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Applying for and getting benefits

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.

Applying for and getting benefits

What are the most important support benefits for people with disabilities? Which residence title do they need to have in order to get benefits? What requirements must they fulfil in order to apply for a benefit? Where can you apply for the benefit? We will inform you about

- who receives which benefits,
- how you apply for a benefit,
- where you apply for the benefit,
- and what you need to bear in mind when applying for the benefit.

What benefits does the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz) allow for?

In order to cover the basic needs of daily life, asylum seekers in Germany receive benefits under the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act. These benefits include:

- benefits in kind for food, clothing and accommodation, healthcare, household consumables and supplies (essential needs)
- cash benefits to cover personal needs in daily life (necessary personal needs)
- benefits in the event of illness, pregnancy and birth

The benefits you receive during your asylum process are intended to cover your living expenses and healthcare.

Who receives the benefits?

Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung)

Where can I apply for them?

This depends on the federal state: It may be at the District Office (Landratsamt), the city administration (Stadtverwaltung) or the Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt). Ask a counselling centre in your area which authority is responsible for you.

What requirements do I have to fulfil?

- You have submitted a request for asylum or an application for asylum.
- You have an arrival certificate (Ankunftsnachweis) or a residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis) in accordance with the Asylum Act (Asylgesetz).
- You live in Germany.
- You can't live off your assets or your income.

Reminder



Asylum applicants are entitled to so-called analogue benefits; people with a tolerance permit (Duldung) are also entitled to these benefits. The persons must have been living in Germany for 36 months. “Analogue benefits” are benefits that correspond in type and amount to income support.

Citizen's benefit and social assistance

Citizen's benefit (Bürgergeld) and social assistance (Sozialhilfe) are financial support from the state for people who have too little money to cover their expenses. The most important difference between citizen's income and social assistance is the ability to work. You receive citizen's benefit if you are able to work. You receive social assistance if you are unable to work.

Application for citizen's benefit: You are fit for work.

Who receives the benefit?

- Recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- Persons with a residence title according to Section 24 of the Residence Act

Where can I apply for them?

Job Centre (Jobcenter)

What requirements do I have to fulfil?

- You have a residence permit or a fiction certificate (Fiktionsbescheinigung).
- You can work at least three hours a day. You are also dependent on financial help.
- You are not able to work but live with a person who is able to work.
- You are at least 15 years old and not yet of retirement age.

In this case, you should apply for citizen's benefit to receive financial support.

Application for social assistance: You are not fit for work and not of retirement age.

Who receives the benefit?

- Recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- Persons with a residence title according to Section 24 of the Residence Act
- Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been living in Germany for 36 months and are entitled to analogue benefits in accordance with Section 2 of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act

Where can I apply for them?

Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt)

What requirements do I have to fulfil?

- You have a residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis) or a fiction certificate (Fiktionsbescheinigung).
- You are not able to work (livelihood support “Hilfe zum Lebensunterhalt”) or you have reached retirement age (basic income support “Grundsicherung”).

Health insurance

Statutory health insurance is an insurance system. It is regulated by the state and guarantees people in Germany basic medical care.

Information for asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung)

- Asylum applicants are not covered by statutory health insurance. Instead, they receive benefits in accordance with the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act.
- Asylum applicants and people with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been in Germany for longer than 36 months receive a so-called health card for refugees throughout Germany. The Social Welfare Office is responsible for registration.
- After a successful asylum process, statutory (or private) health insurance is mandatory!

Who receives the benefits?

- Recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- Persons with a residence title according to Section 24 of the Residence Act



Where can I apply for them?

Job Centre, Social Welfare Office or health insurer

What requirements do I have to fulfil?

- If you receive support from the state, you apply for membership at a health insurer. Submit the certificate of your membership to the Job Centre or Social Welfare Office. You can also apply for health insurance membership at the Job Centre or Social Welfare Office.
- If you are gainfully employed, you take out health insurance with a health insurer of your choice.

Here you will find a list of [health insurers \(Krankenkassen\)](#).

There is also family insurance. Spouses and children of employed persons can be included in the health insurance of the parent who is working. This is free of charge.

Disability card (Schwerbehindertenausweis)

Disability card

People with a recognised severe disability receive a severely disabled person's disability card in Germany. It is proof of the degree of your disability. The card offers people discounts, so-called disadvantage compensation. This includes, for example, discounts on cinema and theatre tickets, local public transport and radio and TV licence fees. With the card, they receive tax advantages.

Who receives the benefits?

- Recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- Persons with a residence permit according to Section 24 of the Residence Act
- Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung)



Where can I apply for them?

Welfare Office (Versorgungsamt)

What requirements do I have to fulfil?

- You have a disability for at least six months.
- You have already submitted an application to the Welfare office to determine the degree of disability. You then received a certificate of disability about the degree of your disability.
- You will be recognised as disabled if you have a degree of disability of 30 or more.
- You need a degree of disability of 50 or more to obtain a severely disabled person's disability card.

You apply for a severely disabled person's disability card at your local Disability Office. You will need the certificate of disability for this. You can find more information in the video: [How can I get my disability recognised in Germany?](#)

Care assistance

In Germany, care assistance is part of social assistance. It is a social benefit with which the state supports people in need of care who are unable to provide their own care. Care assistance includes, for example, home and outpatient care and care aids.

Who receives the benefits?

- Recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- Persons with a residence title according to Section 24 of the Residence Act
- Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been in Germany for 36 months can receive care assistance as a **discretionary service**.

What is a discretionary service?

If you have no legal entitlement to a benefit, the authority will decide whether to grant the benefit you have applied for. Important: You must request the benefit.

Reminder



Who is not entitled to care assistance? Asylum seekers and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been in Germany for less than 36 months. However, the Social Welfare Office can authorise benefits (Section 6 para. 1 of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act) if they are necessary to safeguard health or cover the special needs of children.

Where can I apply for them?

Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt)

What requirements do I have to fulfil?

- You need permanent help in everyday life due to an illness or disability.

You submit an application form and an informal application for recognition of your need for care to the Social Welfare Office. The Social Welfare Office then commissions a care assessment. During such an assessment, the degree of independence of the person in need of care is determined in six areas of life. Your care level is then calculated (care level 1 to 5). The person in need of care receives care services according to their care level.

Application for participation benefits

Participation benefits (“integration assistance” = Eingliederungshilfe) are support measures for people with disabilities. They should enable equal participation in social life. Participation benefits include, for example, assistance services, aids and medical treatment.

Who receives the benefits?

- Recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- Persons with a residence permit according to Section 24 of the Residence Act
- Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been living in Germany for 36 months can receive integration assistance benefits as a discretionary service.

Reminder

Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been in Germany for less than 36 months are not entitled to integration assistance benefits. The authority can authorise integration assistance benefits if they are medically necessary or contribute to safeguarding health.

Reminder

Special regulations apply to children and young people.

Where can I apply for them?

Rehabilitation payers (e.g., Social Welfare Office and health insurer)

What requirements do I have to fulfil?

- You have a disability for at least six months.
- You have a disability and need aids or assistance, for example.

Depending on the benefit, you submit an informal application to the rehabilitation payer. You can find out more about this at a counselling centre.

Medical rehabilitation services

Chronically ill people or people with a disability are entitled to medical rehabilitation services. The benefits include measures to maintain or improve your state of health. Medical rehabilitation includes, for example, medical treatment, medicines and dressings, early intervention for children with disabilities, aids and medical treatment.

Who receives the benefits?

- Recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- Persons with a residence permit according to Section 24 of the Residence Act
- Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been living in Germany for 36 months can receive integration assistance benefits (Eingliederungshilfe) as a discretionary service.

Reminder

Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been in Germany for less than 36 months are not entitled to medical rehabilitation. Access to medical rehabilitation services may be authorised in individual cases if they are medically necessary or contribute to safeguarding health.



Where can I apply for them?

- Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt): Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung)
- Health insurer (Krankenkasse): recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection and persons with a residence permit in accordance with Section 24 of the Residence Act

What requirements do I have to fulfil?

- You are restricted in your everyday life due to an illness or disability.
- The measure is medically necessary.
- The measure must be prescribed by a doctor and authorised by the payer.

To apply for the benefit, contact the Social Welfare Office or your statutory health insurer. However, always go to a counselling centre beforehand and get support.



Aids

Aids are assistive products that help people with disabilities to cope with everyday life. These include wheelchairs, hearing aids, prostheses, visual aids and walking aids.



Who receives the benefits?

- Recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- Persons with a residence permit according to Section 24 of the Residence Act
- Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been in Germany for 36 months can receive aids as a discretionary service.



Reminder

Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been in Germany for less than 36 months are entitled to medical aids if they are medically necessary or contribute to safeguarding their health.

Where can I apply for them?

- Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt): Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung)
- Health insurer (Krankenkasse): recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection and persons with a residence permit in accordance with Section 24 of the Residence Act

What requirements do I have to fulfil?

- You need support with your everyday activities.

Important: Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) must first contact the Social Welfare Office and obtain authorisation for the aid. Only then will the Social Welfare Office cover the costs of the aids. Recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection and persons with a residence permit in accordance with Section 24 of the Residence Act are covered by health insurance. They can consult a doctor. The doctor will give you a prescription for the aid. If you want the aid to be paid for by the health insurer, you must check whether the health insurer has to approve the aid.

Blind person's allowance

Visually impaired and blind persons are entitled to a blind person's allowance. The blind person's allowance is a financial compensation for the fact that these people have disadvantages in everyday life and generally have higher financial expenses. The blind person's allowance is a monthly financial support. It is paid out regardless of age, income and assets. It may not be counted as income towards other social benefits.

The blind person's allowance is a benefit paid by the federal states. The regulations vary from state to state.

Who receives the benefits?

- Recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- Persons with a residence permit according to Section 24 of the Residence Act
- Asylum applicants and people with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been living in Germany for more than 36 months.

Reminder

Asylum applicants and persons with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been in Germany for less than 36 months are not entitled to a blind person's allowance.



Where can I apply for them?

- Social Welfare Office (Sozialamt) for asylum applicants and people with a tolerance permit (Duldung) who have been living in Germany for more than 36 months.
- Welfare Office (Versorgungsamt) for recognised refugees, persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection and persons with a residence permit in accordance with Section 24 of the Residence Act

What requirements do I have to fulfil?

- You need a proof that you are blind.

We recommend that you first obtain information about applying for the blind person's allowance from the authorities and a counselling centre. You can then submit the application.

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:



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