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Jugendamt — Help for Families, Not Just Supervision

What Jugendamt does, what assistance it provides, and when it intervenes — essential information for foreign families. Status: March 2026.

Deutsche Begriffe: Jugendamt | Kinderschutz | Kindeswohl | Erziehungsberatung | Familienberatung

Jugendamt — Help for Families, Not Just Supervision

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What is Jugendamt?

Jugendamt is a government office that exists in every city and district. Its primary task is **supporting families** and **protecting children**.

Important: Jugendamt is **not** meant to take children away. In 99% of cases, it offers **help and counseling**.

What assistance does Jugendamt offer?

Free for all families:

- **Erziehungsberatung** — advice on parenting, school problems, conflicts
- **Familienberatung** — support for marital issues, separation, parental stress
- **Kita-Gutscheine** — application for childcare places
- **Jugendfreizeiteinrichtungen** — sports clubs, youth centers
- **Beurkundungen** — paternity acknowledgment, custody declarations

For special needs (§§ 27–35 SGB VIII):

- **Sozialpädagogische Familienhilfe** — regular in-home support
- **Erziehungsbeistand** — individual counseling for teenagers
- **Tagesgruppen** — after-school care groups
- **Pflegefamilie / Heim** — only as a last resort if child welfare is at risk

When does Jugendamt intervene?

Jugendamt **must** take action when there are signs of **Kindeswohl** (child welfare) being endangered:

- Physical or emotional abuse
- Neglect (lack of food, no medical care)
- Sexual abuse

Process after a report:

1. Report is received (from neighbors, school, doctor, anonymously)
2. Jugendamt investigates the situation (home visit, interviews)
3. **Offering help** — in most cases, a solution is found together
4. Only in **acute danger**: temporary placement of the child (Inobhutnahme)

Tips for foreign families

- Jugendamt is **not your enemy** — it wants to help
- You can **request an interpreter**
- **Cultural differences** in parenting are considered, but: **physical punishment is prohibited in Germany** (§ 1631 BGB)
- **Counseling is confidential** — use these services!
- If uncertain: Migration counseling (AWO, Caritas, Diakonie) can assist with Jugendamt contact