

[Home](#) > ... > [Your Rights](#) > [Victims of Crime](#) > [Victims' Rights - By Country](#) > 5 - My rights to support and assistance

5 - My rights to support and assistance

I am a victim of crime. Who can I contact for support and assistance?

You can find detailed information on support and assistance if you are the victim of a crime on the BMJV's (Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection) central victim protection platform at <http://www.hilfe-info.de>, or you can [download](#) the BMJV's *Opferfibel* (guidelines for victims) booklet (own publication, in German) on their homepage. This national victim protection platform also includes an advisory centre 'finder', which victims can use to quickly find centres in their area offering help via telephone, online or in person. The relevant information is made available by ODABS, an online database for victims of crimes, at www.odabs.org, which is in turn supported by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

You will find below a list of the different sources of help available.

Victim support hotlines

A list of the most important hotlines available free of charge (you cannot call these numbers from abroad). In Germany, you can find the following numbers at www.hilfe-info.de:

Hilfetelefon Sexueller Missbrauch (helpline for sexual abuse): 0800 22 55 530

Hilfetelefon Gewalt gegen Frauen (helpline for violence against women): 08000 116 016

Hilfetelefon Gewalt an Männer (helpline for violence against men): 0800 1239900

berta - Beratung und telefonische Anlaufstelle (helpline for general advice): 0800 30 50 750

Elterntelefon (helpline for parents): 0800 11 10 550

Hilfetelefon Schwangere in Not (helpline for pregnant women at risk): 0800 40 40 020

Medizinische Kinderschutzhotline (medical helpline for child protection): 0800 19 21 000

Victims throughout Europe can get help and support by calling the 24-hour helpline set up by Weisser Ring e.V. on 116006.

Is victim support free of charge?

Yes.

What kind of support can I receive from the State services or from the authorities?

In Germany, each federal State is responsible for providing general assistance to victims. Each federal State has set up various different measures to improve the situation of victims of crime and to provide them with the right sort of assistance. Measures include appointing victim protection representatives to police stations, setting up witness care units, temporary accommodation for battered women and young girls, providing information for victims of crime and financial aid. Many federal States have set up special regional associations which run advisory

centres and victim units. You can find a list of what each federal State offers at <https://www.hilfe-info.de/WebS/hilfeinfo/DE/HilfeUndBeratung/AnsprechpartnerUndBeratungsstellen/EinrichtungenOpferhilfe/EinrichtungenDerOpferhilfe.html>.

There are also central contact points at federal and at regional level. For example, at national level, Dr Franke was appointed as the Federal Government Commissioner for the Victims and Bereaved of Terrorist Offences committed on National Territory. Dr Felix Klein was appointed as the Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight against Antisemitism, and Dr Rörig is the Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues.

Thirteen federal States have also appointed a representative for victims. However, their responsibilities do vary. You can find a list of individual contacts at www.hilfe-info.de.

As a victim of a crime, you can obtain the assistance of a lawyer during criminal proceedings, for example, to support you with your witness statement. You also have the right to support as a private accessory prosecutor even before announcing your participation in the proceedings. You have the right to legal representation as the injured party, or you may be accompanied to your hearing by a person you trust, as long as this does not compromise the objective of the investigation.

As well as legal assistance, you are entitled to psychosocial support before, during and after criminal proceedings. Such support is available for free not only to victims of sexual and violent crimes who are minors, but also to particularly vulnerable adults who are injured as a result of a very violent crime or sexual assault.

Medical treatment

In addition, trauma outpatient centres offer short-term psychological support for victims of violent crimes. Such centres can be found all over Germany. Victims of violent crimes can receive immediate psychological support in a trauma outpatient centre. Many victims of crime show a marked improvement after just a few advice and psychotherapy sessions. If necessary, treatment may be offered and provided over a longer period, e.g. outpatient psychotherapy or inpatient care at a psychiatric or psychosomatic clinic. Many trauma centres are attached to a psychiatric clinic or hospital so that, in most cases, they can provide care by a psychiatric doctor.

You can find a list of trauma centres in Germany at Hilfe-Info.de.

Victims of a sexual or physical assault can have the visible injuries documented. You can generally get a doctor's certificate for any injuries suffered after being examined by a general practitioner at your local practice or a doctor at your local hospital. Some cities also have a special outpatient centre for protection against violence that can document the injuries of victims of crime.

In these centres, you can have your injuries or other any physical evidence examined and documented by a forensic doctor.

Financial support

In addition, the State provides various types of financial support: Anyone who suffers damage to health from a violent crime can obtain compensation payments under the Crime Victims Compensation Act (*Opferentschädigungsgesetz*). They must make an official application to their federal State's Pensions and Benefits Office (*Landesversorgungsamts*). You can also find a list of all the Pensions and Benefits Offices on the victim protection platform at Hilfe-Info.de. Trauma centre treatment is also included in these benefits.

After attacks by extremists or terrorists, victims can obtain compensation when facing hardship (*Härteleistungen*). Your contact point for these benefits is the Bundesamt für Justiz (Federal Office of Justice).

If you are injured in a violent crime at work, during a trip with your school class or university seminar group, or on your way to or from your work or such a trip, under certain circumstances, you may be able to claim statutory accident insurance. Your contact point for these cases is your Unfallkasse or Berufsgenossenschaft (accident insurance fund or occupational accident insurance fund).

Verkehrsofferhilfe e.V. (association for victims of traffic accidents) is the appropriate insurance fund for a violent crime involving a vehicle. It covers, for example, cases in which a vehicle was not insured, hit and run accidents or

when a driver intentionally acted illegally.

What types of support can I receive from non-governmental organisations?

Professional and voluntary non-governmental organisations for victim support have various different measures to improve the situation of victims of crime and to provide them with the right sort of assistance.

Experts working for these organisations can help you by discussing the consequences of a crime, providing psychosocial support, and informing you of possible criminal proceedings and any financial compensation. They can also provide further assistance, such as the services of a lawyer or therapist.

For example, [Weisser Ring e. V.](#) provides support to victims at national level. In addition to centres throughout Germany, this association also provides the above-mentioned helpline for victims (116006) through which victims of crime can obtain professional help immediately. Weisser Ring e. V. offers, in particular, general advice, help when dealing with government authorities and the courts, an initial session with a lawyer free of charge, initial medical/psychological support free of charge when dealing with stress caused by a crime, accompaniment to court hearings and financial support. Weisser Ring e. V. also has schemes for victim compensation and victim-offender mediation.

[Arbeitskreis der Opferhilfen in Deutschland e.V.](#) (ADO, working group for victim support in Germany) acts as an umbrella organisation for various professionally active victim support centres at regional level. Their goals are, amongst others, to encourage regular information exchanges between victim support centres in Germany, set standards for professional victim support, found further professional victim support centres and foster cooperation between all the support centres. At ADO, you can also get advice and help when dealing with government authorities, as well as emergency psychological support, medical treatment and therapy, legal advice, accompaniment to appointments with the police, government authorities and the courts, and support with victim-offender mediation.

Various support centres have specialised in providing advice and assistance for victims of specific crimes, in particular, sexual, racist, anti-Semitic, homophobic and transphobic crimes. These are also organised under various [umbrella organisations](#), for example:

[VBRG](#) – Verband der Beratungsstellen für Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und antisemitischer Gewalt (association of advice centres for victims of right-wing, racist and anti-Semitic violence)

[BFF](#) – Bundesverband der Frauenberatungsstellen und Frauennotrufe in Deutschland (federal association of advice centres and hotlines for women in Germany)

In addition to national victim support initiatives, many help centres are active at a regional and local level and very committed. You can find a list of advisory centres at regional and local level at <http://www.hilfe-info.de>.

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