

Whānau Āwhina Plunket thanks families for their understanding

Whānau Āwhina Plunket is thanking whānau for their understanding during the Omicron outbreak.

The charity sees nearly 300,000 tamariki a year – that’s 89 percent of all new babies and 62 per cent of all newborn Māori pēpi.

Chief Executive Amanda Malu says nurses, kaiāwhina and health workers are doing a great job in what’s been a challenging couple of years. But as Omicron cases continue to rise, parents and caregivers can expect some service disruptions as staff become unwell or need to isolate.

“These include temporary clinic and drop-in clinic closures, appointments being delayed, and longer-than-usual wait time for PlunketLine.”

Ms Malu says as local clinics feel the squeeze of staffing shortages, frontline staff were focusing on seeing newborn pēpi and those most in need of additional support.

“This means for people with good support networks who are doing well, we may need to cancel appointments, or offer them virtually or over the phone instead,” she explains.

“We have range of tools to assess and support whānau virtually including online breastfeeding support, our zero-data website that answers many common parenting concerns, and regular updates and helpful advice on our Facebook page.

“Also, our wonderful PlunketLine nurses are available free to all whānau and caregivers 24/7 on 0800 933 922.”

Anyone with immediate concerns should get in touch with their GP or health care provider, or call an ambulance for urgent health care needs.

Ms Malu says many people don’t realise that unfortunately Whānau Āwhina Plunket appointments that are missed because of COVID-19 cannot be made it up, unless parents are concerned about their child’s health and development or need extra support.

“We can’t go back in time and make up those missed appointments, which I understand is upsetting for parents. We will see tamariki at their next core visit.”

Ms Malu says most whānau and families have understood the pressure nurses, kaiāwhina and health workers are under.

“It’s been really tough on parents who have had their babies during the pandemic. We have seen an increase in stress and anxiety in our whānau and families. We know the pandemic has hit people hard, socially and emotionally,” says Ms Malu.

“Our staff are working incredibly hard to meet the needs of our tamariki, whānau and communities in the most trying of circumstances, and I’m grateful to our parents and caregivers for their patience and understanding as we navigate this together,” she says.

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