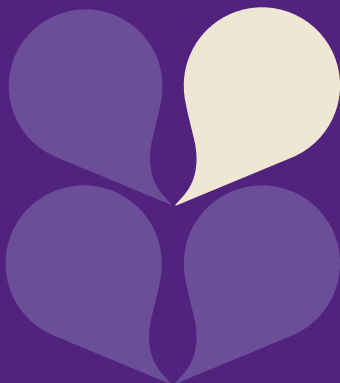


Child & Family Service

Information for parents and caregivers
– helping you support your
loved ones to heal



helpauckland.org.nz

HELP

Preventing sexual abuse.
Supporting survivors.

If your child has been sexually abused, we're here to help

HELP's Child & Family Service provides assistance to children who have experienced sexual assault, as well as their families and caregivers. We are here to support you, and to help your child to heal from the experience.

We do this through:

- A 24-hour crisis phone line **0800 623 1700**
- Information to assist caregivers
- Assessment of therapeutic needs
- Individual child therapy for boys aged 0-8 and girls of any age
- Caregiver and family counselling and support
- Support can be provided through police interviews and medical examinations
- Support during the court process
- Website with helpful resources and information **www.helpauckland.org.nz**
- Prevention education

You can call us directly to access these services or a referral can be made through your child's social worker, GP, schoolteacher or other professionals and friends, with parent or caregiver consent.

Child therapy - helping to heal

Our therapy model involves working with the child and their parent or caregiver, to restore the child's sense of safety in their world. Therapy can help to minimise the effects of trauma on a child's development by providing a chance to talk through their worries.

We find that children, especially very young ones, might not have the words to express how they feel. We use play therapy with creative media, activities, and role-play to help the therapy process.

'Keeping safe' education can be used to help children become more confident and brave to say when they feel unsafe and to ask for help. Parents and caregivers can learn these skills as well - to assist their child's learning and to know how to respond to a child's need for safety.

The experience of sexual abuse can disrupt a child's healthy development and cause problems later in life. We can minimise these difficulties if the child and their family get the support they need as soon as possible.

We are here
to support your
family, and to help
your child to heal
from the hurt.

Caregiver support - helping families/whānau

It's only natural that parents and caregivers have strong reactions to what has been done to their child. For example, you may feel anger at the offender, yourself or the child, self-blame, guilt, shame, resentment, a sense of powerlessness, and/or fear for your child's future safety.

We work closely with caregivers and families to help them understand and manage their feelings and reactions. You can voice any concerns you have about your child's behaviour, ask questions about how you can best deal with the situation and discuss ways to keep your child safe in the future.

Research tells us that the home environment and the responses of parents and caregivers are key factors in a child's recovery. Not every child who experiences abuse will need long-term therapy - sometimes it's most appropriate that we only work with the child's parents/caregivers to help them meet the needs of their children.

It helps to have someone understanding and supportive to talk to when you and your child are feeling distressed. Call us any time if you'd like to access this service, 0800 623 1700 is our 24/7 HELPLine.

Keeping your child safe

It's always our priority to make sure that children are safe. If we believe a child is still at risk of harm, we will work with their family to contact Oranga Tamariki for further support to ensure that any child at risk of harm can become safe. We can also work alongside other agencies to support the family.

Common effects of childhood sexual abuse

Children who have been sexually abused can experience an array of emotions and symptoms, including:

- Feeling frightened, sad or numb
- Withdrawing from family or friends, or wanting to stay extra close to those they feel safest with
- Guilt, self-blame, denial, lack of concentration
- Anger, hostility, or aggression
- Nightmares, problems sleeping, or bed wetting
- Flashbacks, risk-taking behaviours, or problems with sexual behaviour
- Eating difficulties

How you can help your child

It's common for survivors not to want to talk to their parents or caregivers. They may fear the reaction, not want to upset the family, wish to return to normality, or they might have been threatened by the person who sexually abused them so they don't tell.

The best thing to do is let your child know you are there to support them, without pressuring them to talk too early. They will let you know when they are ready if you are available to them.

Offer support through your words and your actions; for example, a hug if they look upset. Tell them it is not their fault. Only ask your child what you need to know to keep them safe. It is best not to ask lots of questions, especially in case a police investigation is required.

“Tell your child that they’re not to blame for what happened to them. It is not their fault. Make sure they know they are loved, they are important, and that **you will keep them safe.**”

HELP COUNSELLOR

“HELP’s therapy **service was incredible.** I felt seen and heard and worthy of a better life.”

TAMARA, SURVIVOR

HELP is here if you need us

24/7 HELP



0800 623 1700



Text 8236



gethelp@helpauckland.org.nz



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Connect with us



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