



Arrest

Having a family member arrested can be very stressful. It may be something you were expecting or it may have come completely out of the blue. You may be left feeling very helpless as there is nothing you can do to stop or change the situation.

You may have lots of unanswered questions about the arrest and how it was carried out. If the police came into your home you may be left wondering if they will come back and what your rights are. If you are concerned or need your own legal advice contact your local Community Law Centre.

Children

If children have witnessed the arrest they may experience trauma and anxiety especially if the police have entered the family home. In some cases dogs or the Armed Offenders Squad will have been used. It can be very traumatic for children to see the adults in their lives upset.

This can be a very scary and confusing time for children and they may go on to exhibit the effects of trauma long after the event. They may become quite clingy and show signs of behaviour they were thought to have outgrown. Younger children may seem afraid of police or other authority figures and older children, hostility.

"My little boy is now terrified every time he sees a police vehicle go by."

"My eldest son blames the police for taking away his father. He is angry toward them and I am concerned that he will get involved in anti-social behaviour."

"For months afterwards the children had difficulty sleeping. They started wetting the bed and having nightmares."

It is important that children are given a chance to ask questions and talk about how they are feeling. They may need to have it explained that what happened was not their fault. Reassure them that their family member is safe and that they will get to see them again.

It feels like everybody knows

It can be very embarrassing for older children if neighbours or friends witness the arrest. Children may find friends are no longer allowed to come over or that invitations to other people's houses stop.

This can be made harder by media attention, especially if the alleged offence is high profile. If you can, its best to try and keep the children in the same kind of routine as possible. Some families however may feel they need to go and stay somewhere else until things settle down a bit.

"We went to stay with my sister until all the attention had died down. I was so embarrassed as the police kept coming and going to our house. I just wanted to get away from it all."

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What happens now?

Your family member may be allowed to return home after attending the police station. If they are going to trial they may be allowed to stay at home or they may be remanded into custody while the court case is settled.

Although not yet found guilty or not guilty this will mean they enter the prison system and will appear in court from the court cells. See *Attending Court* and *Preparing for Prison* for more information.

Get support

It is not uncommon to feel a whole range of emotions at this time. You may swing between feeling angry, worried, confused and very alone. It's important that you get support at this time and speak to someone you trust. If you don't feel you can talk to your friends or family contact Pillars or Lifeline.

Try to remember how scary things can seem to children. They will need a lot of help to deal with the big feelings they are having and the anxieties they experience. This is important to try to lessen any long term negative effects. See also *Caring for Children When a Family Member Goes to Prison* and *Telling the School*

Who can help?

Pillars - Pillars has a range of services including a free and confidential helpline for anyone who is affected by the imprisonment of a family member or friend. Phone 0508 PILLARS (0508 7 45 527) or visit www.pillars.org.nz

Lifeline - Free confidential non-judgmental counselling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Phone 0800 543 354

Community Law Centre - Free legal info & advice. Visit www.communitylaw.org.nz

Department of Corrections - Information for friends and families of people in prison. Visit www.corrections.govt.nz

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