

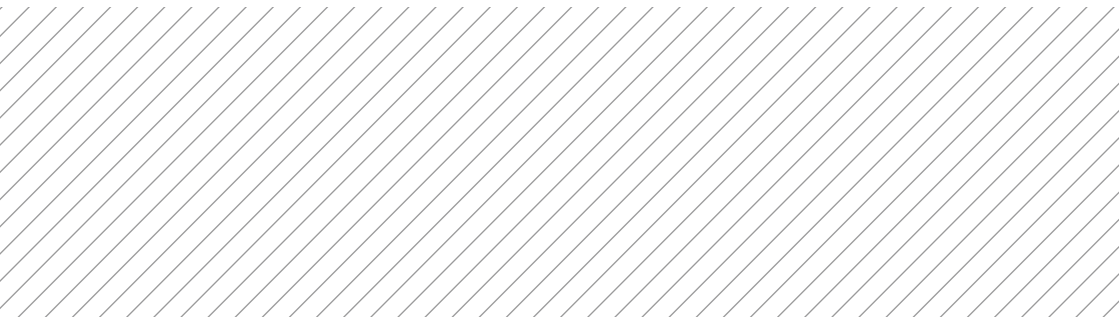


Vlaanderen  
is welzijn



# My rights in youth care

DEPARTMENT OF  
WELFARE  
PUBLIC HEALTH &  
FAMILY



## FOR STARTERS

This booklet will tell you everything you are allowed to do, and to expect when you are receiving help from an organisation. These are your rights. It also covers what your parents and care providers are allowed to do. It tells you what youth care is about.

The coloured boxes will help you to better understand the text.

Tips are in an orange box

Explanations are in a green box

A blue box gives you more details

Text in a pink box is very important, you should remember it!

At the end of this booklet, you can find an explanation for some of the words that are more difficult.



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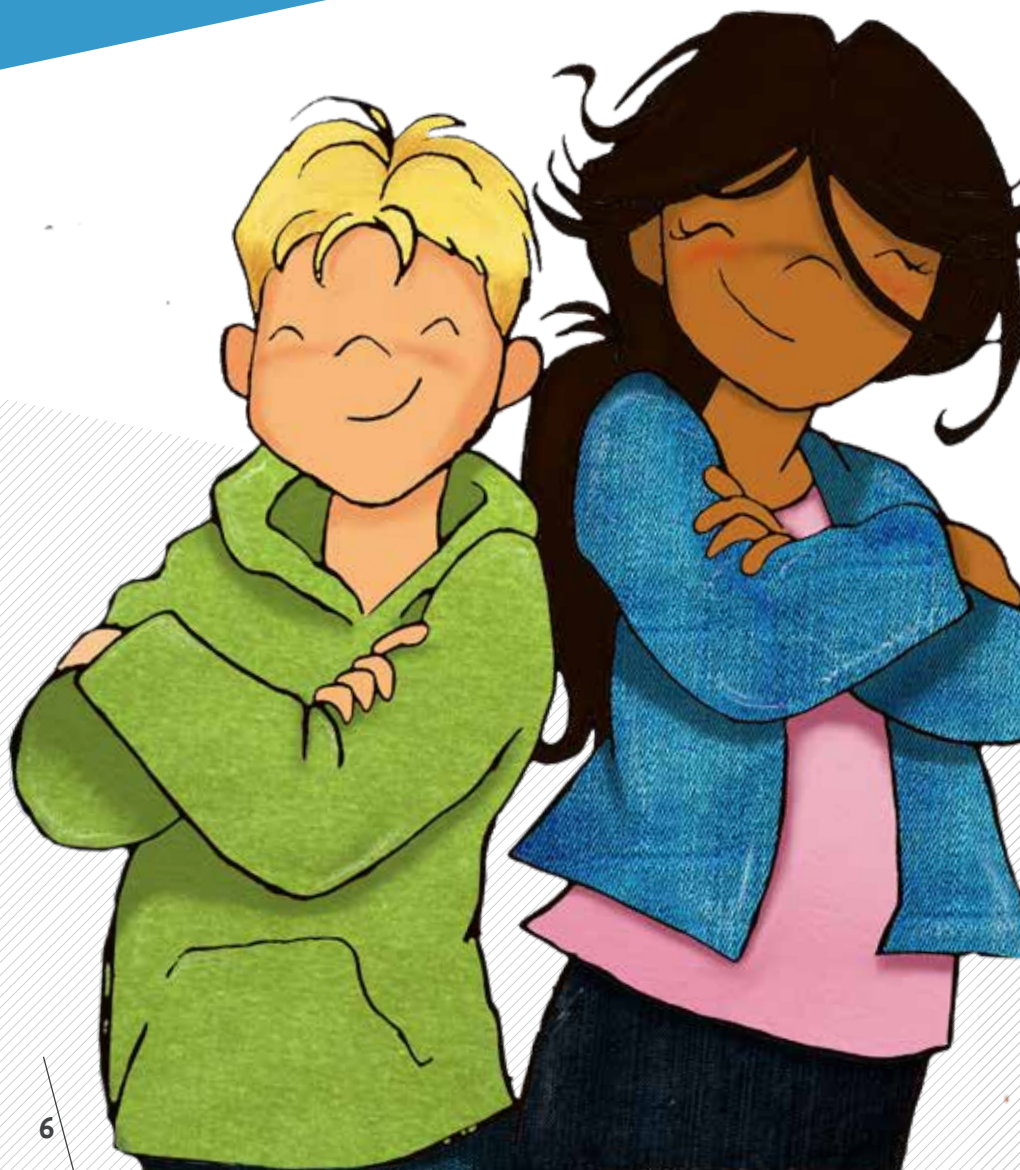
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# 1 DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUTH CARE?



## 1. WHAT IS INTEGRATED YOUTH CARE?

Children have the right to grow up as happily as possible.

They therefore have the right to receive care and protection from their parents and other adults. Children are also entitled to an education, to play, not to live in poverty... and to receive help.

Sometimes, you will have questions or problems.

For example, if:

- you have regular discussions with your parents, brother or sister,
- you are often home alone because your parents have to work,
- you are disabled and feel isolated,
- you are bullied at school or need help with your homework,
- you feel down and sit in your room all day,
- your parents have so many worries that they can't look after you for a while,
- you lost someone you love and fall into depression because you can't cope with it on your own....

The best thing to do then is to talk to someone who can give you good advice or help. This could be your parents or a family member, a youth movement leader, a teacher, etc.

But for some problems you need more help. In that case you can go to an organisation that helps children. That could be Awel, tZitemzo, het Centrum voor leerlingenbegeleiding - CLB (the Pupil Guidance Centre), het Vertrouwenscentrum Kindermishandeling (the Child Abuse Trust Centre), etc.

Children who have problems must receive help.

That's why there have to be organisations that can help children and their parents with all kinds of problems.

"Integrated youth care" is the name for all kinds of help children can get from these organisations.

## 2. THREE IMPORTANT RULES WHEN YOU RECEIVE HELP



### **EVERYONE ALWAYS HAS TO DO WHAT IS IN YOUR BEST INTERESTS.**

Suggestions and decisions from care providers, your foster parents or your parents always have to be in your best interests.

### **TO BE ABLE TO USE YOUR RIGHTS, YOU HAVE TO BE COMPETENT.**

“Being competent” means that you can do and decide certain things yourself. So when you’re competent, you may exercise your rights yourself!

Under normal circumstances, all children are competent to exercise their rights in ‘Integrated Youth Care’ themselves.



### **ALL CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE HELP HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS.**

Children may not be treated differently because they are a boy or a girl, because they speak a different language, have a different cultural or religious background, or because they are disabled.





## 2 WHAT YOU CAN & SHOULD WHEN YOU RECEIVE HELP



## 1. YOU MUST RECEIVE HELP

Your parents can seek help if it's necessary. But so can you! Sometimes you and your parents will receive help even if you don't ask for it.

It happens that an organisation or care provider cannot help you. This might be because they have too much other work, because they don't know how to help you with your problems themselves, or for another reason.

In that case, they have to tell you where else you can go to look for the help you need.



Write the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of all the organisations where you can find help on a card. That way you can find help quickly if ever you have questions or problems.

If you don't know which organisation to turn to, you can ask "tZitemzo".

If you have questions or problems, you must receive help.

## 2. YOU MUST RECEIVE INFORMATION

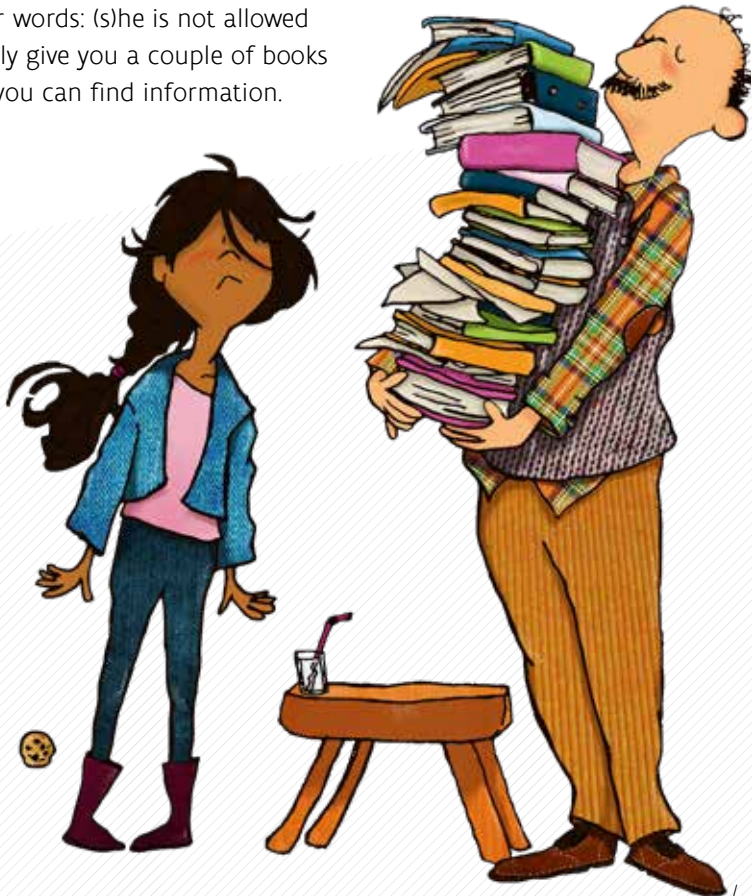
Your care provider must tell you what is going to happen in order to help you and your family.

(S)he must tell you how (s)he is going to help you, how long it is going to take, what you and your parents can do, who is going to help, etc.

If changes are made to what was said earlier, (s)he must tell you as well.

(S)he must explain everything to you very clearly, so that you understand exactly what is going to happen.

In other words: (s)he is not allowed to simply give you a couple of books where you can find information.



If you have questions about the help you are getting, write them down immediately. That way you won't forget to ask them when you talk to your care provider. Ask as many questions as you can when you talk to your care provider. For example the following ones:

- What is going to happen to me?
- What if I don't want to receive help? Or if I want different help?
- How long is the care provider going to help me and my family?
- Where can I go if I have questions?
- Where can I go if I am not satisfied with the help I'm getting?
- What am I allowed to do during the period I receive help?
- What are my parents, my foster parents or my care providers allowed to do?

The more you know about the help you are getting, the more you can have your say in it!

And your parents? Does the care provider have to tell them everything that is going to happen as well?

Your parents have to take care of you. For this reason, the care provider will explain to them what is going to happen to help you and your parents.

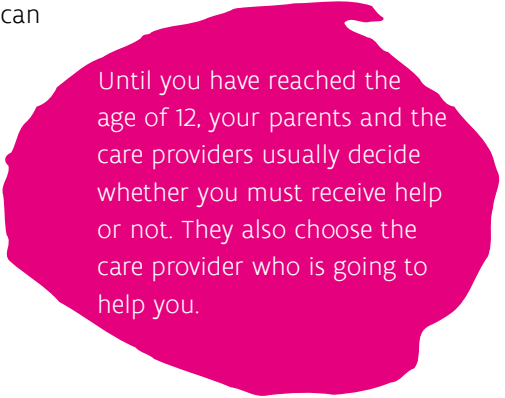
If you have told your care provider anything you don't want your parents to know, you can ask him/her not to tell them.



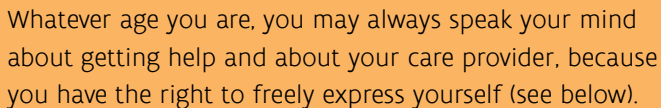
### 3. ARE YOU ALLOWED TO DECIDE WHETHER YOU WANT HELP OR NOT?

If you are under 12 years old, you can only decide if you know what is in your best interests.

You will then have to explain to your parents and the care providers that you know well enough what is best for you to make your own decisions.



Until you have reached the age of 12, your parents and the care providers usually decide whether you must receive help or not. They also choose the care provider who is going to help you.

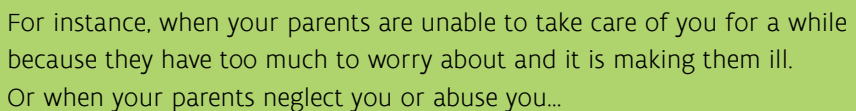


Whatever age you are, you may always speak your mind about getting help and about your care provider, because you have the right to freely express yourself (see below).

### 4. RESPECT FOR YOUR FAMILY

Your family is important to you. Your parents are responsible for your upbringing and they have to take care of you. If possible, you must be able to live with your parents. Everyone agrees on that!

If there are problems in your family, you and your parents must receive help. When you and your parents receive help, it would be best that you can live at home. But that's not always possible.



For instance, when your parents are unable to take care of you for a while because they have too much to worry about and it is making them ill. Or when your parents neglect you or abuse you...



Until you are 12 years old, your parents and care providers decide whether you can live at home or not.

That means that care providers cannot separate you from your parents if you and your parents don't want that to happen. The only people who can separate you are the Juvenile Court, and it will only decide to do that if it really is in your best interests.

If you are not living with your parents, they can still visit you often.

Your care providers can only forbid them to come and see you if the visits are not good for you. The Juvenile Court can also deny the right to visit.

Of course you are allowed to speak your mind about this! But you can only have a say in the decision if you know what is best for you.

You will then have to explain to your parents and the care providers that you know well enough what is best for you to make your own decisions.

Only a Juvenile Court can separate you from your parents without your parents' permission. If you are not living with your parents, they are still allowed to visit you (unless that is not good for you) and your care providers have to inform you how they are doing.

If, for example, you have been placed somewhere because your parents are assaulting you, they may not be allowed to see you for a while.

If you are not living with your parents, your care providers or foster parents must tell you where your parents are and how they are doing.



## 5. YOU ARE ALLOWED TO HAVE A SAY

Under normal circumstances your care providers, your parents and yourself will discuss the help you and your parents are receiving together. Which help is best for you and your family? Is everything going alright? Are there any problems? Does anything need to be changed?

Your opinion must be observed wherever possible. If that is not possible, you are entitled to an explanation why.

Listen carefully to what is being said about the help. The more you know about the help you are getting, the more you can have your say in it!

You may always speak your mind about the help you are getting.

You may have your say about it and sometimes you even get to decide about it.

If you are receiving help in a children's residential facility or in a small living group, you are allowed to meet with the other children to discuss life in the small living group.





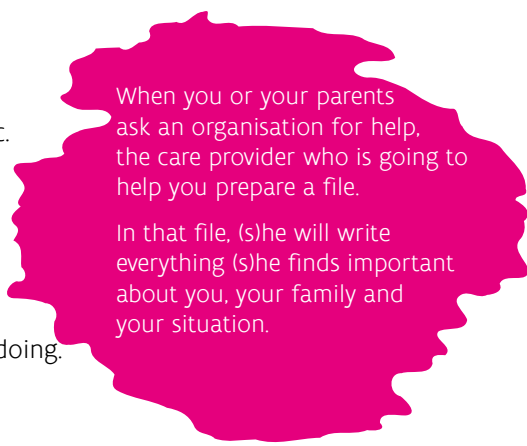
## 6. YOUR CASE FILE

You must have a case file.

Your case file could be a folder that contains all the information, or a document on the computer, etc.

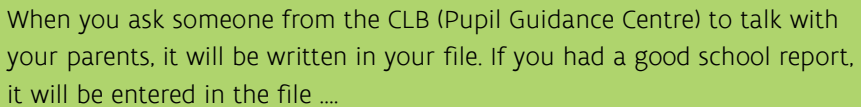
Each time something important happens to you or your family it will be added to your file.

That way all care providers always know how you and your family are doing.

A pink, cloud-like shape with a scalloped edge, containing text.

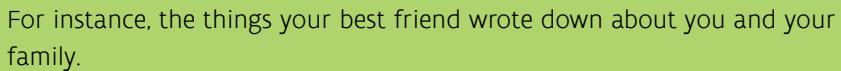
When you or your parents ask an organisation for help, the care provider who is going to help you prepare a file.

In that file, (s)he will write everything (s)he finds important about you, your family and your situation.

A solid green rectangular box containing text.

When you ask someone from the CLB (Pupil Guidance Centre) to talk with your parents, it will be written in your file. If you had a good school report, it will be entered in the file ....

You may also ask your counsellor to write something in your file or to add something to it.

A solid green rectangular box containing text.

For instance, the things your best friend wrote down about you and your family.



## **WHO IS ALLOWED TO READ YOUR FILE?**

Normally, only your parents and your care providers may read your file. You are only allowed to read your own file when you are considered competent, when you can show or explain to your parents and the care providers that you know well enough what is best for you. Even then you are not allowed to know everything that's in your file!

You may not read:

- what your care providers wrote down for the Juvenile Court,
- what someone has told a care provider in confidence,
- things that might hurt you, which you are better off not knowing.

## **YOU MAY ASK THAT SOME PEOPLE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO READ THINGS YOU HAVE SAID**

Sometimes you tell your care provider something you don't want your parents to know. The care provider will still write it in your file because it may be important for other care providers. But you may ask that your parents or other people you are living with are not allowed to read those documents in your file.

## 7. YOUR PERSON OF TRUST

You can choose your person of trust yourself, which can be anyone over 18.

When you talk to your care provider you may always bring someone along that you trust and feel good with. This person will be your 'person of trust'.



Make sure that you know your person of trust's name, telephone number and, if possible, his/her e-mail address so that you can reach him/her if you want to.

## 8. PRIVACY

Nobody is allowed to interfere with your life just like that. That means, for example, that no one may read your diary or your text messages without your permission. And that you may choose your own religion, and whether you want to be a vegetarian or not, and how you want to style your hair...

You may be yourself at all times. You may have your own ideas about the world, about people and about religion. Sometimes you also need some private space, where nobody disturbs you. Care providers as well as your parents, your foster parents and others must respect that!

Your parents are responsible for your upbringing and they have to take good care of you. That is why they sometimes interfere in your life, even if you don't want them to. For instance, when they think you are having problems and are lying to them about that.

Care providers or foster parents will interfere in your life when, for instance, they suspect that you have stolen something, or that you are using drugs, etc.

Privacy also means that information about you and your family may not be shared with whomever.

This information could be your names, your address or telephone number, or your picture. It can also be about how your family lives, which problems you have, who is helping you, etc.





## 9. POCKET MONEY

Older children get more pocket money than younger ones.

If you live in a residential facility instead of at home, you are entitled to pocket money.

For instance, children from 6 to 8 years old who are staying at a children's residential facility get around 6 euros pocket money per month. Children between 8 and 12 receive about 12 euros per month.

## 10. YOU MUST BE TREATED WELL

Your care providers or foster parents may never treat or punish you in a very mean way.

If you have misbehaved badly you will of course receive a more severe punishment than when you've been a bit naughty.

If you stole a CD you will get a more severe punishment than if you refused to clean up your room when your counsellor asked you to.

And if you hurt people around you or break things, you may even be isolated for some time. You could be sent to your room for a while, for example.

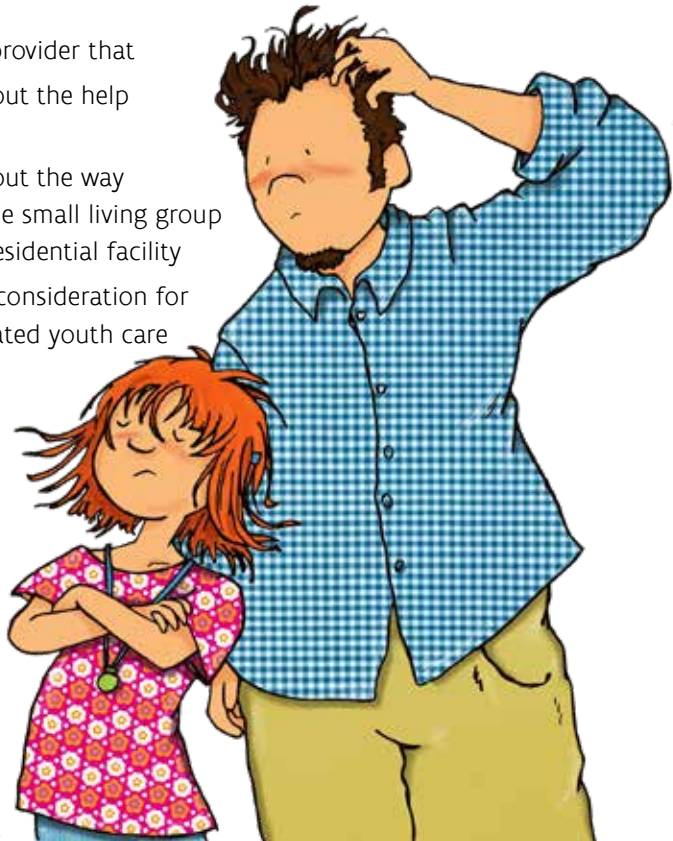
Which punishments are not allowed?

- Corporal punishments such as beating, kicking, pinching, etc.
- Psychological violence such as verbal aggression, threats, etc.
- Depriving you of meals
- Forbidding you to have visitors (unless the Juvenile Court has made this decision)

## 11. NOT SATISFIED?

You may tell your care provider that

- you are unhappy about the help you are receiving
- you are unhappy about the way you have to live in the small living group or in the children's residential facility
- there is not enough consideration for your rights in integrated youth care





# 3 ANY QUESTIONS?





If you have any questions or problems, you can turn to the care providers who are helping you. But you can also contact:

**CLB (Centrum voor leerlingenbegeleiding - Pupil Guidance Centre)**

[onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/clb](http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/clb)

**AWEL**

tel. 102

[www.awel.be](http://www.awel.be)

**Kinderrechtencommissariaat (Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner)**

tel. 0800 20808

[www.kinderrechten.be](http://www.kinderrechten.be)

**1712, Helpline for questions about violence, abuse and child abuse**

tel. 1712

[www.1712.be](http://www.1712.be)

These organisations will try to help you and if they can't, they will tell you where you can go for help.

If after reading this brochure you still have questions about integrated youth care and about your rights within the counselling process, you can turn to tZitemzo for more details.

**tZitemzo**

tel. 09 233 65 65

[info@tzitemzo.be](mailto:info@tzitemzo.be)

[www.tzitemzo.be](http://www.tzitemzo.be)

[www.rechtenindejeugdhulp.be](http://www.rechtenindejeugdhulp.be)

You can write the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of all the organisations that you can turn to for help below. That way you will find help quickly whenever you have questions or problems.

ORGANISATION	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL

Write down your care provider's telephone number so that you can reach him/her if you have a question or if there's something you want to talk about.

<b>NAME</b>
<b>TELEPHONE</b>
<b>E-MAIL</b>

Write your person of trust's name, telephone number and his/her e-mail address here so that you can reach him/her if you want to.

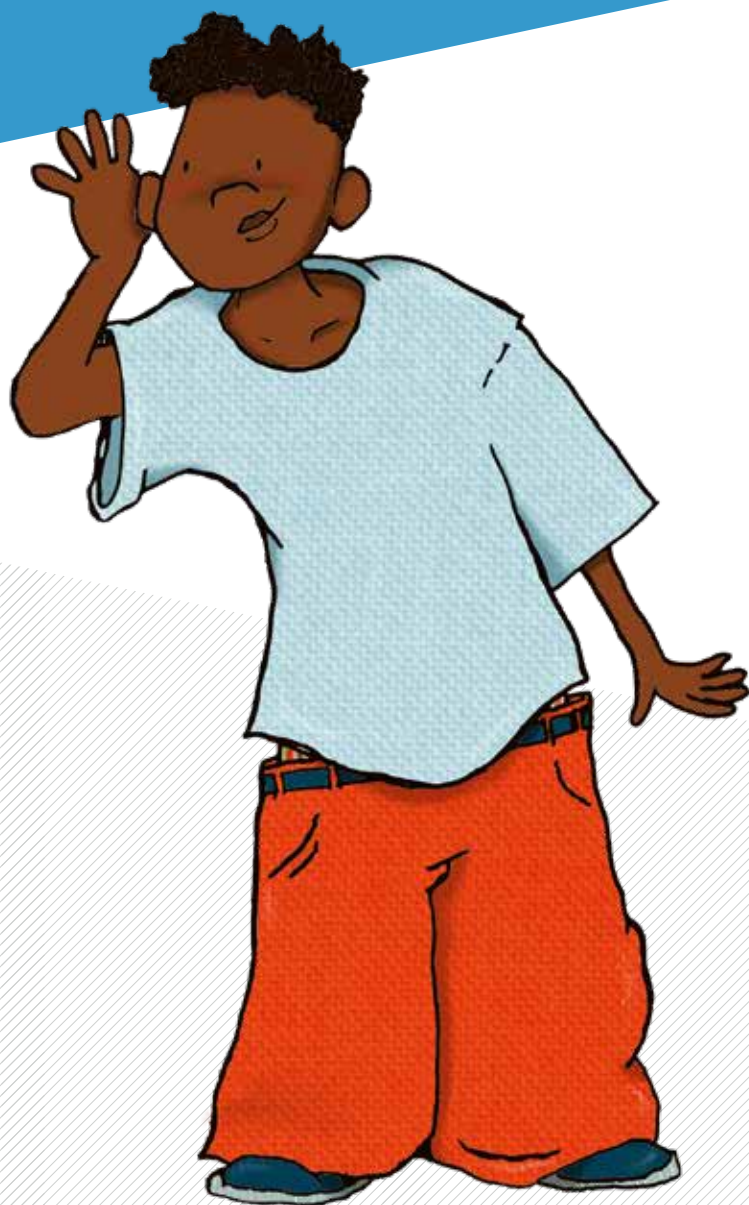
**NAME**

**TELEPHONE**

**E-MAIL**



# 4 SAY WHAT?



## **AWEL**

Children who want to discuss a problem, who need information on a certain topic or who want to share something they've experienced can phone AWEL.

## **Counsellor**

A counsellor is someone who helps you to deal with your problems for a while. When you live in a children's residential facility, for instance, or when you receive help at home, etc.

## **Competent**

"Being competent" means that you can do and decide certain things yourself. So when you're competent, you may exercise your rights yourself! You are not competent until you know what is best for you.

## **Interests**

"Your interests" are what is best for you. What those "interests" are exactly, is not written anywhere. It is different in every situation.

## **Professional confidentiality**

A person bound by professional confidentiality is not allowed to share things they have heard or been told because of the job they have. If you tell your care provider something, for example, they are not allowed to just go and tell someone else.

## **CLB (Centrum voor leerlingenbegeleiding - Pupil Guidance Centre)**

Pupils, parents or teachers can go to the CLB when they have questions about education and school, and about other problems pupils are faced with.

## **Consultant**

The counsellor who helps you at the Sociale Dienst van de Jeugdrechtbank and the Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg.

### **Case file**

Your case file contains information about you, your family, your life and the help you are getting. Your case file may be in the form of a booklet, a folder, or a document on the computer, etc.

### **Care provider**

A care provider is someone who helps people when they have questions or problems. A care provider could be someone from the Centrum voor leerlingenbegeleiding (CLB), your counsellor in the children's residential facility or your consultant at the Juvenile Court, etc.

### **Having your say**

Having your say means that you are allowed to freely give your opinion about something. It means that you may share your ideas about a certain subject.

### **Integrated youth care**

"Integrated youth care" is the name for all the help available for children in Flanders. 'Integrated youth care' tries to improve the co-operation between all these organisations so they can give children better and quicker help.

### **Kinderrechtencommissariaat (Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner)**

You can address the Kinderrechtencommissariaat when adults don't respect your rights. If you have your own ideas about laws, you can let them know as well.

### **tZitemzo**

tZitemzo provides information and advice about children's rights, as well as about Belgian laws, to children and to adults who are close to those children (family, friends, teachers, etc.).

### **Small living group**

When children and a few counsellors live together in a residential children's home, they live together in small groups. They eat and watch television together, do their homework together and go on trips as a group. Children's residential facilities usually contain several small living groups.

## **Majority**

You reach majority at 18 - if you are younger than 18, you are a minor.

## **Organisation**

In this booklet, an organisation is a place you can turn to for help.

## **Placement**

Placement means: to give children a different place to live if they can't live at home. This placement could be in a small living group, a children's residential facility, a boarding school, a foster family, etc.

## **Privacy**

You are entitled to your own ideas about the world, about people and about religion. You are also entitled to a place where you can be yourself. Others will have to respect that.

## **Confidential**

Confidential literally means "in confidence". Confidential information is information you share with someone in confidence and which is not intended for anyone else.

## **Vertrouwenscentrum Kindermishandeling (Child Abuse Trust Centre)**

The Vertrouwenscentrum Kindermishandeling is an organisation anyone that can go or write to when they want to report their suspicion that a child might be subject to abuse. Of course, you can also contact the Trust Centre if you are being abused yourself!

## **Person of trust**

A person of trust is someone you trust and who assists you with the help you get. Your person of trust has to be someone over 18.

## **Children's residential facility**

A children's residential facility is a place for children who can't live at home.

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Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family  
Koning Albert II-laan 35 bus 30  
1030 Brussel

## **Published by**

Karine Moykens, Secretary General  
Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family  
Koning Albert II-laan 35 bus 30  
1030 Brussel

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tZitemzo  
Hoogstraat 81, 9000 Gent  
info@tzitemzo.be - [www.tzitemzo.be](http://www.tzitemzo.be)

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