process and participate in reviews of the plan.

## What if the Referral is Declined?

If the Care and Protection Coordinator declines your referral you can:

- Continue to work with the ākongā, their whānau, and the school to consider additional steps you may take (e.g., contacting the School Board and other supports).

## What If I Have Other Wellbeing and Safety Concerns?

If at any time you are concerned that ākongā may be subject to abuse, neglect, or ill-treatment, you can talk to the Care and Protection Coordinator and / or make a report of concern (RoC). A RoC should be made before or after a referral is made, while the FGC process is underway or after the FGC process is completed.

Before making a RoC you should:

- Be familiar with and follow the requirements of your child protection policy.
- Talk about your concerns with the school.
- Agree who will contact Oranga Tamariki for advice or to make a (RoC).

To make a RoC contact Oranga Tamariki National Contact Centre on 0508FAMILY (0508 326 459) or email [contact@ot.govt.nz](mailto:contact@ot.govt.nz) for advice.

If you or the ākongā is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation you should Contact Police immediately on 111. The school should be aware as quickly as possible after contacting the Police.

## Referral Process

The following process maps shows the various potential outcomes and when making a referral.

