

## Check & Connect – Working with families

**Jonas Leatio'o (kaihoe | mentor):** You're on the program, but you're not in trouble, you know? We're just here to provide support and help. That's always the first thing. And with the families, we make sure we mention that, "Your child's on the program, they're not in trouble, there's nothing wrong. You know, they just need a bit of support and help".

**Tania Liuagamatagi (kaiārahi | supervisor):** We have to be careful sometimes because we don't know what families' experiences of services are. Sometimes they say, "So, you're not a teacher at the school, so why are you working with my daughter or son?". And then the other side is, "So are you a social worker?". But once we explain to the families that, like, "Yes, we're social work-trained or we're youth work-trained, but our focus is this", and really sitting with the families and explaining to them what that actually means for their young person, then we see the walls coming down.

**Georgia Drake (kaihoe | mentor):** It's taking a strengths-based approach to it. Even if a family might be unsure of you, not want to engage with you, that's really them protecting themselves, protecting their child, the young person that lives with them. It's not about me. They're not mad that I'm here, but they're being protective of the young person.

**Tania:** We can go to the house and families will stand in the door and not let us in. That's a clear sign of no, not just yet. And then we just say, "This is who's working with your son or daughter, we just wanted to say hello". And then building on that as we go. And along the way, when we're allowed inside the house, that's when we know we've had a breakthrough with the owner.

**Karaitiana (student):** So the first meeting wasn't good, but my family got used to her. They decided that what she's doing for me is good, which is alright for me. If they trust her, then I do. Yeah. And if I trust her, then they do.

**Leo (student):** He's been over a few times to chat with my family. That's been good, only good conversations. My whole family really likes him.

**Jonas:** We always want to try and build that bridge between families and school, because sometimes it's hard for families to come into school and engage with the teachers. And for us to create that relationship with the families, that can build that bridge.

**Dr Karen Dobric (Tumuaki Tuarua | Deputy Principal Papatoetoe High School):** He's somebody who's coming along and connecting with that student. And that gives the parents, I think the biggest word is 'hope', that their young person is going to be able to get support to stay in school.