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# Health, rehabilitation and care

Information for refugees with disabilities and their families from the project **Empowerment Now** and the group **Now! Nicht Ohne das Wir**



# What are my rights in Germany?

Many refugees with disabilities and their families face significant challenges when they arrive in Germany: How can they get support and help? They have many questions about the support system in Germany. They also want to know what rights they have to support and assistance. But often they cannot find information in their own language.

That's why there are now six brochures with information in nine languages. We inform you about your rights to support and the different types of support available. And we answer questions about the support system in Germany. "What information would I have wanted when I arrived in Germany?" This question was important to us when we wrote up the information.

## You are not alone!

There are many counselling centres in Germany. You can get advice there. Always seek support!

### **Why should I go to a counselling centre?**

Counselling centres can help you apply for support services or if your application is refused. After receiving advice, you will better understand your needs and options, and get the right support services.

### **Counselling centres**

[Supplementary Independent Participation Counselling Centre \(Ergänzende unabhängige Teilhabeberatung, EUTB\)](#)

[Migration Counselling Centres of Welfare Associations \(Migrationsberatungsstellen der Wohlfahrtsverbände\)](#)

For questions about health care, medical rehabilitation and care, you can contact the [Independent Patient Counselling Centre Germany \(Unabhängige Patientenberatung Deutschland, UPD\)](#).

You can also contact disability associations, the Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt), the Employment Agency (Agentur für Arbeit) or the Integration Office (Integrationsamt). They are often close to you.

There are even more counselling services in many federal states. It's best to get information at your place of residence.

# Health, rehabilitation and care

Everyone living in Germany has the right to basic health care. Basic health care includes: medical treatment, medication, remedies and aids, hospital care and dental care.

People with disabilities are also entitled to medical rehabilitation and care services. These services are part of participation benefits. Participation benefits have a legal basis: the integration assistance (Eingliederungshilfe) contained in the Ninth Book of the Social Code. They are social benefits designed to enable people with disabilities to be self-determined and to participate in life. Their participation should be equal. What does “equal participation” mean? It means that people with disabilities should be able to participate in society in the same way as people without disabilities.

However, there is a special situation for refugees: Health, rehabilitation and care services depend on the residence status and length of stay in Germany. Refugees with disabilities often ask themselves: “What health, rehabilitation and care services are available in Germany? Which of these services am I entitled to, depending on my residence status and length of stay?” This brochure answers these questions.

# Free medical care

## Will I get free medical care?

You will receive free medical care if your asylum process is ongoing or if you have a tolerance permit (Duldung) and have been living in Germany for less than 36 months.

In this case:

- Before every visit to the doctor, you apply to the Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt) or the First Reception Centre (Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung "EAE") for a treatment voucher. The treatment voucher may only be valid for a certain period of time.
- In some federal states, you will not receive a treatment voucher, but an **electronic health card for refugees**. You use the health card to go to the doctor. Although you have the card, you are not insured. You only get the most necessary Treatment for acute illness and pain (**Sections 4 and 6 of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act**). The doctor bills the costs to the Social Welfare Office.
- If you need medication, the doctor will give you a prescription. You fill the prescription in a pharmacy. The medication is free.

## Electronic health card for refugees

The health card for refugees allows you to receive medical care without having to apply for a treatment voucher from the Social Welfare Office.

You take the card to a doctor's office and receive treatment there. The doctor's office charges the cost of the treatment to the card.

The health card for refugees looks like a health insurance card. However, there is no European health insurance card on the back.

## Medical entitlement in accordance with Sections 4 and 6 of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz)

During pregnancy and childbirth, you get medical care, prenatal examinations, midwifery assistance and medication. However, you will only receive dental treatment if you are in pain. The Social Welfare Office may approve other services if they are medically necessary or contribute to health security. You must apply for these services from the Social Welfare Office. You must give a good reason why you need the treatment, preferably with a medical report if you have one.

You will also receive free medical care if your asylum process is ongoing or if you have a tolerance permit (Duldung) and have been living in Germany for more than 36 months. In this case:

- After 36 months you will receive the health card for refugees. The card entitles you to extended medical benefits. You will then receive almost the same benefits as those provided by the statutory health insurance.
- A health insurer (Krankenkasse) issues the card. You are free to choose your health insurer. The Social Welfare Office will register you with the health insurer. However, you are not yet a member of the health insurer and are not insured. The health insurer collects the money for your medical care from the Social Welfare Office.
- If the doctor prescribes medication for you, you pay for it at the pharmacy. You pay a maximum of €10 per medication. You don't have to pay extra for medication for children under 18.

If you are a recognised refugee, entitled to asylum or entitled to subsidiary protection, or if you have a residence permit under Section 24 of the Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz) you will also receive free medical care.

- If your asylum application was accepted, the Foreigners Authority (Ausländerbehörde) will issue you with a residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis). If you had to flee Ukraine because of the war, you may be granted a residence permit (Aufenthaltstitel) for temporary protection under Section 24 of the Residence Act.
- If you don't have enough money, you can get citizen's benefit (Bürgergeld) from the Job Centre or social assistance (Sozialhilfe) from the Social Welfare Office every month. The money should cover your monthly living expenses.
- If you receive citizen's benefit, you are insured for health care. The Job Centre will register you with a health insurer and pay your contributions. You can choose your own health insurer.
- If you receive social assistance, you can register with a health insurer of your choice. You will then be insured there. The Social Welfare Office will pay your premiums. But you have to apply for it.

- Look at the list of health insurers you can register with. Not sure which health insurer to choose? [The Consumer Advice Centre](#) can help you.



### **Reminder: Language interpretation during medical treatment**

- Do you need a language interpreter at the doctor's or in the hospital? Then you should first apply to have the costs of interpreting covered. Who pays depends on your residence title. Get help with your application from a counselling centre.
- Are you at the doctor's or in the hospital and need an interpreter? The free emergency interpreting service [TRIA:PHON](#) will support you. Staff can speak Arabic, Bulgarian, Farsi, Dari, Polish, Romanian, Ukrainian, Russian, Turkish and Vietnamese.
- The Apotheken-Umschau has a multilingual [picture dictionary](#) with pictograms and emergency telephone numbers. The dictionary is available in Arabic, German, English, French, Urdu, Farsi, Ukrainian and Russian.

# Medical rehabilitation

## What does medical rehabilitation cover?

People with disabilities are entitled to medical rehabilitation services. Medical rehabilitation is regulated in Section 42 of Social Code IX. It includes measures to maintain or improve the health of people with disabilities.

Medical rehabilitation is carried out by medical professionals. Rehabilitation includes medical treatment, such as

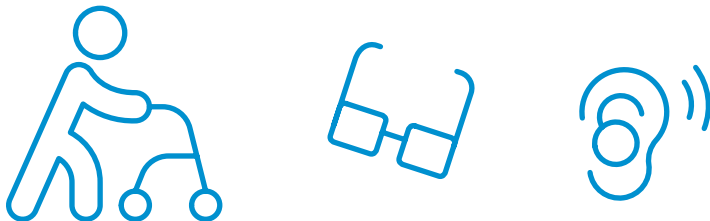
- physiotherapy,
- occupational therapy,
- voice, speech, language and swallowing therapy.

Rehabilitation also includes the provision of aids, such as

- visual aids,
- hearing aids,
- orthopaedic aids.

Early intervention for children with disabilities is also part of medical rehabilitation. The aim of early intervention is to ensure that a child and their family are supported as effectively as possible. Children up to school age are eligible for early intervention.

Decisions about the treatment needed are made by doctors and the rehabilitation facility.



## Am I entitled to medical rehabilitation measures?

Yes, if you are a recognised refugee, entitled to asylum or entitled to subsidiary protection, or if you have a residence permit under Section 24 of the Residence Act and are legally insured. However, the following conditions must be met:

- The measure is medically necessary.
- The measure was prescribed by a doctor and approved by the service provider.

Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been living in Germany for more than 36 months can also receive medical rehabilitation. They must apply to the Social Welfare Office. The Social Welfare Office will then check whether the conditions are met.

However, you are not entitled to medical rehabilitation services if you are in the first 36 months of your stay in Germany and are in the asylum process. But there is an exception: You urgently need the measure because it is the only way to ensure your health. Then you too can apply to the Social Welfare Office for medical rehabilitation.

Medical rehabilitation services can be paid for by:

- health insurers (Krankenkassen)
- Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt)
- payers for integration assistance (Träger der Eingliederungshilfe)
- Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt)

Information on medical treatment and aids can be found in the brochure [The support system for people with disabilities](#).





# Care assistance

## I need care. Can I get help from the state?

If you need care, you can receive care assistance benefits (Section 61 of Social Code XII). Care assistance is part of social assistance. It is a social benefit with which the state supports people who

- cannot pay for their own care and
- are not entitled to statutory care insurance.

The Social Welfare Office calculates a person's financial need. This takes into account the income and assets of the household members of the person in need of care.

What types of care services are available?

- Medical treatment care (administering medication, changing dressings, injections)
- Basic care (personal hygiene, nutrition, mobility)
- Domestic support (shopping, cooking, cleaning the home)
- Nursing aids

## Who is entitled to care assistance?

While asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been living in Germany for less than 36 months are not entitled to care services, there is an exception: If the person's health can only be safeguarded with care services and there is no other option.

Then the person can apply to the Social Welfare Office for care assistance. However, the Social Welfare Office will also check whether the person can afford to pay for the care themselves. The Social Welfare Office will only pay for care assistance if you and your family members have no money or too little money to pay the costs yourself.

People who have applied for asylum and have been living in Germany for at least 36 months apply to the Social Welfare Office for care assistance. Also in this case, the Social Welfare Office will check whether the person can afford to pay for the care themselves.

Recognised refugees, asylum seekers, people granted subsidiary protection and people with a residence permit under Section 24 of the Residence Act are entitled to care assistance. A distinction is made between two groups of benefits:

### **Care services through care insurance**

Some people are covered by statutory health insurance and care insurance. They apply for their care services through the care insurance. However, they are only entitled to care insurance benefits if

- they have been covered by care insurance for at least 24 months in the ten years prior to their application
- and have paid care insurance premiums.

They apply for their care services through the care insurer. However, care insurance only pays a fixed amount for care services. If the money is not enough, the Social Welfare Office can supplement the care services. In this case, the person in need of care submits an additional application for care assistance to the Social Welfare Office.

### **Care assistance from the Social Welfare Office**

Do you have a statutory health insurer, but have not paid into care insurance for at least 24 months? Then you are not yet entitled to care services from the care insurance. In this case, you have to apply to the Social Welfare Office for care assistance.

## **Who assesses my need for care?**

The Social Welfare Office or the care insurer will determine your care needs on the basis of certain criteria. On this basis, the Social Welfare Office or the insurer will determine your care level and approve your application for care assistance or care insurance benefits. You are considered to be in need of care if you need help with daily activities almost all or all of the time.

### **Do you have any questions about care?**

Contact a care support centre. You can get free advice, information on care issues and application forms.

Using the search function of the Centre for [Quality in Care](#), you can find care support centres in your area.

In Germany, a person's need for care is measured on a scale of five care levels. The care level (Pflegegrad) indicates how independent a person is and the extent of their impairment. It also determines the benefits to which the person is entitled. The higher the care level, the greater the entitlement to care services.

- **Care level 1:** Minor impairment of independence
- **Care level 2:** Significant impairment of independence
- **Care level 3:** Severe impairment of independence
- **Care level 4:** Most severe impairment of independence
- **Care level 5:** Most severe impairment of independence with special requirements for nursing care

The amount of care assistance you receive depends on your care level.

### How do I get a care level?

Submit an application for care services to the care insurer or the Social Welfare Office. The authority will then appoint an assessor from the Medical Service of the Health Insurance Funds (Medizinischer Dienst der Krankenkassen "MDK"). This person will assess your care needs. They will make an appointment with you and visit you at home to assess your situation. They will assess six areas of your life. They assess whether

- you can look after yourself,
- you can take your medication,
- you can carry out treatments,
- you can organise your everyday life and your contacts with other people,
- you can communicate independently,
- you are mobile and how mobile you are and whether you have behavioural and psychological problems.

**Important:** You must describe your problems to the assessor as accurately as possible, even if you feel uncomfortable doing so. For example, you describe your problems with personal hygiene and laundry, eating, cooking or shopping, going to government authorities, offices, doctors, therapists, communicating with people who work there, or visiting relatives, friends or events. You can ask someone you trust to accompany you to the interview. They can add their observations to your description.

After the visit, the assessor will write a care assessment report. This is an assessment of your care needs and the care level you will receive. The report is then sent to the Social Welfare Office or health insurer. You will then receive the care assessment report and the care decision. Both will be sent to you in writing within two weeks. Have you been assigned a care level? What care level have you been assigned? Depending on your care level, you are now entitled to care services.

You can choose between care services provided by a **home care service** or **care allowance**. If you are being cared for by a private individual, you will receive a care allowance.

If you disagree with the decision in the care assessment report, you have one month to appeal.

**Information for refugees with disabilities and their relatives** is a series that has published on:

1



The first steps after arrival in Germany – Information on the most important points of contact after arriving in Germany

The support system for people with disabilities – Information on participation benefits, social benefits versus participation benefits, application for aids, recognition of a disability

2



3



Health, rehabilitation and care – Interesting facts about entitlement to medical care, rehabilitation and nursing care and about the health insurance system

Support system for family members of children with disabilities – Information on the right to education, care and support

4



5



Social participation and language courses – Which services strengthen your participation in life in Germany? Information on integration courses, accessible accommodation and support

6



Applying for and getting benefits – Everything you need to know about the main state benefits and how to apply for them

## Who are “we”?

We are the “Empowerment Now” project of the organisation Handicap International and the self-advocates of “NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir”. We are committed to improving access to information for refugees with disabilities and their families. The members of the group “NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir” have experienced how difficult it is to get support and help in Germany. That’s why they want to share their knowledge. Also with you.

## About the group

### NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir:



“NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir” is the self-advocacy of refugees with disabilities. We are refugees ourselves and we have disabilities. Since our arrival in Germany, we have been confronted with barriers. But in our group we find understanding and solidarity. We support each other and work together for an inclusive society.

We work for a better life for refugees with disabilities and their families in Germany. The self-advocacy group “NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir” is supported by Handicap International as part of the “Empowerment Now” project.



## About the “Empowerment Now” project

With “Empowerment Now”, Handicap International supports the self-advocacy of refugees with disabilities and their families. Together with the group “NOW! Nicht Ohne das Wir”, we advocate for the rights and interests of refugees with disabilities. We are committed to systematically addressing the concerns of refugees with disabilities – from accommodation, to access to accessible language courses, to inclusion in the labour market.

The “Empowerment Now” project is funded by:



Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung  
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