



YOU AND THE YOUTH CARE SUPPORT CENTRE

Vlaamse overheid



jongereWelzijn
JONG LEVEN RICHTING GEVEN

INTRODUCTION

This brochure will give you information about the **Ondersteuningencentrum Jeugdzorg (Youth Care Support Centre)**. It explains what the Ondersteuningencentrum Jeugdzorg is, who works there and what they can do for you and your parents.

WHAT IS AN ONDERSTEUNINGS-CENTRUM JEUGDZORG?

The Ondersteuningencentrum Jeugdzorg is a **public service**. It is part of the agentschap Jongerenwelzijn (Youth Welfare Agency) (Flemish government). This agency provides youth support in Flanders, particularly:

- ⌚ Voluntary (extrajudicial) and (judicially) imposed assistance to children and young people in problematic living situations;
- ⌚ Reception and guidance for young people who have committed acts categorized as an offence.

The agentschap Jongerenwelzijn must ensure that every youngster in Flanders is given the opportunity to grow up properly.

The Ondersteuningencentrum Jeugdzorg examines whether it is necessary in alarming situations to initiate or continue government assistance (societal necessity).

Alarming situations are situations:

- > that threaten the development opportunities of a minor. For instance, not going to school often or not getting enough food.
- > that adversely affect the minor's (psychological, physical or sexual) integrity. For instance being beaten, being touched by people around you in places that make you feel uncomfortable, being forced to do things you really don't want to do ...

Societal necessity means that society deems it necessary to intervene, for example, when the assistance is not running smoothly or if you or your parents are no longer able to or no longer wish to cooperate.

The government then intervenes so as to make sure that you and your family get the help you need. The Ondersteuningencentrum Jeugdzorg is then activated.

As long as assistance runs through the Ondersteuningencentrum Jeugdzorg, it is still voluntary youth care (with your and your parents' consent). However, you cannot simply decide to change or stop the assistance. That is agreed upon together: in consultation with you, your parents and the youth care workers.

In voluntary youth care, everyone must be in agreement. If not, the assistance cannot continue.

When **danger** threatens or if cooperation within voluntary youth care is no longer working, then the Ondersteuningencentrum Jeugdzorg can send your file on to the Public Prosecutor's Office (juvenile prosecutor). The juvenile prosecutor can engage the juvenile judge. The juvenile judge can then initiate judicial youth care (imposed assistance).



WHAT DOES THE ONDERSTEUNINGSCENTRUM JEUGDZORG DO?

The Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg has four tasks:

- 👂 **Give advice** to youth care workers;
- 👂 **Investigate** whether it is necessary for the government to intervene in the assistance;
- 👂 **Set up assistance** or follow up on current assistance;
- 👂 **Refer** to the juvenile judge if judicially imposed assistance is required.

1. ADVICE

A youth care worker can ask the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg for advice on how to help you and your family. He can also ask for an explanation about the functioning of the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg and he can ask whether it is necessary in your case to register with the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg. This can be done **anonymously**, so the youth worker does not have to give your name to the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg.

2. INVESTIGATE WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD INTERVENE IN THE ASSISTANCE

You, your parents and the person who has contacted the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg are invited for a discussion. Everyone gets the opportunity to tell his/her story. The Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg asks questions about your living conditions and the help you have already received. Together you will assess whether your home situation is safe and whether you are getting enough opportunities to grow up properly.

With that information in mind, the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg will decide whether or not it will follow up on you and your family. If this is not necessary, the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg will take no further action, except perhaps refer you to a (different) care provider who can help you along.

If the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg deems it necessary to follow up on the assistance, it can do two things:

- 👂 Initiate assistance (or follow up on the assistance in place)
- 👂 Refer to the juvenile court for judicial youth care.

At the end of the investigation, you (you, your parents and the person who registered you) will again be invited for a discussion. In that discussion you will receive an explanation about:

- 👂 The decision of the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg to follow up on the assistance or not;
- 👂 The type of assistance the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg thinks is most suitable for you;
- 👂 The way in which the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg will follow up on the assistance.

3. ASSISTANCE

Depending on the situation, the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg will be more or less involved with the assistance. Sometimes it will suffice that the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg merely observes how the assistance is going. It will mainly ensure that everyone sticks to the agreements. The Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg will make clear arrangements with you and your counsellors as to what is expected from everyone. The counsellors are obliged to pass important information about the assistance progress on to the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg (obligation to inform).

However, if necessary, the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg will intervene directly in the assistance. It will then draw up an assistance programme containing the various steps required and how it will follow up on the assistance. In that case the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg will follow up on and steer the assistance itself if necessary.

4. REFERRAL TO JUDICIAL YOUTH CARE

The Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg can – at any time – decide to make your situation known to the Public Prosecutor (juvenile prosecutor). The juvenile prosecutor can then engage the juvenile court. For example: the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg notices that you or your parents are insufficiently taking part in the assistance, or that you are in danger and it is necessary to call upon a juvenile judge for your safety. In such cases, the step to judicial or imposed youth care will be taken, and there is no need for your or your parents' consent. You will, however, be informed of the intention to refer you to the juvenile judge. At that point, you may still request a meeting where you receive a final opportunity to tell your story. Sometimes it is still possible to remain in voluntary assistance if you manage to make new arrangements and everyone willingly cooperates.

WHO WILL HELP YOU ALONG IN THE ONDERSTEUNINGSCENTRUM JEUGDZORG?

In the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg a consultant will assist you. Your consultant is your fixed **contact person**. Your consultant will personally follow up on your situation, but will not solely decide what is going to happen to you and your assistance. The entire team of consultants in the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg take these decisions so as to assure you that the help you will receive does not depend on the opinion of one single person.

You will have several talks with the consultant. It is good to know that the consultant is bound by **professional confidentiality**. He cannot simply pass on information about you and your parents to others. If it is necessary to pass on information, you will be informed accordingly. This also applies to things that other people say.

The Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg's consultant will always ask for your consent and your parents' consent whenever he wants to change something in the assistance, as it is still voluntary assistance. However, you and your parents are expected to cooperate. If you do not cooperate, the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg can decide for itself to refer you to the juvenile prosecutor.

The consultant will involve you, your parents and the youth workers in his search for personalized assistance, meaning a solution that **helps you specifically**.

MY CONSULTANT

Name:

.....

E-mail address:

.....

Telephone number:

.....

Reachable on (permanence):

.....

(Write down the contact details of your consultant at the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg)



WHAT KIND OF HELP CAN YOU RECEIVE FROM THE ONDERSTEUNINGSCENTRUM JEUGDZORG?

The help you receive can vary greatly. Everyone who is involved in the problem is also involved as much as possible in the solution. This surely includes you and your parent(s), but also the care providers and others who were already involved with your family. If you are already staying in a youth care institution, the institution's counsellors will also follow up on your situation. So, you will not be on your own.

You do not need the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg in order to get help. Youth care is either directly accessible (e.g. Centra voor Leerlingenbegeleiding (Pupil Guidance Centres, or CLB), Jongerenadviescentra (Youth Advice Centres, or JAC), a psychologist...), or you can obtain access through the intersectoral gateway (see the **brochure, "You and the intersectoral gateway"**). If you wind up in the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg, it does not actually change anything concerning the type of help you can receive. There is no type of assistance that you can receive exclusively in the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg.

The difference is mainly that the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg provides you with a consultant who follows up on your assistance. Thus you will always have a fixed contact person there.

URGENT ASSISTANCE

Fortunately, situations that require immediate protection do not occur all too often. It is, however, good to know that a juvenile judge can respond immediately in case of physical, psychological or sexual abuse. The juvenile judge will then take measures to provide you with immediate protection.

It is important for you to speak out when you are afraid something is going to happen to you or someone is going to harm you. Then it is best that you contact your consultant at the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg immediately. In very urgent cases, you can better call the police (call 101) or the emergency number (112).

If you are not sure where to turn to in such a situation, you can also call the hotline for abuse, violence and child abuse at the number 1712. They can tell you what you can do in your specific situation. You should know that a call to this number does not appear on the telephone bill. You can easily call from your home without anyone finding out that you have called this number.

The consultant at the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg and the youth workers following up on you are all bound by professional confidentiality. They deal with information very discretely and you can ask them not to relate certain things. However, if they notice that you are in danger, they are obliged to take action. Safety comes first. Sometimes this could imply that they call upon the juvenile court to take emergency measures.

Need more information about judicial youth care?



Then ask your consultant for the brochure: **"You and the juvenile court"**.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

You and your parents have a number of rights, but also duties within youth care. You will find more information about this on our website www.jongerenwelzijn.be.

Also have a look at the website <http://wvg.vlaanderen.be/rechtspositie>. This website specifically deals with the rights of minors in youth care.

For further information on children's rights in general you can visit the following websites:

-  Kinderrechtencommissariaat (Commission for Children's Rights): <http://www.kinderrechtencommissariaat.be>
-  The Children's Law Centres: <http://www.kinderrechtswinkel.be>

ALMOST EIGHTEEN

On your eighteenth birthday you will become an adult. The Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg will no longer follow up on the assistance. Usually you are prepared for that to happen. But it may happen that you are not quite ready yet and would still like to have some support. Life as an (young) adult can be hard, especially when you are on your own. In that case it is a good idea to discuss this with your consultant at the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg. He can get you on your way to receive continuing assistance through the 'gateway'. He can also give you information as to where you can turn to as an adult so that you will find the way to further assistance.

QUESTIONS OR COMPLAINTS?

Is there anyone in your immediate surroundings you can talk to about this? It could be a friend, a teacher, a care provider at the Centrum voor Leerlingenbegeleiding (CLB), a youth worker... If you are staying in a residential institution, it could also be your individual counsellor, the social worker or psychologist, the management of the institution... They will help you find a solution.

If for some reason it is impossible for you to turn to them, you can call upon the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg if it is following up on your situation. Your consultant will then help you, your parents and the care providers around you to find a solution.



STILL HAVE A QUESTION OR COMPLAINT CONCERNING YOUTH CARE?

You can address the JO-lijn.

JO-lijn is the help line of Jongerenwelzijn. Are you looking for information, advice or do you have a complaint? Call the JO-lijn on the free number **0800/ 900 33**.

JO-lijn is reachable by phone on:

- 📞 Monday mornings between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.
- 📞 Wednesday afternoons between 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.
- 📞 Friday afternoons between 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.

You can also write them:

JO-lijn
Ellipsgebouw
Koning Albert II-laan 35 - bus 32
1030 Brussel

Or send an e-mail to jo-lijn@jongerenwelzijn.be.

PRODUCTION

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MORE INFORMATION

www.jongerenwelzijn.be/integrale-jeugdhulp
Addresses of local services can be found in the Contact section.

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