

2. Applying for Child Care

Private Child Care

Private child care should be arranged directly with the care-giver or with an agency. See below for suggestions for agencies.

Public Child Care

The local public office for children and family services (Jugendamt) issues vouchers (Gutscheine) that can be used for Kitas (Kindergarten), Elterninitiativen (parent initiatives) and some Tagesmütter (childminders). The Jugendamt will grant vouchers for full or part-time care based on:

- parents' working hours (as employee or freelancer)
- parents looking for work
- parents studying
- child's age

The cost for public child care is based on parents' combined income. For a cost calculation, see table beginning on page 39:
<http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/sen-familie/kindertagesbetreuung/elterninformation.pdf>

NB: Income is generally calculated on the basis of the previous year's tax return. However, the Jugendamt sometimes requests proof of the salary that you will receive in your new position (Verdienstbescheinigung). If you need this, please contact us.

Contact information for Berlin's Jugendämter is provided below.

How to apply:

1. Submit an application for a voucher, along with the required supporting documents, to your local Jugendamt ***two to six months before child care should begin*** (see Information for parents and attached application). Applications submitted too late will not be processed in time; those submitted too early waste your time as vouchers older than six months expire. Contact information for all Jugendämter in Berlin can be found below.
2. Identify Kitas you would be willing to send your child to – preferably near home or work. You will need to visit these places personally to be sure they are appropriate for your family's needs. For a list of Kitas see: <http://www.kitanetz.de/bezirke.html>
3. Put your child on the waiting list of several Kitas (10 or more) as far in advance as possible. Call the Kitas every few months to indicate that you are still interested in a place.
4. When a place becomes available, give the Kita your voucher. Remaining administrative matters will be settled directly with the Kita.

Important to note:

Public child care institutions require an 'Eingewöhnung' phase – a getting-comfortable period of one to four weeks when at least one parent is expected to help their child ease into the new situation by staying with them at first, then leaving for increasing periods of time until the child can easily get through the day without the parent's presence. Remember to take this into account when applying for a voucher from the Jugendamt. For example, if you want to have child care fully functioning in May, you should request a voucher which is valid as of April, so that you have time for the Eingewöhnung.

Most Kita places become available at the beginning of each school year (01. August); availability at other times is possible, but rare. If there are no Kita places when you need them in your neighborhood, you may have to consider going outside your neighborhood or exploring a private child care option.