



## INFORMATION FOR FOSTER CARERS WHEN AN ALLEGATION OF ABUSE IS MADE

NZ Family & Foster Care Federation  
Support Project

NZFFCF Allegation Support Coordinator

**FREEPHONE 0800 693 278**  
**FREEPHONE 0800 NZFAST**



## Introduction

Foster caring brings a lot of new experiences and challenges. As a caregiver you are responsible for some of the most vulnerable children in society. You provide a vital service for our society.

However, when an allegation is made concerning your care of a child or young person, CYF has a statutory responsibility to investigate it. The investigation should be fair, transparent and time-limited.

Whether you are caring for a child or young person on behalf of the Chief Executive of CYF, or Open Home Foundation, Barnardos, IHC or another Child and Family Support Service, an Iwi Social Service, Cultural Social Service or as a Whanau / Kin Carer, allegations must be investigated.

It is alarming for an allegation to be made about the way you care for a child or young person. It should be recognized that many allegations are found to be unsubstantiated although none the less difficult to work through.

This booklet sets out the process the investigation will take and what supports and information are available to you.

NZFFCF have a key role in offering professional support to caregivers if an allegation of abuse is made against you.

## How Child, Youth and Family Receives Allegations of Abuse Against Caregivers

CYF receives allegations against caregivers from a number of sources including:

- A person who is concerned about the care that you are providing to a child or young person e.g. a neighbour, a friend of the child or young person, a teacher,
- The child or young person for whom you are providing care,
- The parents or family/whanau of the child or young person for whom you are providing care, and
- A Child and Family Support Service, Iwi Social Service or Cultural Social Service who considers, after notification, that an allegation has been received about your care should be reported to CYF, under section 15 of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act.

## Why Child, Youth and Family Must Investigate all Allegations of Abuse Against Caregivers it Receives

- Section 17 of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act requires CYF to investigate all notifications of ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of children and young persons it receives.
- If you provide care for a Child and Family Support Service, an Iwi Social Service or a Cultural Social Service, CYF If you provide care for a Child and Family Support

Service, an Iwi Social Service or a Cultural Social Service, CYF's investigation is additional to, not a replacement of, that organisation's investigation into the allegation against you.

- If you provide care for any of these organisations you need to know their policy about investigating allegations of abuse.

## Child, Youth and Family's Approach to Investigations into Allegations of Abuse Against Caregivers

Child, Youth and Family will:

- Treat all allegations, especially the most serious, as a priority to be investigated as quickly as possible,
- Have a clear process for investigating allegations which is time-limited with clear beginning and end points,
- Tailor the extent and scope of the investigation to the type and seriousness of the allegation received,
- Investigate allegations of abuse against caregivers with an open mind,
- Only make decisions when all relevant information has been gathered and assessed and the investigation is complete,
- Understand that allegations of abuse are stressful for all involved, especially the caregiver(s),
- Understand that caregivers need information and support during its investigation
- Endeavour to maintain the integrity and well-being of the caregiving family/whanau during its investigation.
- Ensure that the caregivers are given information about the allegation investigation in writing. (When the Police are involved, the time frame may lengthen)

### Sources of Information and Support to Caregivers During an Investigation into an Allegation of Abuse Against Caregivers

NZFFCF can offer you a trained independent support worker during CYF's investigation into an allegation about your care of a child or young person.

### The NZFFCF Support Worker Will:

- Provide information and advocacy to enable you to make healthy decisions and choices throughout the investigation process
- Offer independent and unbiased information
- Liaise with key players to monitor policy and practice standards during the allegation process
- Be appropriately trained and supervised
- Maintain the highest level of confidentiality

# The Allegation Team

The roles in boxes belong with NZFFCF Support Members. The roles belong to one, or a team, of chosen people.



- Advocate for a timely case closure / outcome
- Promote 'best practice' standards and training options that will help prevent allegations from occurring
- Keep statistics

#### The Support Worker Will Not:

- Decide who is right or wrong
- Take action on behalf of the Caregiver
- Take on role of mediator, investigator or legal advisor

#### It is Important that Either:

- You contact the 0800 693 278 (0800 NZ FAST) as soon as you are told of an allegation against you or
- You may give Child, Youth and Family your permission to contact the NZFFCF on your behalf.

A NZFFCF Support Worker will then be allocated to you.

**NZFFCF National Allegations Project**  
**Coordinator Contact Details**  
**phone 0800 693 278 (0800 FAST)**  
**email: [nzffcf.eoxtra.co.nz](mailto:nzffcf.eoxtra.co.nz)**

#### Your Support Team

You will probably need to have your own personal support people in addition to any assistance provided by the NZFFCF. The diagram on the previous page shows the range of personal support you may require and that you can expect from your Support Worker.

You have the right to have a support person with you in all your dealings with CYF regarding the allegation. CYF and NZFFCF recommend that you exercise this right. The support person, not being as emotionally involved, often remembers more clearly what happened at a meeting and what was to occur next.

## Child, Youth and Family Procedure for the Investigation of an Allegation of Abuse Against Caregivers

1. CYF receives and records the allegation of abuse against your care of a child or young person in care.
2. CYF social work staff inform the Site Manager of the allegation against you.

3. The Site Manager selects two experienced social workers to undertake the investigation and appoints a more senior social work staff member to supervise the process. The social workers and supervisor investigating the allegation must not be responsible for the case work for the child / young person abused or the Caregiver Liaison Social Worker for you. This may mean that the social workers come from a different office. The Site Manager makes every effort to ensure that cultural and gender perspectives are taken into account when putting the investigation team together.
4. The investigating social workers assess the immediate safety of the child or young person involved in the allegation and any other children or young people living with you.
5. The investigating social workers make a decision about whether the child or young person should remain in your care.

It may not be tenable for CYF to allow a child or young person to remain with you if the child or young person has made the allegation.

If you provide care for a Child and Family Support Service, Iwi Social Service or Cultural Social Service and that organisation received the allegation initially, they may have already removed the child or young person from your care during their investigation. You need to be aware of the organisation's policy on removing children and young people when they receive an allegation against a caregiver or when CYF informs them of an allegation.

6. Following their initial assessment, the investigating social workers outline the next steps to you. They will:
  - tell you that they have formulated an investigation plan tailored to the type and seriousness of the allegation,
  - advise you in general or specific terms about the allegation that has been made, provide updated progress where appropriate
  - advise you of possible outcomes, and
  - give you an opportunity to respond to them about the allegation.

If the investigation is not going to be proceeded with, the investigating social workers will tell you whether further action is going to be taken and what it is. This may include referral to a caregiver liaison social worker or Child, and Family Support Service, Iwi Social Service or Cultural Social Service social worker for action.

## Who Will Child Youth and Family Tell

- The parents or guardians of the child or young person concerned of the allegation against you, and
- The parents or guardians of any other children placed with you.
- As required by section 17 of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, CYF consults with the Care and Protection Resource Panel about the allegation.
- The investigating social workers interview people who can provide information relating to the allegation. This will include you as caregiver and the children and

young people in your care. Sometimes these interviews will include others who have knowledge of your role as a caregiver such as teachers or health workers.

- At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigating social workers and the supervisor prepare a preliminary report with initial recommendations. Subject to police approval, this preliminary report should contain the specific allegations.
- Your Agency should give you a copy of the preliminary report and initial recommendations. You will have the chance to consider it prior to the opportunity you are given for a face-to-face meeting with the Site Manager or your own Agency Manager to respond to the allegations and initial recommendations.

## Possible Outcomes of an Investigation of an Allegation of Abuse Against Caregivers

- Admission/found – the caregiver(s) admits that abuse has occurred or the investigation establishes that abuse has occurred.
- Prosecution – the police charge a caregiver with an offence against a child or young person
- Conviction – a court convicts a caregiver who has been charged with an offence against a child or young person.
- Inconclusive – the investigation has not been able to conclusively determine whether abuse occurred and /or who may have perpetrated the abuse.
- Unfounded – the investigation has established that no abuse occurred.

## At the conclusion of an allegation you have the right to:

**A written account of the allegations of abuse made against you**

**A face-to-face meeting with CY&F Site Manager, Practice Leader and Supervisor**

**Written outcomes of the investigation process**

**Know your current status as a foster carer**

**View any information written about you, under the Official Information Act**

## After the Investigation of an Allegation of Abuse Against Caregivers Has Ended

1. You have the right to be informed of the complaints process through the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is able to review the process in regard to the decision making but is unable to reverse the decision. The Office of the Ombudsman can be contacted on Free phone 0800 802 602, or PO Box 10152, Wellington.

2. The person who made the allegation will be advised that the matter has been investigated and told if further action has been taken (not the details of the further action).
3. If the allegation made against you is unfounded, Child, Youth and Family will inform all parties that the case will be closed with no further action being taken.
4. Child, Youth and Family records all information about the investigation and the outcome on the child or young person's file and your file.

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