

Need a helping hand?

Gabriela:

'With three young children, I was having a hard time. I wanted to do everything exactly right, but I just couldn't get it all together. My child health clinic referred me to Home-Start. It was clear that Inge, my volunteer, had lots of experience as she was a mother herself. Inge taught me that it's not the end of the world if the laundry doesn't get done. She told me that you can't be there for your children and get the laundry done on time and keep your house spotless at all times. For me, these were real eye-openers. She was someone I could really talk with, and that made me feel a lot better.'



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Like other families, yours, too, sometimes goes through a difficult period: illness, troubles with the children, little contact with friends and other family members, problems at work, lack of money, or tensions between partners. Usually, you can solve these problems yourself. But sometimes, it's a relief when someone else has time to listen or lend a helping hand when it comes to arranging practical matters effectively. At these times, a volunteer from Home-Start can provide you with the extra support you need.

What is Home-Start?

Home-Start offers support, practical help and friendship to parents with at least one child younger than seven years of age. Families can have older children next to their young child(ren) as well. You could also have older children in your family, of course. As the parent, you indicate what your needs are, and these needs become the focus for the support you will receive. Home-Start volunteers are parents themselves and have taken a training course to prepare them to work according to the Home-Start methods. Volunteers are assisted and supported by a

coordinator. Because Home-Start is available in many municipalities in the Netherlands, an increasing number of families are receiving support from this organisation. Both research and experience have shown that parents are very satisfied with the support they get from their volunteers. Parents feel more confident and start dealing with their children in a more positive way.

How does it work?

You can apply for support by contacting the Home-Start coordinator in your town or city. Next, you will meet with the coordinator to discuss how Home-Start can help you. The problems you are confronting are the starting point for the support you – or your family – will receive. Next, you will be introduced to a volunteer. If you feel at ease with each other, your volunteer will come to visit you every week. You will begin by getting to know one another and developing a sense of trust. Together, you will discuss how you want to be supported or lean a helping hand with practical matters. How long you receive support depends on what you need.

What can you expect from Home-Start?

- A volunteer who regularly comes to visit you at home.
- Personal attention and a helping hand.
- Parenting support.
- An opportunity to establish contact with other parents.
- Help with practical matters.
- Friendship and trust.

