



# INFORMATION FOR RELATIVES OF DETAINEES

BERLIN



# Feelings and thoughts

## Detention is a difficult experience for everyone involved

At first, keep calm. Everything changes very suddenly. Many relatives report insecurity, fears and self-reproaches during the time when their family members are detained. It is helpful to find new routines in everyday life or to maintain the old routines. In this way, stability can be kept during this turbulent time.

At the beginning, the detention is often concealed from others, as it can be associated with fears or even shame. The affected ones are confronted with bias and prejudice, their self-confidence is harmed. However, concealment usually leads to high emotional pressure for the relatives. Being open about the situation eases the emotional burden. Talking about the situation with persons of trust or in relatives' groups can help.



There will be many unanswered questions at first. However, a prison is a structured place, and many things will become clear over time. Use the information in this booklet to find answers to your questions!

One of your relatives has been detained. The situation can be confusing and overwhelming not only for themselves. As a parent, (ex)partner and relative, this circumstance can also quickly become too much for you. You may now have to arrange many things for the relative and reorganize yourself. If you have (joint) children, the situation may also vary, since the children must understand and cope with the situation as well.

The following information is intended to support you and give you ideas about how visits should proceed and how else you can keep in touch with the detained person.

Keep in mind that everyone deals with this particular situation differently. No matter if it's anger, fear, sadness, lack of understanding, powerlessness - all of these feelings are normal. Keeping in touch with family members can be difficult, but it is an important part of the detention process. It can build and strengthen security and trust on both sides.

# This booklet

On the following pages we have compiled information and offers for you. The QR codes in the red fields will take you directly to the corresponding websites. To do this, you must scan the QR codes with the camera of your mobile phone or a QR code scanner. Alternatively, you can also enter the specified internet pages into your browser.

## You can obtain help

### People who are there for you

Special support services are available from social workers inside and outside prisons, from independent organizations, and from psychologists and pastoral counselors.

These also include online services for adults and children. You can find a list of services under this link. The above-mentioned services will also be happy to provide information about other contact points for your concerns and needs.

<https://t1p.de/angehoerigenarbeit>



In addition to the special support services for relatives of imprisoned people, there are also many other counseling and support services available to you in Berlin.

If you scan the QR code, you will be taken to an overview of authorities and institutions that provide advice on the many different topics that may be important to you at the moment.

<https://t1p.de/kontakte-adressen>

## Counselling and support

In case of detention, it is usually necessary to go to certain authorities or make certain phone calls in order to sort out the situation and to be financially and legally secured. The following authorities should be informed about the detention of a relative:



- *Bundesagentur für Arbeit/Jobcenter* [federal employment agency]
- employer
- *Jugendamt* [youth welfare office]
- health insurance

There are various places where you can apply for financial assistance for individuals and the family. Keep in mind: the sooner the application is submitted, the better, because the date of submission of the application is considered the official start of the benefit.

You can apply for the following benefits at the offices mentioned:

- Arbeitslosengeld I from *Agentur für Arbeit*, Arbeitslosengeld II from *Jobcenter*
- *Sozialhilfe* from *Sozialamt* [welfare benefit from social security office]
- *Wohngeld* [housing benefit from the local authority in charge]
- *Unterhaltsvorschuss* from *Jugendamt* [child support advance from youth welfare office]

On the internet: <https://t1p.de/Formulare>

You can get help with filling out the documents through independent organizations.

## Personal visits

### Being a guest in a prison (JVA)



Personal visits must be announced in advance.

All information on the visiting regulations in the Berlin prisons, including current information on visits during the coronavirus pandemic, can be found here:

<https://t1p.de/besuchsregeln>

# What do I need to know for visiting somebody in prison?

- A visit to the prison must be announced in advance by the detainee. Visits are limited in time. Inmates are allowed at least two hours of visits per month. In addition, the prisons provide information on the duration and frequency of visits.
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- You must bring an identity card or passport to prove your identity
- For security reasons, each person is searched with a metal detector before the visit.
- Presents must not be brought or accepted without prior permission.

## Keep in touch between the visits

### How can I stay in touch?

Personal visiting hours are limited, but there are more ways to keep in touch and make the detainees participating in life.

- You can write letters to your relatives. But be careful! Nothing may be enclosed, and letters will be checked before handed out to the detainee.
- Addresses of the Berlin prisons can be found here: <https://t1p.de/haftanstalten>
- Sending parcels to the prison is not allowed.
- Detainees are happy to receive (self-painted) pictures and photos of their relatives, but only by post. This also makes it possible to share life events such as birthdays or a school enrolment.
- Phone calls. In some prisons, there are even telephones in the detention rooms. In open prisons mobile phones can be borrowed. Most prisons also allow video contact. The time you spend with your relatives in this way is not deducted from your visiting hours. Inmates have many options, but they must actively make use of them. Find out which ones they can use.



- Many prisons have special offers, for example supervised play hours for detainees with their children. Find out what your prison is offering.
- For older children: prepare topics of conversation corresponding to their interests.

## And what about children?

### What's now important ...

Your first impulse might be to protect your child from incriminating information. However, it is especially important to be open with the children. Through a sober, age-appropriate and gentle explanation, the child can learn to deal with the situation and reassure itself that it is not to blame for the current situation.

For the future, it is also important for children not to see police and judicial staff as the enemy. Creating and maintaining daily routines will help you and the children to have more stability, security and structure.

When you go to the prison with your children for the first time, think about how this encounter feels for children. Even if you have many organizational things to discuss, there should be time to turn to the children. Perhaps you can make a first visit alone or clarify urgent questions in advance.

## A visit to the prison with children

In order to visit your relatives in the prison, you must first make an appointment for a visit. This is usually limited in time and a member of the General Prison Service (in German *Allgemeiner Vollzugsdienst*, short *AVD*) may stay in the room with you. You are not allowed to bring any gifts.

You can easily find information for children about visits to a prison on the Caritas web page. Here you can also get information about a typical daily routine.



<https://t1p.de/besuch-im-gefaengnis>, English: <http://besuch-im-gefaengnis.de/en/>

# When you struggle...

## Topics of conversation for the first visit of your children

The following topics can be discussed or serve as an idea for the visiting time

- What questions need to be clarified together?
- How does life go on outside?
- What is the daily routine in prison? What does a prison cell look like?  
Information about the daily routine and the design of a detention room is available on the Caritas web page (see QR code and internet address on page 6).
- How was the children's day in kindergarten or at school?
- The children's daily routine: What did you eat? Did you play with friends?

## Books for children and parents

- There are various books for children and parents talking about a family member being in prison.
- You can read the books to your children or just read them on your own. Here is the list:
- <https://t1p.de/literatur-hinweise>



Senatsverwaltung  
für Justiz, Vielfalt  
und Antidiskriminierung

**BERLIN**



**Senate Department  
for Justice, Diversity and  
Anti-Discrimination**

[Senatsverwaltung für Justiz, Vielfalt und Antidiskriminierung]

Text and design: IBI gGmbH

Created by *Arbeitskreis Kinder und Familie von Inhaftierten des Netzwerks Integration von Inhaftierten und Haftentlassenen* [Working group on children and families of detainees of the network Integration of detainees and ex-detainees]

on behalf of SenJustVA

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Updated 07/2022