



Increasing the strengths of families

Parenting support in Flanders –
Belgium





Introduction





Introduction

- > The upbringing of children is of all times...
 - » Spontaneous and self-regulating process
 - » Process of interaction between parents and children in a specific context

- > But society is changing:
 - » Risk society with increasing complexity
 - » Parenting is more difficult or parents are more conscious, want to be the perfect parent





Introduction

- Generally children and families are well in Flanders
 - » Scientific research on the needs of parents and parenting in general
 - » Scientific research on the wellbeing of children and youngsters
- Small minority of the population have (more serious) problems
 - » 4 – 6%



Introduction

> Starting-points

- » Parenting process is very important
- » Parents deserve the support they need
 - For all parents
 - Also for families at risk





Parenting Support?



Definition

Parenting Support is

- > the easily accessible,
- > basic support
- > to parents and persons with childcare responsibilities
- > in the upbringing of children.


(Flemish Parliament Act of 13 July 2007 on the organisation of parenting support)





Definition

So parenting support in Flanders means:

- > A wide range of activities:
individual programs and group programs, home visiting and centre programs.
 - > Not only aimed at preventing abuse and neglect but also (and mostly) aimed at strengthening families in general.
 - > For all types of families.
- 



Definition

For who?

- > Everyone who takes care of children and youngster (0-18 years)
 - » Parents, grandparents, ...
- > For all families and also families at risk
 - » Poor families, lone parents, ethnic groups,...





Principles of parenting support

- > Easy accessible
- > Tailor made
- > Participation
- > Empowerment
- > Methodical





Short history of parenting support in Flanders

- > Informal – organized support
- > Concept started in the 90 : idea of prevention
- > Now: parenting support as enrichment, non problematic





The organisation of parenting support in Flanders



The Flemish policy

- > Flemish Parliament Act of 13 July 2007 on the organisation of parenting support
- > Motivation:
 - » The potential needs of all parents in the upbringing of children
 - » Parenting support as a social and governmental responsibility
 - » The right of every parent to get support





The Flemish policy

Flemish Parliament Act: the organisation of parenting support.

- > Different levels of organisation
 - » Local level and beyond
 - » Parenting shops

- > Different levels of facilitation
 - » Flemish parenting support coordinators
 - » Provincial parenting support centres
 - » Flemish expert centre (EXPOO)





Local level

- Parenting support supplied by local organisations:
 - » Provision of information about parenting
 - » Detection of needs and assembling what fits these parents needs
 - » Referring parents to services
- Local government (with a local coordinator) has a directing role



And beyond: supralocal level


- > Not possible to develop a broad spectrum of parenting support initiatives in every municipality!
- > Establishment of supralocal networks: focus on the organisation of pedagogic counselling
- > Local coordinators and Flemish coordinators





Parenting shops

- > A centre for parents and parenting support


 - > Multiple tasks:
 1. provide basic information
 2. respond to general parenting queries
 3. offer pedagogic advice on specific parenting issues
 4. encourage interaction, emphasising the need for social networks and making parenting a topic for discussion,
 5. educational or training initiatives
 6. Individual and group level support
 7. ensuring early identification of any uncertainty in issues of parenting
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Facilitation of parenting support

- > Flemish parenting support coordinators
 - » Consult for local authorities in setting up a parenting support
 - » cooperative associations with the parenting shops,
 - » coordinate supralocal networks

 - > Provincial centres to support parenting support
 - » facilitate parenting support across local authorities or regionally,
 - » enable parenting support initiatives to be set up
 - » enable the sharing of experience and good practice

 - > EXPOO, Flemish expert centre
 - » providing practical assistance to the field of parenting support
 - » collecting, enhancing and disseminating the relevant knowledge and know-how on parenting support.
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Discussion



Question ?

- Does a general approach in parenting support matches the needs of those parents who need the most support?





Question ?

> Is the internet a good place for providing parenting support ?





Question ?

- > Is parenting support a matter of prevention policies or a general service to the public?





Question ?

- > Parenting support should focus more on creating meeting places for parents and not on parental skill training.