# Survivor Experiences Service

### For people who experienced abuse in care

## Information about meeting with the Survivor Experiences Service

This document is about what will happen if you choose to have a private session with the Survivor Experiences Service. A private session is a meeting. It is a chance for you to talk about what happened when you were in care. It can be part of the healing process.

We know that it takes courage to talk about what happened. We will:

* Treat you with respect.
* Support you with your wellbeing. This means helping you with any strong feelings that you have.
* Keep your information private.

### How should I prepare for my meeting?

One of our facilitators will contact you. The facilitator looks after everyone and makes sure things are organised and run smoothly. They will let you know the details about when and where your meeting is.

You can bring something with you to help you feel comfortable, safe, or calm. This could be a candle, a blanket, a photo, or something that is important to you.

You might want to plan what you are going to say. You could write it down if you want to. If you would like support to write it down, the Contact and Support team can arrange that for you.

Some things to think about are:

* What was your childhood like?
* Why were you put in care?
* What happened to you in care?
* Who abused you?
* Did anyone know that you were being abused?
* How did the abuse affect you?
* What would have helped you to be safe?
* What should the government and churches do to help people who were abused in their care?

### Who will be at my meeting?

There will be a Facilitator and a Kaitakawaenga in your meeting:

* The Facilitator will welcome you. They will talk to you about your rights and ask you to sign a consent form. If you agree, they will take notes and make an audio recording.
* The Kaitakawaenga is person who has mana and is trustworthy. Their role is to listen to your experience.
* A Wellbeing Advisor will be at the venue before, during and after your session. They can join your meeting if you want that. Their job is make sure you are feeling ok, and to help you get support if you need or want it. This support could be counselling, mirimiri, or something else that would help you.

Counselling means talking with a trained person (a counsellor) about issues that affect you. It can help you find ways to cope and to heal from your experiences. Mirimiri is similar to massage. It is a Māori healing treatment. It includes aspects of wairua (spirituality)

You can also bring a support person or advocate with you. If you want to do this, please let us know before the meeting. A support person could be someone from your whānau or family, or someone you are close to. The support person cannot speak for you or tell your story.

An advocate is someone who has permission to speak for you. If you want to bring an advocate, please talk to us about this before the meeting.

If you need support with your communication, we can arrange for a communication assistant or translator to be in your meeting too. If you need this, please let us know as soon as possible.

### What will happen in the meeting?

Meetings usually take about 90 minutes. In the meeting, you can share your experience of abuse in care. The Kaitakawaenga will listen to your story. They might ask you pātai (questions) to make sure they understand. You don’t have to talk about anything that you don’t want to. You can stop any time.

The Facilitator will take notes and make an audio recording of your session. If you don’t want this to happen, you can say so.

### What happens after the meeting?

Talking about what happened to you might make you feel strong emotions. You might feel good that you have been heard. You might feel proud, or relieved. You might feel angry, sad, or a mix of other emotions.

The Wellbeing Advisor will check how you are feeling. They can help you get wellbeing support, if you would like this. This support will be short-term, but we can help you to find long-term support if you want or need it. We will check in with you a few days later as well.

It is important to take care of yourself. You could:

* Talk to someone you trust, even if you do not feel like it.
* Be kind to yourself. You could plan something relaxing, or something that helps you be calm.
* Contact us to ask for support. Our contact details are at the end of this document.
* Contact a support service. We have given you another document with the contact details for some support services. It is called “Support Services.”

If you are worried about your mental health, contact your local GP or mental health service. If you, or someone else, is in danger, contact the police on 111.

### How to contact us

You can contact us by phone, text, email, or post:

* Phone 0800 456 090. In Australia the phone number is 1800 456 032. The phone line hours are 8:30am-4:30pm New Zealand time.
* Text 8328.
* Email [contact@survivorexperiences.govt.nz](mailto:contact@survivorexperiences.govt.nz)
* You can write to us at Survivor Experiences Service | Ratonga Wheako Mōrehu, PO Box 805, Wellington 6140.
* If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or find it hard to talk, you can use the New Zealand Relay Service. [www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz)

**End of information: Information about meeting with the Survivor Experiences Service**

This Large Print document is adapted by Blind Citizens NZ from the standard document provided by the Department of Internal Affairs | Survivor Experiences Service