

# Frühe Hilfen: Guideline for Family Support

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## Summary

Since the beginning of 2015, regional early childhood intervention networks have been established and expanded throughout Austria. A core element of these regional networks is family support, which ensures continuous contact with the families and – in the sense of a pilot function – the organisation of the required support services.

The Guideline for Family Support was developed in a participatory process. The objective is to serve a common understanding of the function and tasks of professionals working in family support and to offer practical guidelines for action. On the one hand, it is aimed at new family support workers who want to familiarise themselves with the basic attitudes, framework conditions and concrete activities of family support. On the other hand, it can also be used by already active family support workers for reflection.

### The guideline

- » outlines tasks and basic attitudes and the underlying understanding of family support,
- » describes concrete steps that can be taken and
- » define the framework conditions that should be in place for the successful implementation of family support.

Concerning the family support the guideline e. g. highlights, that a prerequisite for building trust and a relation is to get in contact with all persons involved and to listen actively. Besides solution and resource orientation also calmness concerning the process is needed. Instead of carrying out screenings and diagnoses the family support worker should gain an insight and assess the situation together with the family. By choosing together with the family and referring to additional matching specific services the family support workers ensure the access to required services. Positive attitudes and the assumption, that parents want the best for their child, build the basis. Honest interest in others, reliability and voluntariness are key, too.

The implementation of the family support follows four steps: getting in contact with the family, the initial interview, the ongoing support, and its conclusion:

- » Usually, the first contact is made by telephone. With the help of a checklist the most relevant information can be gathered and clarified, if the main criteria for joining the programme are fulfilled.

- » The initial interview is carried out during a personal meeting (mostly a home visit) and focuses on getting to know each other, a first assessment of the situation (resources and needs) and already existing support services. The framework conditions are explained, commitment is established, and the next steps are agreed upon.
- » During the ongoing family support the assessment of the relation as well as the situation (resources and needs) is reflected and renewed regularly. Depending on the individual situation duration and intensity of the family support can differ. Matching specific services should be organised step by step to avoid additional stress. The main idea in that context is to rely on the regional network. In the case of gaps, it might be necessary though, to implement specific interventions by family support workers. Home visits are the core of the family support.
- » If the agreed objectives are achieved, the family support should come to an end. This also needs thorough preparation and adaptation to the individual situation. Ideally a last home visit is organised and used for reflection and feedback.

The guideline is rounded off by useful templates and working materials for the work in family support.