

27 JUN 2017

Sam Bishop
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Dear Sam Bishop

On 19 April 2017, you emailed the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki requesting information relating to methamphetamine (P). You received a Notification of Decision on 18 May 2017 from the Ministry regarding your information request.

I will address each of your questions in turn.

- *What is the Ministry's policy on methamphetamine (P) use by parents and/or caregivers of children who are already working with the MVCOT?*
- *Does the MVCOT require parents and/or caregivers, who have been informed as being users/suppliers of P, to undergo drug tests for the use of an illegal Class A substance to ensure children are not in the presence of the illegal substance?*
- *Does the use/supply of P by parents and/or caregivers warrant the immediate removal of children in their care and if not why not?*
- *Does the MVCOT leave children in the care of parents and/or caregivers who are know users/suppliers of P and if so why?*

As you are aware, on 1 April 2017, the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki was established, for which Hon Anne Tolley is Minister for Children. The new Ministry incorporates a 'whole of sector', child-centred approach which will transform the way it works with vulnerable children and young people, by working in partnership with the wider social sector to achieve its outcomes. It is responsible for ensuring vulnerable children and their families and whānau get the services they need, and that agencies work together to take a broader view of children and young people who are at significant risk of harm now and in the future.

Children's safety is the Ministry's top priority. Methamphetamine labs are a dangerous place for children to live and exposure to any drug activity can pose serious risks to children. The Ministry works closely with police when children are living in a home where methamphetamine is being manufactured.

When the Ministry is notified that there are children present in a home where methamphetamine is present, an assessment is made as to the children's safety and alternative care is arranged for them when necessary. If there are any concerns that children have been exposed to chemicals, a medical check is sought to make sure their health has not been compromised. The Ministry takes these health concerns seriously and strives to find the best solution for the children in such situations.

While the Ministry does not impose mandatory drug testing of parents or caregivers, it is committed to working closely with families of children who have been exposed to a drug culture to make sure these children are able to live in a safe and nurturing family environment. Any decision to remove a child from their home or return them home is carefully considered and must be in their best interests.

Further information regarding the Ministry's assessment and response procedures are available online at: www.practice.mvcot.govt.nz/policy/assessment-and-decision-making/index.html.

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

If you are not satisfied with this response concerning children and young people in the care of the Ministry, 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



Pepi Batsos
General Manager
Organisational Support