

# Notifications to Child, Youth and Family Services

## What this is about...

The protection and nurture of children is a task shared by families and communities. Society's responsibilities are expressed through macro policies which support families, and through its agents on whom it relies to identify those children who are harmed in their families. Agencies who have a role in identifying children at risk include the health sector, schools, Police, Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, the criminal justice system, and community agencies.<sup>150</sup>

Determining the amount of abuse and neglect that occurs within New Zealand is difficult because it is often a 'hidden' crime. Thus, surrogate measures, such as rate of notification to Child Youth and Family Services can be used as a general - although potentially inaccurate - barometer of the level and extent of abuse and neglect. Notifications are made to Child Youth and Family Services for a range of problems including abuse, neglect, breakdown in relationships in families and suicide.

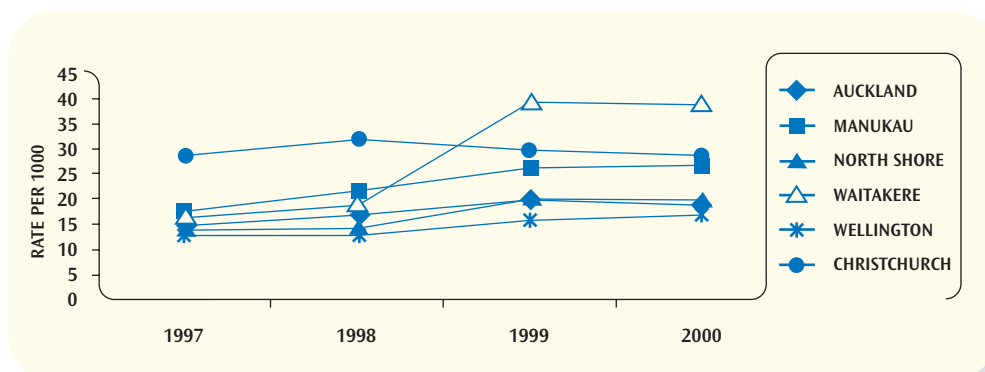
This indicator shows the rate of care and protection notifications to Child Youth and Family Services per 1,000 of population aged 17 years and under.<sup>151</sup>

## What did we find ?

The data shows that the rate of care and protection notifications to Child, Youth and Family Services has been mostly increasing since 1997. This may not reflect increasing levels of child abuse, because increased reporting can be influenced by a range of factors including:

- Awareness of services and support through, for example, the increased role of Community Liaison Social Workers who focus on prevention and early intervention, education and working collaboratively with other agencies (e.g. Barnardos, Iwi social services, etc)
- Response of health professionals (such as GPs and public health nurses) and schools.
- Preventative programmes or interventions that have been implemented in particular areas, such as the pilot Domestic Violence Initiative that was conducted in Waitakere in conjunction with the Police and other agencies.
- Centralisation of services and the establishment of the National Call Centre (which manages notifications from Northland to Hamilton as well as Christchurch City sites) has improved accessibility to services and provides consistent practice to all callers.

NOTIFICATIONS PER 1,000 PEOPLE AGED 17 YEARS AND UNDER, BY CYF DISTRICT (1997 TO 2000)



Data Source: Child Youth and Family Services

150 Office of the Commissioner for Children. 2000. Final Report on the Investigation into the Death of James Whakaruru.

151 The catchment areas for Child Youth and Family Offices are not consistent with city boundaries and reflect rate of notification by office rather than city. Data from the following offices are captured in the graph: Auckland = Grey Lynn and Royal Oak offices; Manukau = Mangere, Otara, Papakura (includes Franklin) offices; North Shore = Takapuna, Rodney offices; Waitakere = Henderson (also includes parts of Rodney); Wellington = Wellington; Christchurch = Christchurch, Papanui, Sydenham offices.