



### Speaking and Understanding German **Family Centres – The Proper Place for Language Learning**

“I can communicate with my neighbours at last. Before, I only used to say ‚hello‘ when we met in the street, and then I hurried on.”  
Tuğçe, 36 years old

Sound knowledge of the German language is crucial to children's later learning at school and in their jobs. For it is a fact that life will be much easier for those who learn the German language from infancy and have a good command of German – be it in everyday life, at school or at the workplace. The family centres therefore offer a wide range of language courses in a move to provide the best possible support to parents and children in learning German. In addition, numerous family centres offer courses to help children improve their native language proficiency: the better children speak their mother tongue, the easier it is for them to learn a foreign language. Moreover, the native language is an integral part of every child's identity.

#### **Family centres ...**

- offer language courses for all children including those who do not attend any day-care facility,
- conduct German language courses for mothers and for mothers together with their children,
- organise German language courses specifically intended for fathers,

- offer courses to help children improve their native language proficiency,
- encourage and improve children's reading.

### Sharing Cultural Diversity **Family Centres – The Proper Place for Intercultural Understanding**

“Everybody is welcome here. We celebrate both Easter and Sugar Bayram.”  
Isabella, 27 years old

Numerous people with different cultural backgrounds shape life in North Rhine-Westphalia. Our state greatly appreciates that diversity. This is the reason why the family centres offer a great variety of provision especially for families with an immigrant background plus opportunities for inter-cultural exchanges for all families. In order to be able to do so, many family centres have staff who are familiar with the various language backgrounds, cultural and religious traditions and customs. There is also an increasing number of educators who themselves have an immigrant background. Furthermore, the family centres cooperate closely with integration agencies, parent associations and the regional centres for the empowerment of children and adolescents with an immigrant background (RAA). The staff at the family centres will be happy to provide information about the various programmes and activities.

#### **Family centres ...**

- organise inter-cultural parents' cafés,
- jointly celebrate the various traditional festivals,
- arrange inter-cultural baby meetings, toddlers' groups and mother-child groups,
- offer or help find cooking, sewing and needlework courses and pregnancy/birth preparation courses,
- co-operate with parent associations established by immigrants.

#### **Location of the Family Centres**

To facilitate access, Family Centres will be set up throughout North Rhine-Westphalia.

Families can visit [www.familienzentrum.nrw.de](http://www.familienzentrum.nrw.de) to locate their nearest Centre and find out more. Information about Family Centres can also be obtained from the website of the NRW Ministry for Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration ([www.mgffi.nrw.de](http://www.mgffi.nrw.de)).



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## **Children and Families First** Family Centres in North Rhine-Westphalia

Children

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## Dear parents,

We are making good headway in turning North Rhine-Westphalia into Germany's most child- and family-friendly state. Never before have greater efforts been made on part of our state to offer support and assistance to parents and children.

By establishing the family centres we have built a network in North Rhine-Westphalia which offers comprehensive support and guidance to families, strengthens parents and promotes the development of children at an early stage. The family centres are intended as reliable ports of call for you and your family in all aspects of everyday life. They help families to find children's day-care facilities, family counselling and educational opportunities, and they aim to provide for the family as a whole.

Family centres especially strive to promote equal opportunities for people with an immigrant background. The centres therefore offer a great variety of provision for parents and children with an immigrant background. In addition to parents' cafés where parents can share experience, there are courses aimed at improving both foreign and native language skills, and inter-cultural programmes as well as activities designed for all families.

I would like to cordially invite you to visit a family centre near your home! Please feel free to come even if your child does not yet attend a day-care facility. The staff at the family centres will be happy to provide information about the various programmes and activities. They know the ins and outs. Some of them speak your native language and some of them also have an immigrant background. It is a matter of prime importance to me to support immigrant families and to foster cultural exchanges between immigrants and the native population. For diversity is a real gain and a great opportunity for our society.

With cordial regards

Armin Laschet  
Minister for Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

## Family Centres in North Rhine-Westphalia The Programme

### What Are Family Centres?

"It is called 'family centre' because mom and dad go there, too."

Meryem, 6 years old

Family centres are children's day-care facilities which, in addition to providing care for children, focus attention on the family as a whole with the aim of offering counselling and assistance whenever the need arises. One of the family centres' primary tasks is to strengthen parents in bringing up their children and to promote the development of children at the earliest possible stage. With a view to achieving that objective, they cooperate closely with family education and counselling centres and other family, child and youth welfare services as well as schools and associations. This enables the family centres to coordinate and integrate a wide range of help and advice for parents. The centres' services are tailored to the needs of the families in the community.

### Family centres ...

- strengthen parents in bringing up their children,
- facilitate exchanges between parents,
- promote the development of children at an early stage, paying due regard to their talent and abilities

- promote the children's creative and imagination skills, and stimulate their impulse for activity,
- are able to identify children's strengths and weaknesses early on and to provide counselling,
- furnish parents with information about how to improve their children's health and diet,
- offer parents immediate assistance and advice in everyday conflicts,
- give parents instant information about where to turn for help in a range of situations,
- assist parents in finding care for their children outside regular opening hours,
- help parents to better integrate work and family life by arranging for care by day-care mothers or fathers.

Strengthening Families

### Family Centres – The Proper Place for Education, Counselling and Assistance

"Yes, I've noticed. At the Family Centre you know where to turn to when you have questions"

Anastasija, 32 years old

The family centres co-operate closely with family counselling and family education institutions. This enables them to better support families in educational issues and to offer them guidance for coping with everyday problems. The centres organise courses and workshops where parents can improve their strengths and pick up suggestions and useful ideas for dealing with stressful situations in their

everyday lives. Moreover, the family centres offer parents information about a wholesome and balanced diet, living healthily and promoting the healthy development of their children.

The family centres' staff will be pleased to help families establish contact with the counselling and education services.

### Family centres ...

- facilitate access to individual educational counselling,
- organise parents' cafés where parents can share experience,
- offer a wide range of weekend and leisure-time activities for parents and kids (e.g. visits to zoos or circus performances, joint boat or bicycle trips),
- offer courses designed to develop parenting skills,
- provide workshops, courses and information on housekeeping, maintaining good health, wholesome diet etc.