



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

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14 JAN 2014

Alecia Rousseau

fyi-request-1341-bc5e0e99@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Ms Rousseau

Thank you for your email of 2 December 2013 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many children placed in Child, Youth and Family care have been subject to sexual and/or physical abuse while in care, over the last 10 years?*

The Ministry of Social Development supports community environments where 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 every allegation of abuse is treated seriously.

Children and Young People in Child, Youth and Family Care

Children and young people come into the care of the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development for a variety of reasons, which are often complex. The care may be short-term, or longer-term where care and/or protection issues are present. In some cases, an investigation will result in a child or young person being unable to remain in their home. At any one time there are about 4,000 children and young people who have been taken into the care of the Chief Executive and are living in out-of-home care placements. Many of them will return home, others will stay permanently with their extended family or an approved non-family caregiver.

The removal of a child or young person from their family is a decision that is not taken lightly. As with all the actions taken by Child, Youth and Family, the interests of the child or young person are paramount. If no suitable family member is identified as being able to safely care for the child or young person, then they will be placed with an approved Child, Youth and Family caregiver. Wherever possible and appropriate, the relationship between the child or young person and their family is maintained and strengthened.

Child, Youth and Family provides a range of care placements across a continuum of care options, depending on the specific needs of the child and young person in care. Child, Youth and Family aims to match children and young people's needs with the right care placement depending on whether they have moderate, high or intensive needs. Care placements range from trained or specialist carers, through to intensive 24/7 supervised care, and care and protection and youth justice residences.

Abuse of Children and Young People in Child, Youth and Family Care

In 2010/11 Child, Youth and Family began reporting on the number of children and young people who were found to have been abused while in the care of Child, Youth and Family. This information is reported in the Ministry's Annual Report, available at

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www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/corporate/annual-report/index.html.

When Child, Youth and Family receives a notification that a child or young person is being abused by a caregiver, an internal caregiver investigation is conducted and caregivers are referred to the Police. If the result of the internal investigation is that the caregiver is found to have abused a child or young person in their care, then the caregiver's approval is likely to be revoked and, if so, their file is closed.

At the time of notification any children and young people in the care of that caregiver are removed from the home and placed with alternative caregivers.

Prior to 2010/11 Child, Youth and Family did not report the number of children and young people who were found to have been abused by their caregiver. This information is held on individual caregiver and client files and in order to meet your request, Ministry staff would need to manually search through thousands of files. Therefore, these parts of your request are refused under section 18(f) of the Act as this would require substantial collation.

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.

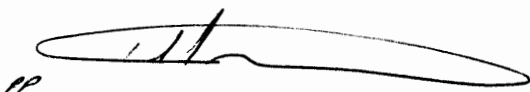
However, the Ministry does report the number of substantiated abuse findings for children and young people found to have been abused while in the care of Child, Youth and Family and this is provided below:

- In 2010/11, 28 children and young people were found to have been physically and/or sexually abused whilst in care.
- In 2011/12, 23 children and young people were found to have been physically and/or sexually abused whilst in care.
- In 2012/13, 35 children and young people were found to have been physically and/or sexually abused whilst in care.

I hope you find this information regarding children and young people in care helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman
PO Box 10-152
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely



Bernadine Mackenzie
Deputy Chief Executive Child, Youth and Family