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Unterhaltsvorschuss — State Support for Single Parents

Unterhaltsvorschuss provides financial assistance to single parents when the other parent fails to pay child support. Terms, amounts, and application process.

Deutsche Begriffe: Unterhaltsvorschuss | Jugendamt | Alleinerziehende | Unterhalt | Barunterhalt | Mindestunterhalt

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What is Unterhaltsvorschuss?

Unterhaltsvorschuss (also called Unterhaltsvorschussleistung) is state financial assistance for **single parents** when the other parent:

- **Does not pay child support**
- Pays child support **irregularly** or **insufficient amounts**
- **Cannot be located** (unknown whereabouts)
- **Is deceased** (and no orphan's pension is being paid)

The state steps in and pays the child support **in advance** — and attempts to recover the money from the parent obligated to pay.

Requirements

Your child is entitled if:

- They are **under 18 years old**
- They live with a **single parent**
- They have their **place of residence in Germany**

• The other parent **does not pay or pays insufficient child support**

No entitlement exists if:

• Both parents **live together** (even without marriage)

• The single parent **marries** or enters into a new domestic partnership (exception: the new partner is not the father/mother of the child — **in this case, entitlement continues!**)

• The single parent **refuses to cooperate** (e.g., does not provide the name of the other parent — without valid reason)

For children aged 12 and above additionally:

• The child must **not receive Bürgergeld**, **or**

• The single parent must have a **gross income of at least €600/month**

Amount of Unterhaltsvorschuss in 2026

The amount is based on the **minimum child support** (Düsseldorf Table) minus the **full child allowance** for a first child (€250):

Child's Age	Minimum Child Support 2026	minus Child Allowance	**Unterhaltsvorschuss**
0–5 years	€482	-€250	**€232/month**
6–11 years	€554	-€250	**€304/month**
12–17 years	€649	-€250	**€399/month**

Note: Amounts are adjusted on January 1st of each year. The values listed here apply to 2026.

If the other parent pays partially

If the other parent pays, for example, €100/month, the Unterhaltsvorschuss is **reduced accordingly**:

• 8-year-old child: €304 – €100 = **€204/month** from the state

Duration of the Benefit

• For children **under 12 years: no time limit** (until their 12th birthday)

• For children **12–17 years:** also until their 18th birthday (expanded since 2017), provided the additional requirements are met

Applying

Where?

• At the **Jugendamt** (Youth Office) of your city or district

• Responsible department: Unterhaltsvorschussstelle / Beistandschaft

What documents are needed?

• **ID card/passport** of the applying parent

• **Birth certificate** of the child

• **Registration confirmation** (proof of residence)

• **Acknowledgment of paternity** or birth certificate with father listed

• Evidence of **child support** (e.g., court order, lawyer's letter, bank statements)

• **Income verification** (for children aged 12+)

• Proof of **child allowance receipt**

How long does processing take?

• Typically **2–6 weeks**

• The advance is paid **retroactively from the month of application**

• **Tip:** Submit your application as early as possible — retroactive payments before the application month are not available!

Recovery from the Other Parent

The state pays the Unterhaltsvorschuss only **as an advance**. This means:

• The Jugendamt **demands repayment from the obligated parent**

• The claim for repayment transfers to the state

• If the other parent pays directly to you, you must **notify the Jugendamt**

• Upon refusal to pay: **enforcement proceedings** and wage garnishment

• In serious cases: criminal prosecution for **failure to pay child support** (§ 170 German Criminal Code)

Unterhaltsvorschuss and Other Benefits

Benefit	Can Be Combined?
Child Allowance	Yes (deducted from calculation)
Bürgergeld	Yes (Unterhaltsvorschuss counted as income)
Housing Allowance	Yes (Unterhaltsvorschuss counts as income)
Child Supplement	Yes (taken into account)
Parental Allowance	Yes

Important for Foreigners

• **EU Citizens:** Full entitlement to Unterhaltsvorschuss if residing in Germany

• **Third-country nationals:** Entitled if you have a **residence permit** authorizing **employment**

• **Asylum applicants:** No entitlement during pending asylum proceedings (only after recognition)

• **Tolerated residents:** Generally no entitlement

Frequently Asked Questions

Must I provide the name of the child's father/mother?

Basically **yes** — you must **cooperate** in determining paternity and enforcing child support claims. If you refuse without valid reason, your application may be rejected.

Exception: In cases of violence or threats from the other parent, you may refuse to provide information for **good cause**.

What happens if the other parent starts paying?

• You must **immediately notify the Jugendamt**

• The Unterhaltsvorschuss will be **reduced accordingly or discontinued**

• Any overpaid benefits must be **repaid**

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