



# Home Safety Suggestions

Parent/Caregiver/Whānau Information – Child Development Service

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## Introduction

This handout provides some ideas which may help whānau/families for whom there is a safety risk for their child on their home property due to their behaviour. In some instances these suggestions may remove the need for further intervention, if the safety risk is reduced. These suggestions may also be useful in situations where the whānau/family is waiting for the services of a behaviour support team.

Funding for some of the solutions below may be able to be accessed from the Ministry of Health via an occupational therapy assessment, should criteria be met. For us to be able to apply for funding we need to have the following services, Explore and Lifelinks involved. It may be beneficial to liaise with these services, while your child is waiting for a housing assessment to make the assessment process faster once it begins.

Lifelinks – funding for respite/care support: <https://www.lifelinks.co.nz/>

Explore – specialist behaviour service: [info@healthcarenz.co.nz](mailto:info@healthcarenz.co.nz)

Unfortunately, this process can take some time, therefore it is acknowledged that some whānau/families may wish to seek funding elsewhere. Use of some of these strategies may mean an occupational therapy assessment is no longer needed.

## Supervision

Close-by supervision is our recommendation as the best strategy – for those challenging times of day when safety concerns are most likely to occur, eg. during meal times or bath times, etc. You could contact your Lifelinks coordinator to discuss funding for additional help/alternatively getting support from whānau/family at the challenging times.

## Considerations regarding the home environment

When restricting access from any doors/gate of the home it is strongly recommended the families have a safety plan and review this regularly. ([www.escapemyhouse.co.nz](http://www.escapemyhouse.co.nz))

### Fence safety

- It may be necessary to move anything that can be climbed on such as garden furniture, away from boundary fencing to prevent the child from using these to climb up and over fencing. Garden equipment should be stored securely, eg. in a locked shed to ensure the child does not have access to it.

### Building/Modifying fencing

- Ministry of Health guidelines are that secure gates/fencing should not cross a driveway as it may create vehicle/pedestrian risk of injury.
- Fencing recommendations are that fencing should not be able to be climbed, ie. cover horizontal rails that could be stood on.
- Angled return fencing can make climbing over the fencing more difficult. This is a piece of fencing (approx. 200-300mm wide) that is angled at 30-45 degree on the top of existing fencing, angling into the play area of make climbing over the fence more challenging.
- Bamboo or light weight fence covering can also be used to cover horizontal railing.

## Gates

- It may be possible for gates to be secured with chains, combination padlocks or child safety-keyed pool gate style.
- Consider fitting the locks up high or on the other side of the gate if this would be more effective.

## Doors

- Fitting a door with a higher and lower latch can be a simple method of restricting exit. Two handed coordination is required to undo both latches at the same time and this can be difficult for many children to master.
- In some instances, a keyed/patio bolt or a hook/latch can be easily secured to a door to enable you to lock it securely. It is recommended that the key is out of reach of the child but needs to be accessible to the adults in the case of an emergency

## Alarms

- Chimes/bells/sticky back alarms can be available at hardware stores.

## Windows

- These can be secured with security window latches so they only open approximately 10 cm to ensure they do not open wide enough for the child's head to get stuck in the gap.
- If you wish windows to be completely secure, then a smaller patio bolt lock can sometimes be attached to windows.
- Alternatively, sticky back window alarms may be available at some larger hardware stores.

## Locked cupboards

- It may be possible to install a slide bolt or padlock on one cupboard to secure items such as matches, chemical medications, sharp knives, or position them in a high cupboard, that is difficult to reach, or it is obvious to others when the child is trying.

## Electrical

- Plastic cover guards for power points can restrict objects being placed into them.
- Ovens/Gas hobs: using back elements to prevent child reaching over and accidentally burning is recommended. Ovens can be switched off at the wall when not in use. Some elements/hobs such as gas can have the knobs removed when not in use.

## Considerations regarding the child

### Play/Sensory processing

- Frequently changing play activities/movement toys using your child's interest or setting up sensory activities can assist with redirecting away from attempts to leave the property and seek stimulation elsewhere.

### Communication

- Using strategies such as 'stop and then' and 'no climbing visuals' placed by windows, furniture and doors/gates may help some children.
- The 'stop' visual might be a picture of a stop sign informing the child that they should not climb out of the window or go out of the door. The 'then' part of the visual is a picture of something else they need to do instead of going out of the window or door. The 'then' visual could for example inform the child that they need to find Mum/Dad, go to their visual schedule, go to the toy box, etc.

### Behaviour

- Explore Behaviour Specialist Advice service is accessed via referral from Lifelinks (see contact details above). Be aware Explore has a waitlist, so it may be beneficial to seek a referral as soon as possible, as this will be required for funding applications should housing modifications be recommended part of the home safety plan.



Child Development Service, Montreal House, Private Bag 8140, Christchurch  
phone: (03) 383 6820 | Fax: (03) 383 6809

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