

INFORMATION ON THE NATIONAL SUPPORT CENTRE FOR PALLIATIVE TERMINAL CARE VOLUNTEERS (VPTZ) – 2009, BASED ON REGISTRATION 2007

THE VPTZ ORGANIZATION

- The VPTZ organization includes 201 affiliated local organizations, including 87 hospices.
- Providing cover for 95% of the Netherlands.
- Approximately 8.300 volunteers.
- 420 coordinators.
- 80% of the affiliated organizations employ a paid coordinator (for an average of 26.1 hours per week); other organizations only have coordinators who work on a voluntary basis.
- The national organization receives subsidies totalling 12.1 million euros (in 2009) to cover coordinators' and volunteers' expenses (insurance, training, activities, out-of-pocket expenses, etc.), and a further 2 million euros in respect of the hospices' accommodation costs.

THE NATIONAL VPTZ ORGANIZATION ASSISTS LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VARIOUS WAYS:

- Training materials for a 1.000 introductory in-house training courses are sold each year (an introductory training course consists of eight three-hour sessions)
Every year 1.400 volunteers are trained on a national level:
- 3 basic modules (five half-days per module)
5 extra (specialized) modules (five half-days for four of these, two half-days for one).
- A national conference for all volunteers, held every three to four years.
- Training for 100 coordinators each year:
5 basic modules (five half-days per module)
4 extra (specialized) modules (two half-days per module)
Two coordinator seminars per year, each examining specific aspects of voluntary work.
Two coordinator conferences per year (linked to the coordinator seminars), providing the opportunity to discuss practical issues.
An annual 'inspiration day' for coordinators.
- A management course for the members of local governing committees (four half-days).
Peer supervision sessions for local governing committees.
An annual policy discussion meeting for the governing committees of all VPTZ member organizations.
- Publication of the newsletter *Antenne*, which has a circulation of over 8,500 and is sent to all volunteers six times a year.
- Publication of a newsletter which is sent to all VPTZ committee members and coordinators six times a year.
- A website (including a section which can be accessed by VPTZ members only), in addition to an interactive mailing list.
- Publication of a comprehensive Organizational Handbook, which contains many sample documents and templates.

AVERAGE DEPLOYMENT OF VOLUNTEERS PER YEAR (2007)

- 4,450 patients receive support from the volunteers in their own homes.
- 2,850 patients each year are welcomed to the hospices.
- 2,475 personal visits are made to provide advice and information.
- 3,000 relatives are offered support during the grieving process.

WHERE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE SUPPORT

- 71% of the organizations provides support in the patient's own home
- 46% in residential nursing homes
- 46% in hospices
- 23% in residential care homes
- 12% in residential facilities for the disabled
- 6% in other locations such as hospitals.

THE NATURE OF THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY VOLUNTEERS

- Practical help and 'a listening ear' for patients and families.
- Sitting with the patient through the night.
- Remaining with the patient so that family carers can spend a little time elsewhere ('respite care').
- Being on hand to advise and provide information.
- Helping with personal care.
- Doing light housework.
- Visiting the family after the patient has died, if desired.

FAMILIES' APPRECIATION OF THE VPTZ VOLUNTEERS

In most situations requiring palliative terminal care, several volunteers will be involved at one time or another. Of the families surveyed, 78% have no objection to there being more than one volunteer who visits the patient, but they prefer not to deal with multiple care professionals. The patients have a different relationship with the volunteers. The families are very satisfied with the support that the volunteers provide. Their support has been described as:

- A real find
- Enabling the patient to die in familiar surroundings
- A respite for other caregivers
- A source of comfort

Families and informal carers are 'satisfied' (30%) to 'extremely satisfied' (68%) with the support provided. When asked to score the volunteers on a scale of 1 to 10, they awarded an average rating of 8.7. (Source: K. Luykx & P. van den Akker, *Een extra steun in de rug, onderzoek over de ervaringen met vrijwilligers in de palliatieve terminale zorg*, IVA Tilburg, November 2003).

When relatives look back on the process, 28% say that they would have liked to call in the volunteers at an earlier stage. It often takes some time for people to get used to the idea.

