



**ORANGA
TAMARIKI**
Ministry for Children

WAYS YOU CAN CARE

How you can open up your home to a child or young person who needs you through caregiving, offering permanency or adoption.





There's no harder job,
or greater reward.
The people who care
for children are the heart
and home of
Oranga Tamariki—
Ministry for Children.

They welcome children
and young people into
their families and help
turn young lives around.

Contact
Oranga Tamariki—
Ministry for Children
0508 326 459
contact@ot.govt.nz



WELCOMING A CHILD INTO YOUR HOME

All children belong in safe, stable families who will love and care for them.

Children and young people have told us they need caregivers who:

- make them feel welcome and loved
- provide more than just food, shelter and supervision by helping them feel part of a family
- meet a range of needs and help them to learn, grow and heal
- can persevere and be patient, no matter what
- support them to maintain relationships with their family and friends
- help them develop skills, knowledge and experiences to prepare for young adulthood.

There are many ways that you can care for a baby, child or young person, whether you're thinking about:

- **caregiving** where you welcome a child into your home, while we work with their family so they can safely care for their children
- **permanent care** when you give your lifelong commitment to a child in care and they become part of your family
- **or adoption** where the birth parents choose to make you the child's legal parents, and you raise the child as your own.

It takes all sorts of people to look after children and teens. You might be surprised to find that you're just the right person to offer your love, and make a real difference to a young life. Read on to find out more about all the ways you can care.

WHO WE ARE

Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children, is the biggest care agency in New Zealand.

At any one time, we'll be caring for thousands of children and young people to keep them safe and make a positive difference in their lives.

These children usually come into our care because they have been neglected and abused, or their behaviour can't be managed by their parents.

We know it's best when children can stay at home safely, but when that's not possible we have around 5000 caregivers who provide day to day care for the children who need it.

Around half of our carers are looking after children or young people from their extended family or whānau.

Others have opened up their homes because they are passionate about caring for kids.

We also provide adoption services, whether you're wanting to adopt, placing your child for adoption, or looking for a birth child or parent.

In an average day at Oranga Tamariki we will:

- receive around 300 calls from people concerned about the safety of a child
- support extended family and caregivers to look after around 4000 children and young people in care
- hold around 60 family group conferences, where families meet to find ways to keep their children safe and well cared for, or help young people deal with their offending
- be in touch with more than 100 families to make a positive difference for their children
- be responsible for around 100 young people in youth justice residences.



IS CARING RIGHT FOR ME?

Children who can't live with their usual caregivers come from a range of backgrounds and each has had their own unique experience.

We need carers with a diverse range of experience and backgrounds – just like the children and young people they care for – so that we can ensure the people looking after our children and young people are well matched to them.

We welcome carers of any gender, marital status and cultural or religious identity. The most important thing is their ability to provide a safe, stable and loving home for the children and young people who need them.

As a carer you will provide for all the child's day to day needs, stick with them during tough times, give them new experiences and help them be the best they can be.

You will make a great caregiver or adoptive parent if you:

- can commit wholeheartedly to caring for a child who needs you
- have a stable home life
- are willing to accept the child and help them develop their potential
- can persevere and be patient
- can work with the child's family.

It can be tough at times – but it can also be a life-changing experience for everyone involved. We can put you in touch with experienced caregivers before you apply, so you get a better idea of what it takes.

All our caregivers receive training and are approved before they are able to have a child or young person in their care.

The application process usually takes about two or three months. You'll need to complete an application form and provide some information about you and your family.

Things you need when you apply:

If after talking to us you decide you'd like to apply to become a caregiver or adoptive parent, you'll need:

- a completed application form (we'll send you one when you call)
- a Police check
- proof of your identity
- a full doctor's medical report
- the names, contact details and addresses of two referees.

You'll then be invited to two interviews, one of which will be at your home.

There's more information on how to become a caregiver on our website

www.orangatamariki.govt.nz

If you're still not sure whether you could be a carer, just give us a call on **0508 CARERS (0508 227 377)**.

CARING FOR TAMARIKI

We care for thousands of tamariki and rangatahi to keep them safe and look for a variety of families to make a positive difference in their lives.

Most children come into care because they have been harmed by adults and have often had difficult lives.

They can be anything from newborn babies up to teenagers, and may have brothers and sisters who need care too. What they need the most is a safe and stable home, and a sense that they belong.

Some people want to offer a child a permanent home, or can take care of children for a short time.

Others are good with troubled teenagers, children with challenging behaviour or have a passion for working with disabilities. We'll help you to match your passion and skills to a child or young person who needs your care.

You will be part of our team and our social workers are trained to help and support you.

As a caregiver, you may be asked to attend one or more Family Group Conferences.

This is a meeting of all the people involved in making decisions about the child or young person, which includes them, their family, whānau and any caregivers, the social worker and others that have a role to help make good decisions.





The types of caregiving

Our caregivers may provide just one type of care or a mixture, depending on their skills and passion.

Just like kids, the type of care you provide will often grow and change over time.

There are lots of ways you can help care for our tamariki:

Emergency care is when a young person or child is placed in your care at very short notice because there are immediate and serious concerns for their safety and there is nowhere else that's safe to go. Emergency care is for a short time while other arrangements are made.

Respite care is when you look after a child for a weekend or a short period of time to give their parents or caregivers a break.

Short term care is when we're working with a child's family. You might be asked to care for them for up to six months while we work with their family.

Long term care is when it is taking a bit longer to work with the child's family, and the child is with you for longer than six months.

Family Home care is when two adult caregivers care for up to six children or young people in a home environment. As the caregivers you live rent-free in an Ministry-owned home, and receive an allowance for the children in your care. Family Home care involves children moving in and out of the home depending on what's happening for them.

Permanent care is when a decision is made by the Family Court that a child cannot be cared for by their own family and you are to become the permanent carer for them – for life. Permanent care involves a legal process to enable you to be a child's permanent caregiver.

We'll work with you to create a plan to make it happen.

CAREGIVING - SO CHILDREN CAN RETURN HOME

If a child can't be safe at home, we will work with their family wherever possible, so their child can return home safely and be well cared for.

This is when we need caregiving families who can provide their love and care for as long as a child needs it, and help prepare them to return home.

These children have been affected by their past experiences, so you'll need to be able to stick with them if things get tough, be patient and understanding of the effects of abuse, and have a passion for making a positive difference to a young life.

They may be with you for weeks or months, depending on the nature of the issues and what needs to happen to keep the child safe and well cared for in their family.

You'll make a great carer if you:

- would like to be part of a team with the social worker, the child's family and other professionals
- have an understanding of different backgrounds, cultures and the impact social problems can have on family life
- can deal with the challenges of children who have been affected by abuse or neglect
- can offer your care to a child for as long as they need it, but are able to let go when it's time for them to return home
- can stay in touch, if that's the right thing, once the child is back home.

Think about caregiving if you would like to welcome a child into your home and offer your care for as long as they need it.

"Most of my young men make it and return 'home' often – they know that my home will always be their home, and I am still their mentor."

Caregiving dad to teenage boys

EMERGENCY CARE

There are times when a child has to be urgently removed from a dangerous situation.

In these cases, a child may come to you at very short notice, in the middle of the night, or without much preparation.

In emergency care, the child may be with you for only a few days, or a longer time while we make a plan for the child. If we need to spend a while working with the family so the child can return home, you may choose to become the child's caregiver for a longer period.

Emergency caregivers are able to welcome children in at short notice and make them feel at ease as part of the family.

You will make a great emergency carer if you:

- cope well in crisis situations
- are flexible and able to make changes quickly
- can help a child feel safe and secure in times of uncertainty.

Think about emergency care if you enjoy rising to a challenge and want to care for children at a time when

REAL LIFE:

"It was about one o'clock on Christmas morning and we had a social worker call up and say there was a 12-year-old boy down at the Police station.

We rummaged around looking for presents that might be suitable for him, since we have four children of our own who would be opening their gifts. He arrived at three in the morning, and we had pressies waiting for him. It was such a blessing to see the joy on that boy's face when he got to open presents along with the other kids."

Emergency caregiver

RESPIRE CARE

Respite carers welcome children into their home on weekends, school holidays or for short breaks.

They give the child's usual carers a much-needed rest, and provide a great break away from the children.

Respite carers play a vital support role. They become an important person in a child's life, a bit like an aunty, uncle or grandparent role.

You'll make a great respite carer if you:

- Can make child feel at home quickly
- Can take children on weekends or for regular breaks
- Want to support caregivers or families of children with high needs.

Think about respite care if you enjoy having fun with kids for a short period of time.

PERMANENT CARE

Giving a child a permanent home tells them that they are wanted, loved, will always have a home with you and that they're a valued member of your family.

It helps them develop attachment and trust, and gives them the best chance of growing into a secure adult.

When a child can't go home safely to their own family, the thing that will make the biggest difference to them are carers who will commit to them for life.

"Even though the kids are only with you for a week or a month, you hope that by giving them a warm home and caring environment, you can show them that they can have those things in their life."

Respite caregiver

These children and young people have been let down by adults and hurt. They need people to provide a safe and stable home, who will stick by them through thick and thin, welcome them into their family and let them know they belong.

When you give a child or young person a permanent home, they are no longer in the care of Oranga Tamariki; they are in your care and become part of your family. In most cases you will become their guardian, often in addition to their birth parents.

We will still be there for you, and provide you with the support you need to give a child your lifelong commitment.

You will make a great permanent carer if you:

- would like to be committed to a child for their whole life
- will stick by the child when the going gets tough
- can maintain contact with the child's birth family
- would like to make the most meaningful difference to a young life
- would like the child to always be part of your family.

Think about giving a child a permanent home if you would like to give a child your lifelong commitment, or if you've thought about adoption and are considering other ways you can welcome a child into your family.

"I feel like I can breathe now. I know that I'll have the children for life, I can love them and give them my all. These children are my passion."

Permanent carer to two children





ADOPTION

We work with birthparents who may be considering placing their child for adoption and families wanting to adopt a child.

We also assist adopted people and birth parents to access information about their adoption.

Adoption is a service for children and we focus on finding the right family for each child. Because it's the right thing for children, we also encourage ongoing connection with the child's birth family and their culture.

Adoption is when a child legally becomes part of your family and you become the child's parents, with all its joys and challenges. In adoption, the birth parents choose to make you the child's legal parents, and you raise the child as your own. Legally, adoption is the fullest sense in which you can become a parent to a child not born to you.

Open adoption

In New Zealand most adoptions are open, which means that you will meet the birth parents before the adoption order is made and maintain an ongoing relationship together.

We work with the birth parents, who choose the people that they would like to raise their child. We also work with you, as an adoptive parent, to prepare you for the journey ahead and help you work with the birth parents.

In many cases the birth parents continue to have a part in the child's life, if everyone agrees that's best.

You will make a great adoptive parent if you:

- would like to be committed to a child for life
- can work with the child's birth family and help the child retain their identity
- can provide the child with a sense of belonging as part of your family.

ADOPTING A CHILD FROM OVERSEAS

Just like adoption in New Zealand, adopting a child from overseas means you will become their parents and raise them as part of your family.

However, adopting from overseas comes with special challenges, and these children need extra care from families who are committed to helping them thrive.

Children adopted from overseas are usually older and have had difficult experiences in their past.

There are cultural considerations as well; a child needs some kind of connection to their heritage, and may not speak English when they arrive in New Zealand.

Every country has their own criteria for adoption, and it can take a long time to work within these processes. If you're thinking about overseas adoption, get in touch with us. We can answer your questions, give you all the information you need and help you work through the process.

You will make a great adoptive parent to a child from overseas if you:

- would like to be committed to a child for life
- can help a child fit into another culture, learn the language and stick by them when the going gets tough
- are willing to meet the challenges of raising a child affected by their background.

Want to know more?

If you would like to know more about becoming a caregiver or adoptive parent, call **0508 CARERS (0508 227 377)**.

They will put you in touch with a social worker in your local area who can talk to you about finding out more.

"Any child becomes you own if you give of yourself to that child. I have birth and adopted children, they are all my children, equally loved and precious."

Adoptive mother

REAL LIFE STORY

"Our girl came to us as a teenager, and she is an absolute treasure.

She's currently studying at university. She says that she blames me for the fact that she's at uni, and I'm happy to take the blame for that!

We recently put on her wedding... she is just totally part of our family.

Caring is something that comes from within.

You just need to paddle through the rough waters when a new child arrives, because that is what these kids need to develop a sense that people really do care."

Caregiving mum

"I couldn't imagine being without my girls now. You've just got to do what makes your heart sing."

Permanent carer

