11.1 | Child Care

If you are bringing your children to Germany, you should start researching child care options as soon as possible and, if necessary, make arrangements while you are still in your own country. Even though Germany is making various efforts to offer more child care options, places may be limited and will always require registration. There are two types of child care facilities: day-care centres and nursery schools, or in-home care provided by an individual.

Day-care centres and nursery schools

Day-care centres provide care for children from the age of three months until school-age. Care is usually provided all day from 7 am to 5 pm.

Nursery schools offer care for children from the age of 2-3 until they reach school-age. Care is usually provided from 7 am to 2 pm or 4 pm.

If you require child care, please contact the day-care centre or nursery school well in advance and register your child so that the facility can reserve a place for you. Fees are charged according to parental income and depend on the number of hours your child will spend at the facility per week. Most facilities offer lunch as well as educational programmes.

AT TU DORTMUND UNIVERSITY

In cooperation with various partners, TU Dortmund University operates a large day-care facility for the children under the age of three of researchers who are involved in DFG projects, as well as holiday child care for older children (ages 6–13), open to all members of the university. Both are right on campus. Our Family Service includes the “Campus Familienbüro” (Campus Family Office), which offers advice on child care in Dortmund, advice on reconciling family, work and university studies, as well as advice on nursing care. There are quiet rooms and baby changing rooms in various locations as well as a parent-child room in the central library. We also hold regular parent cafés.

Contact

Jeannette Kratz
Office for Equal Opportunity, Family and Diversity at TU Dortmund University
Department 3
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For events and other information, please visit the TU Dortmund University family portal.

www.tu-dortmund.de/familie

For more information on counselling and care services as well as life-work balance in general, please refer to Chapter 2.5.
11.2 | Schools

In North Rhine-Westphalia, compulsory education starts with primary school (years 1-4), after which pupils have the choice between three different types of school in Germany’s multi-track educational system: “Hauptschule” ends after year 9 or 10 with a certificate called “Hauptschulabschluss”. “Realschule” ends after year 10 with the “Realschulabschluss”, “Gymnasium” ends after year 12 with the “Abitur”, which is the prerequisite to enter a university. In addition, there are comprehensive schools as well as the new secondary schools (since 2012) which combine various types of school under one roof and issue various school-leaving certificates.

State schools are free in Germany in the field of general education, there are only a few private or international schools that charge fees. The local school authority can provide information about the particulars of the school system in your area.

The choice of school is usually made after a personal visit and consultation with a member of the school leadership team. The academic year begins after the summer holidays in August or September, depending on the federal state. In Germany, most classes are held during the morning hours. However, North Rhine-Westphalia is currently expanding various forms of day schooling.

In-home child care

In-home child care offers supervision and education mainly for children under the age of 3, which is usually provided at the home of the child-minder. In addition to small, family-based child care, a large-scale provider can accommodate up to nine children. Fees are charged based on parental income.

To find qualified child minders with a valid child care permit issued by the Youth Welfare Office, please refer to the Youth Welfare Office or other agencies.

The easiest way to find a babysitter to mind your children for a few hours during the day or in the evening is to ask colleagues or neighbours.

Holiday child care

TU Dortmund University offers child care for the children of university members during the first or second week of the Easter and autumn holidays as well as the first two weeks of the summer holidays. There are places for 30 children (ages 6 to 13).

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Generally, we recommend you to submit an application and familiarise yourself in detail with the responsibilities of the Family Offices as well as your own rights. Currently, a residence permit for the purpose of (doctoral) study does not constitute eligibility for child benefit. Therefore, if you hold this kind of residence permit, you should verify whether your partner is eligible.

Maternity leave and parental leave
Pregnant women who are in employment are entitled to maternity leave. This begins six weeks before the due date and ends eight weeks after birth. Maternity leave is laid down under German law; during this period, pregnant women and nursing mothers are not allowed to work.

As an employee, you have the right to take parental leave up until your child’s third birthday. Parental leave affords you the opportunity to look after your child yourself.

If you have any other questions, please contact the Human Resources and Legal Affairs Department (see Chapter 8.1) or TU Dortmund University’s Family Service (see Chapter 11.1).

Parental allowance and parental allowance plus
Parental allowance and parental allowance plus are designed to compensate for loss of income after the birth of a child. The allowance and eligibility requirements vary according to the parent’s employment situation after the birth of the child, but can be combined. In addition a partnership bonus allows the eligibility period for parental allowance to be extended yet further.

Eligibility requirements
Mothers and fathers are eligible for parental allowance and parental allowance plus if they:

- are entitled to pursue gainful employment,
- care for and raise their children themselves after birth,
- pursue gainful employment for no more than 30 hours a week,
- live in the same home with their children and
- are resident in or habitually reside in Germany.

Child benefit
Parents can apply for child benefit for their children up to the age of at least 18. Under certain circumstances, foreign parents are also eligible for this benefit.

Applicants are usually eligible for child benefit if they are resident in or habitually reside in Germany. If the applicant resides outside of Germany, he or she may still be eligible for child benefit if the applicant is subject to unlimited income tax liability in Germany.

The monthly amount of child benefit is currently 192 euros for the first and second child, 198 euros for the third child and 223 euros for the fourth and each additional child.

Application process
The application must be submitted in writing to the respective Family or Child Benefit Office. The forms are available online.

Tax allowances for children
In Germany, taxpayers are entitled to a tax allowance for each child. This entitlement starts with the month in which the child is born. If you have children, you can register their child allowances with the inland tax authority in most cases, thus reducing your tax burden. Child benefit will be offset against these tax allowances.

11.3 | Family Benefits

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- care for and raise their children themselves after birth,
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- live in the same home with their children and
- are resident in or habitually reside in Germany.
Parental allowance is 67% of the family’s average monthly earnings prior to the birth after deducting taxes, social insurance contributions and professional expenses. It is, however, limited to a maximum of 1,800 euros and a minimum of 300 euros. Non-working parents receive the minimum amount in addition to their previous family income. Parental allowance can be claimed by both mother and father from birth until the child reaches 14 months of age. The minimum duration is two months. Both parents can divide the period between them. The maximum claim period for any one parent is 12 months. It can be extended by two additional months if earnings cease and the partner is involved in caring for the child. Single parents who have sole custody or at least the right to determine the place of residence can receive parental allowance to compensate for their loss of earnings and, due to the absence of a partner, claim the full 14 months for themselves. Since parental allowance is paid exclusively on the basis of the child’s age in months, the amount of parental leave requested from the employer should always match the child’s age in months.

Parental allowance plus will affect children born after 1 July 2015 and simplify the rules for parents who work part-time whilst receiving parental allowance.

Application process and deadlines
Parental allowance must be requested from the relevant local authority using a form that can be completed online and must be submitted bearing an original signature. The application does not have to be submitted immediately after the birth. However, retroactive payments can only be made for the three months immediately preceding the beginning of the month in which the application for parental allowance was received.

Labour legislation
Before your husband or wife starts looking for work, you should familiarise yourself with the relevant labour legislation (see Chapter 6). Please consult the German Consulate or local Foreigners’ Office to find out whether marital partners are allowed to pursue gainful employment and which documentation you may have to submit to apply for permission.

Job offers
You will find job offers in the weekend editions of newspapers, on online portals, via advertisements on notice boards or at the employment offices of the Federal Employment Agency. EURES – The European Job Mobility Portal – contains job offers and helpful information for all who wish to take advantage of freedom of movement for workers. In Germany, EURES advisers work at the employment agency job centres.