

Pārongo 6

Ngā whānau pāhekoheko

Information Sheet 6: Family reunification

Key messages

for CDEM Groups to discuss with early learning services and schools:

- Early learning services and schools need to have a detailed family reunification process in their emergency plan.
- Early learning services and schools should practice the family reunification process at least once a year.

The following information can provide the basis for conversations CDEM Groups to have with early learning services and schools about family reunification. Ensure the key messages are covered in any discussion or correspondence about family reunification.

One of the most important responsibilities for early learning services and schools following an emergency is reuniting children and students with their parents or caregivers.

The best way to deal effectively with this situation is to plan ahead.

A good reunification process can alleviate stress for students, family, and staff. The following principles underpin the delivery and coordination of services to children and students separated from their parents, legal guardians, or usual caregivers in an emergency:

1. Children and students are kept safe and cared for.
2. Children and students should be reunited with their parent, legal guardian or usual caregiver as soon as possible.
3. All reasonable steps are taken to reunite children and students with their parent, legal guardian or usual caregiver before referring to Police.

Early learning services and school staff have a duty of care for children and students, however this duty of care becomes more significant during an emergency. Staff should continue to care for children and students until they are collected by an approved person (a person who has been authorised by the child's or student's parent or caregiver to uplift the child and student).

If, after a period of time the child or student has not been collected and the early learning services and school can no longer continue to provide for their care,

there is an agreed process to be followed which requires engagement with the New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki, Ministry for Children. (Page 8, Section 9.4.1, Welfare Services in an Emergency Director's Guideline). During a large emergency event, it will likely be some time before these two agencies will be able to do this.

Emergency plans should detail arrangements for caring for children and students including information to help reunite them with their parents, legal guardians, or approved alternate caregiver in a safe and timely manner. Consider including information on:

- policies and procedures for reuniting children with parents and caregivers
- how parents will obtain information about their children during an emergency
- contact information for parents and caregivers (home and work phone numbers) OR descriptions of where this information can be found
- who is allowed to collect the child or student and what the back-up arrangements are
- where required, who is NOT allowed to collect the child or student
- where the collection point will be located (designate both an on-site and off-site collection location), this could include maps
- what the arrangements are if children and students cannot be collected.

Early learning services and schools should include in their service enrolment pack, a reminder that children and students will only be released to those pre-designated adults that have been listed on the emergency information contacts form and that adults must have proper identification when collecting the child/student.

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