



Looking after whānau during COVID-19

Keeping whānau well and healthy has been the focus for Ora Toa PHO, a health service based in Porirua run by Ngāti Toa iwi and the only Māori owned and operated PHO in the Wellington region.

In addition to its services, Ora Toa runs a COVID-19 swabbing clinic in Cannons Creek and a mobile testing clinic for the community.

“Some staff who work in our community outreach health teams and our Puna Reo were redeployed to our medical centres to cover for staff who were in the vulnerable age bracket or had underlying health issues and could no longer work,” says Ora Toa Kaiwhakahaere Te Iringa Davies.

Ora Toa’s mental health and addiction service has also continued to provide counselling and support over the phone. The Immunisation Team has continued working during lockdown, delivering flu vaccinations and essential childhood immunisations.

Ora Toa also set up an iwi support hub for iwi members throughout the country to provide wrap-around support and help whānau connect with social services.

“We tapped into the social service providers and government agencies to support our whānau,” says Te Iringa. “The iwi has totally appreciated it. We’ve sent out a lot of food vouchers, kai packs and organised frozen meals to be delivered to our kaumatua who are living alone.”

The iwi organisation has also distributed over 3500 hygiene packs containing hand sanitiser, soap, masks, gloves and toilet paper, with Whanau Ora, into the community.

A focus has been recognising the uncertainty of this time and supporting clients, whānau and the community to access support and help.

“I feel like Porirua really banded together to stop the virus. Everyone tried to look after each other. Everyone totally banded together for the betterment of our iwi and our clients and our organisation.”

Ora Toa Dr Sarah Sciascia has a weekly spot on Te Ao Maori News, a live streaming programme fronted by Wena Harawira to answer COVID-19 questions in an engaging way through a Maori lens.

“Getting our iwi to engage and participate, that’s what we’ve found to be key. As long as our iwi members are talking they’re not in the unknown.”