

[www.starttaranaki.co.nz](http://www.starttaranaki.co.nz)

PO Box 25. Kaponga. Taranaki 4314

phone: (06) 764 6225

Fax: (06) 7646 227

**PROGRAMME OUTLINE**

START Taranaki is based in Kaponga on the southern slopes of Mount Taranaki. It was incorporated as a charitable trust in late 2003 and is governed by a Board of Trustees. The board brings a range of experience to the running of this not-for-profit group and all are passionate about achieving good outcomes for youth.

START Taranaki has been identified as an extremely effective intervention for recidivist youth offenders. It is START Taranaki’s unique three phase design and focus on building meaningful relationships between young people and positive role models which allows its young people to feel safe to share pieces of themselves without fear of ridicule.

START Taranaki has a holistic approach which looks at each client’s skills and strengths then builds individualized plans with young people to make change that is meaningful and sustainable to them.

The desired outcome is to equip the young people with the tools to function as an adult in society and contribute towards safer communities through this initiative to reduce crime.

The individualized plans include strategies to:

* Help young people understand and manage their behaviours
* Identify career options and plan for these
* Raise self-awareness and self-esteem
* Improve social skills and ability to interact positively within the community
* Improve health and education
* Build skills towards being an independent adult and provide supervision and support, for long term change/success

**Phase One** - an intensive four week ‘Isolation’ where young offenders are removed well away from their familiar environment. The youth are kept on the move in a native bush setting. They learn to live, work and have fun together as a team. Each young person receives instruction in bush craft and survival skills and is placed in a solo situation with limited human contact for three nights and three days. It is a time to reflect on their past and contemplate the future. This solo experience is often a point of realization which sparks genuine motivation for change.

‘Isolation’ is an effective tool for uncovering hidden strengths and talents. The harsh conditions of the bush and the challenges allow for the invaluable development of strong trust and attachment between young people and staff. It is these relationships that really make the difference throughout the rest of the programme. Self-belief is evident at the end of this component; the young people have been pushed to their limits and have experienced what it feels like to succeed.

To transition the young people from ‘the bush’ back into normal living, the youths spend 4 days at a Marae in Oaonui. START Taranaki collaborates with tangata whenua to promote the awareness of Maori culture and developing their Wairua me Hinengaro (spiritual awareness) whatever their beliefs or background may be.

Activities include:

* Tikanga o te marae
* Kapa haka
* Waiata
* Gathering and preparing kaimoana
* Carving

During this time START Taranaki has a Whanau Day, where the young people spend quality time with their whanau. Meetings are held with the young people and their whanau to discuss progress made and start developing plans for the future. These whanau meetings are often the first time in many years that the young person has listened to positive feedback about themselves in front of their whanau.

**Phase Two** - an intensive period of six weeks to seven weeks which is called ‘Ora Toa’. The focus is on maintaining motivation, continuous goal setting and installing routines that will extend well beyond the six weeks. We aim to bring about awareness as to how they can contribute positively to society through community based projects. The young people are placed in work experience to help develop their work ethics. Young people have the chance to try out many new things and begin to discover strengths, skills and interests. These discoveries are constantly being recognized, celebrated and incorporated into a transition plan. Transition plans are developed with a large amount of input and consultation with the young person and their whanau. It is this plan which outlines the nuts and bolts of how the young person is going to return to the community and put into action everything they have learnt.

**Phase Three** - is called ‘Transition’. This component sees each young person placed back in the community either with family, approved caregivers, or independent living situations. This is where the young person has the opportunity to regain ownership over their place in society and be responsible for keeping themselves on track without the 24 hour support and supervision they have had at START Taranaki. The young people follow their transition plan which outlines their day to day activities such as attending further education or employment. Support structures are put in place to ensure the young person feels they are still cared for. START Taranaki staff continue their work with the young people as mentors, maintaining regular telephone and face to face contact. Support is crucial at this stage as it is where negative influences can undo all the progress that has been achieved. START Taranaki staff maintains links with each young person over and above the minimum ten week requirement.

*Child, Youth and Family and Youth Justice Practitioners have acknowledged START Taranaki as New Zealand’s ‘flagship’ youth intervention programme.*