



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Sam Bishop
fyi-request-5062-4e5d65d6@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Sam Bishop

On 6 December 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information related to the number of caregivers known to Child, Youth and Family for the use of methamphetamine, the frequency at which these cases are reported to Police and the Ministry's procedures for managing these cases.

The Ministry of Social Development works hard to create community environments where the abuse and neglect of children and young people is not tolerated. Child, Youth and Family always works in the best interests of the child or young person and are guided by the Child, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989.

Child, Youth and Family's standard reporting of substantiated abuse includes emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. The Ministry does not centrally record whether methamphetamine or any drug use is involved in a notification or substantiated finding of abuse. This information is held in notes on individual case files and in order to provide this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, the Ministry refuses your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

Child, Youth and Family's key statistics, including notifications, findings, interventions, investigations and assessments are available online at www.cyf.govt.nz/about-us/key-statistics/

When Child, Youth and Family are notified of children in a home where methamphetamine is present, an assessment is made as to the children's safety and alternative care is arranged when necessary. The outcome of this assessment is in part informed by whether the parents have used or are using methamphetamine. If there are any concerns the children have been exposed to chemicals, a medical check is sought to make sure their health has not been compromised. All children entering care are now provided with a Gateway Assessment which looks at their wider health needs and ensures any issues are identified and addressed.

Further information regarding Child, Youth and Family's assessment and response procedures are available at www.practicecentre.cyf.govt.nz/policy/assessment-and-decision-making/index.html

Child, Youth and Family take children's health concerns seriously and consult Police under the Child Protection Protocol (CPP). The CPP sets out the process for working collaboratively at the local level, and as a formally agreed national level document, it is followed by all Child, Youth and Family and Police staff. For cases which require further investigation, Child, Youth and Family works jointly with Police as they investigate whether criminal charges should be laid. Child Youth and Family's investigation includes keeping the children safe and planning with the family and other services to improve their wellbeing. Police's primary duties are to protect victims and consider questions of criminal liability for perpetrators. The decision to lay charges is a Police decision.

You may be interested in further information regarding the CPP which is available at www.practicecentre.cyf.govt.nz/documents/resources/child-protection-protocol-2016.pdf

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public after ten working days. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding children exposed to methamphetamine users and Child, Youth and Family procedure in such cases, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely


MP
Michael Scott

General Manager, Ministerial and Executive Services