

**Public Health Association of New Zealand**

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**Conference told there are not enough services for Māori children**

There are not enough health and social services that focus specifically on Māori children and young people, two Māori health leaders told the Public Health Association's annual conference in Ngaruawahia today.

"Māori health services tend to be adult-centric," Director of Māori child advocacy organisation Te Kahui Mana Ririki Anton Blank told conference delegates today.

"Government priorities have created this situation. Māori health providers deliver services in areas like smoke-free, diabetes, and mental health because that is where the funding is. There are not enough services that focus specifically on the needs of tamariki.

"This is a major concern because we have high rates of child abuse and child maltreatment."

General Manager of Māori SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) Kodi Hapi supported Anton Blank's observations of the sector.

"Over 60 percent of SIDS deaths in this country are Māori," he said.

"The whānau of these babies are isolated from services and health professionals. The challenge for us then is how do we reach those whānau?"

Māori SIDS is a small national organisation of five staff. Kodi said that with such a limited resource they need to network with other organisations who work with children.

"We will have to partner with organisations whose primary focus is adults not infants. This means we have to educate them about the needs of newborns, and give them information they can pass onto these whānau."

Anton Blank and Kodi Hapi say their two organisations will explore ways in which they can collaborate in the future.

"The focus of our work is slightly different but we both aim to improve the health and wellbeing of very young Māori. We need to work together and develop strategies for reaching Māori whānau with our messages about good parenting." Kodi Hapi said.

"Ultimately government needs to increase investment in services which focus on the early years. In the meantime we will work to increase awareness of the needs of young ones with the existing Māori health workforce," Anton Blank said.

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