

## Information for parents and caregivers

June 2012



# The Severe Behaviour Service

Supporting children and young people with severe behaviour difficulties or who are at risk of developing severe difficulties.

This information sheet outlines how the Ministry of Education, Special Education can support you and your child at school/kura if they have behaviour difficulties.

Parenting can be stressful and exhausting, particularly if your child is experiencing significant behaviour difficulties. Our Severe Behaviour Service is here to help. The service is funded by the Government and is free.

### About the Severe Behaviour Service

The Severe Behaviour Service has a team of specialists who schools can call in to help if your child is experiencing severe behaviour difficulties.

Our behaviour teams have specialist knowledge, strategies and experience and will provide advice and support for you, your family/whānau and your child's teachers.

Good behaviour can be taught and difficult behaviour 'unlearned'. When parents and teachers are given appropriate strategies and support, they can make changes to a child's learning environment (both at home and in the classroom), which will help them learn more positive ways of coping and relating to others.

Using these strategies can make a real difference to your child's education and to their opportunities to learn.

### Can my child get this support?

If your child is in Years 1 to 10 and behaves in a way that *significantly* affects their learning or their ability to relate positively with other people, they can be considered for the Severe Behaviour Service.

The Severe Behaviour Service's focus is on children whose *main* difficulty is behaviour, which is *severe*.



## How to apply

If you believe your child has a significant behaviour difficulty that is not being addressed, discuss this with your child's teacher or school principal. You can also talk to a kaitakawaenga (a Māori cultural advisor at the Ministry).

The school will then work with you to refer your child to the service.

### The support available for your child

A psychologist or a special education advisor (who might also become your child's caseworker) will work with your child, family/whānau and school to look at what is contributing to your child's behaviour and to work out ways to help change and manage it.

### What happens next

Your child's caseworker will meet with you and your child's school to discuss your child's needs.

You will be asked to sign a consent form that gives permission for Special Education staff to work with you, your child and their school.

They might also need to speak with other specialists or agencies who are working with you or your child. The consent form explains how private information about your child will be protected, and what to do if you want to make a complaint.

Your child will have a team that works with them. You will be part of this team, along with school staff and the special education caseworker.

Over time, the team will gather information about your child's behaviour. This includes information about their classroom and home situations. The aim is to help everyone understand what's contributing to your child's emotional and social behaviour and

apply this knowledge to the places where they learn. Together, you and the team will work out the details of a plan to support the people who have the most to do with your child and their learning – your family/whānau and your child's school.

Once the team has agreed on a plan, the special education caseworker will work closely with you and the school to implement and monitor the plan (see *Individual Plans*).

### Working together

One of the best ways to make a difference is for the behaviour specialists, you and your family/whānau and your child's teachers to work together with your child as the focus. You'll play an essential

*“This [five-point scale on a thermometer] shows you how cross you are so I know when I get angry, I need to stop and go somewhere else. The arrow is 'go'. That's when I go to recycling where I can break up the cardboard boxes for the recycling.”*

Shane

“ My message to other parents is don't be afraid to ask for help. That help makes a major difference. There's no quick remedy. You've got to keep at it and at it.”

Shane's Mum

role because you're the person who knows your child best and knows what's happening in their life.

By working together, the team can better understand the reasons why your child behaves as they do. It enables the team to develop specific programmes that help your child learn new and more positive behaviour and to get on better with other people.

### The people who will work with your child

Depending on your child's needs, the following people might work with your child, their school and you:

- ▶ **psychologists or special education advisors** can help work out what might be contributing to your child's difficulty and what support they'll need. They can help you and your child's teachers develop strategies to improve your child's social and other skills
- ▶ **behaviour support workers** support your child's teacher and your child in the classroom to help meet goals that are agreed for your child. They might work directly with your child, under the direction of the teacher, for some or all of the time they're at school

- ▶ **kaitakawaenga** or Māori cultural advisors work with your child's team and your whānau if you or your child identify as Māori. They help everyone work in culturally appropriate and responsive ways.

### About Individual Plans

Most children with significant special education needs will have some form of individual plan. This is sometimes called an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a Behaviour Plan. This is a written plan that outlines your child's goals and the time it's likely to take to reach those goals. It will describe the teaching strategies, resources and support needed to help your child meet those goals and behave in more appropriate ways.

As a parent, you play a very important part in the team that develops your child's plan. The team working with your child will meet to develop this plan. Talk with your child's school about who you want at IEP meetings – you can have as few or as many people there as you wish. The plan will identify:

- ▶ the current situation – *where are things at now?*
- ▶ your child's goals – *where would we like them to be?*

- ▶ strategies and teaching practices that will make a difference – *how will we get there?*
- ▶ the people and resources involved in the plan – *who will help implement the plan?*
- ▶ how the team will keep track of progress – *how will we know things are getting better?*

Your child's plan will be reviewed regularly in meetings to discuss your child's progress.

### Other support available for your child

If your child's needs are not significant enough for the Severe Behaviour Service, discuss your concerns with your child's teacher or principal.

Your school can look into a referral to Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) who are employed by groups of schools. RTLB are trained teachers who work with children experiencing learning or behaviour difficulties. They can work with teachers, giving them special training, or they can work with individual children or groups of children.

Schools also receive a Special Education Grant that they can use to support children with special education needs. They can spend

this in a variety of ways, including on resources, teacher training and teacher's aide time and on individual students or groups of students.

If your child is being supported by the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) and has severe behaviour issues, these will be addressed as part of their ORS services (see our information sheet *The Ongoing Resourcing Scheme*).

### **The Incredible Years programme for parents of younger children**

If your child is aged between three and eight, you might be able to take part in the *Incredible Years* programme. This is a highly effective programme that aims to strengthen families by improving parenting skills and helping children develop problem-solving skills.

If you go on this programme, some of the skills you'll learn include:

- ▶ how to play/spend special time together
- ▶ praising and rewarding children
- ▶ communicating positively
- ▶ setting limits
- ▶ dealing with disobedience, selectively using distractions, ignoring, time out and other strategies
- ▶ helping children to problem-solve.

Parents who have been through the programme speak highly of the positive long-term changes they've experienced. Contact your local Special Education office if you want to learn more about the *Incredible Years* programme.

## Contact us

If you're unclear about any part of our service or have questions about the support your child receives, please ask. Start by talking with those who work most closely with your child. You can also talk with staff at your local Special Education office or call the Special Education information line on 0800 622 222.

You can get more detailed special education information on our website: [www.minedu.govt.nz/Parents/YourChild/SupportForYourChild/ExtraSupport](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/Parents/YourChild/SupportForYourChild/ExtraSupport).

If you're deaf or have a hearing impairment, you can also contact Special Education through the New Zealand Relay Service on 0800 4 711 711 or go to [www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz).

Your feedback is important. By letting us know what's going well – and what we can do better – we can improve what we do to support all children with special education needs.

Contact details for the people on my child's Behaviour Team:

My local Special Education office:

### **New Zealand Government**

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