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Children have rights



The Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international treaty for the rights of children. The treaty was written by the United Nations. The United Nations is an organization for peace and human rights. Almost every country in the world is a member.



Children's rights apply in Germany and almost every country worldwide!

Why Children's rights?

General human rights also apply to children. In addition, because they are young, children have special rights. Children's rights apply to people under the age of 18. Rights are there so that every child can grow up healthy and happy.



Children are people in their own right. They are equal to adults. Parents must support their children in exercising their children's rights.

General principles: ¹

1. All children have the same rights. These rights apply regardless of issues such as origin, gender or disability, wealth or poverty, etc.
2. What is best for the child is right. Decisions affecting a child must always be based on that child's best interests.
3. An important goal is the best possible development of the children. All children must have equal opportunities. Disadvantages must therefore be compensated for early on.
4. The will and opinion of the child must be respected. Children should be involved and heard when decisions are made that affect them.

¹ Cf. Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk e.V. (2022) (a).



Protection, promotion and participation

In the children's rights, there are specific sections for individual topics. These are "articles". There are 54 of these. They contain the children's rights, and what adults should contribute to them. Many articles fall into one of these three areas: Protection, promotion and participation.²

Protective rights

These rights protect your child from negative influence and harm. This includes, for example, protection against violence and neglect. The family as a healthy home for the children is also protected. Children should never be in need.



Protective rights include the responsibility of parents to take good care of the child. If parents have problems with this, they can get free support.

An example:



Mirjam has become a mother, which makes her very happy. She gives her child attention, closeness and care. Although she does her best, Mirjam's child often cries at night. Sometimes she doesn't even know what the child needs. It gets very tiring over time.

Mirjam calls the early help counselling centre (Frühe Hilfen). This is how she finds out about the free consultation hours on the topics of "sleeping" and "crying". There, Mirjam meets other parents who are in the same situation. Mirjam learned to understand her child's signals better from the friendly specialist. Mirjam now recognizes what her child needs before it cries.



Ask for support as early as possible.
Ideally, before you are so overburdened!

Tip: Early help (Frühe Hilfen) is an offer for parents. Early help already helps during pregnancy and is also available for families with children up to the age of three. Specialists support parents with questions and problems and arrange suitable offers. This is voluntary for parents, free of charge and anonymous if desired.

² Cf. loc.cit.; ibid. (b).



Promotion rights

These rights support your child in his or her development. This includes the right to the best possible health care, as well as the right to education, social security and good living conditions. Children also have a right to play and leisure, rest and relaxation!

An example:



Baran fled to Germany with his son. They live together in a shelter. Baran wants his son to have the same opportunities in school as all the other children in his class. The father learns from the social worker in his accommodation how he can register his son in a day-care centre. He does that immediately.

Baran is happy. He knows that his son will have a lot of contact with children and that the day-care centre is a good preparation for school. Soon Baran's son will speak his first words in German and in his family language!

Tip: Early daycare attendance can be particularly important for children who speak a different language. This can be just as valuable for families who have few educational opportunities for children, for example, because they live in poverty.

Participation rights

Your child has the right to express what he or she needs, what he or she wants and what his or her limits are. Parents need to give children opportunities to communicate. Children should be involved in decisions that affect them according to their level of development. They also have the right to child-friendly information.

An example:



The Müller family has its own restaurant. The children should be used to the food of their German homeland at an early age. One-year-old Lina is sitting at the table with her parents and grandmother. She likes to eat porridge made from carrots and potatoes. Her grandmother offers Lina apple sauce for the first time. This is new for Lina. She smells it, makes a face and turns away. That means: Lina doesn't want to try apple sauce.



Tip: The right to co-determination from the start means that parents have to interpret the child's signals. Babies' signals are often very subtle. Lina's limits for her body must be respected. No one can force her to try the apple sauce.



Do you want to know more about how to perceive these subtle signs? Or to introduce complementary nutrition? Then you are welcome to contact the early help (Frühe Hilfen).

Conclusion

Every child has rights. Parents can and must help them so that their children know and experience these rights. All rights are equally important. The topics of protection, promotion and participation belong together. When children feel safe and know their rights, they can participate more. No child is forced to participate.³



Parents often have to observe several rights. The guiding question is: What is best for the child? Parents do not have to be able to answer this question alone.

Sources

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Graphics: www.pixabay.com

³ Cf. Maywald (2018).