



Children, Youth and Families

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Providing the same high standard of quality to everyone!

The main objective of the regional offices for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat) is to contribute to growth and development for children, young people and families. We will achieve our objectives through professional competency, openness, human resources development and constructive cooperation with each local authority.

Bufetat's work is founded on three values:

- Respect.**
- Openness.**
- Participation.**



For these to be more than mere words, we must strive constantly to make space for reflection and a critical approach to practice. We are committed to high standards and our employees are dedicated individuals with great expertise in their respective fields. We systematically target research and development in order to maintain and improve the services we provide. We can and will always strive to improve, and seek to demonstrate the link between what we say and what we do for our clients.

One prime aim for us is to make our services more transparent. We wish to stimulate dialogue and insight, and do our bit to improve awareness of what our work entails. As a government agency, we aim to heed criticism and to be receptive to those with comments to make. Together, we will provide the same high quality services to everyone!

Ann-Marit Sæbønes
Director General
Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs

The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir)



The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) is the central governmental office under the Ministry of Children and Equality that is responsible for:

- child welfare
- family counselling
- adoption
- matrimonial cases
- ex gratia compensation payments
- administration of grants
- youth exchanges
- youth information

Subordinate to the Directorate are the five regional offices for Northern, Central, Western, Eastern and Southern Norway (Bufetat), which maintain contact with the local child welfare authorities through 26 regional response and consultation teams spread across the country. Bufetat is responsible for the foster home services, family and community-based child welfare services, state child welfare institutions, and family counselling offices.

The Directorate's main remit is to ensure that children, young people and families receive help, support and useful information in the areas covered by the Directorate. The Directorate is to advance the principal objectives on behalf of the Ministry of Children and Equality, and follow up on Bufetat activities nationwide through supervision, support and advisory services in the five regions.

MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND EQUALITY

THE NORWEGIAN DIRECTORATE FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

Regional Office,
Northern Norway

Regional Office,
Central Norway

Regional Office,
Western Norway

Regional Office,
Eastern Norway

Regional Office,
Southern Norway

Response and Consultation Teams

Assistive programmes in the home with state-funding

Foster care services

Child welfare institutions

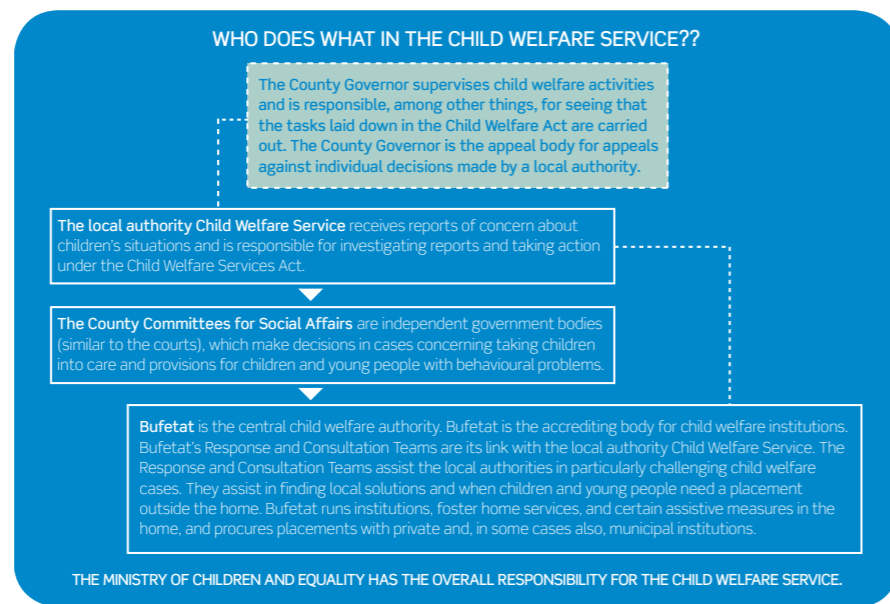
Family counselling offices

Child Welfare



Bufetat, with its five regional offices, is the central child welfare authority responsible for assisting local authorities in child welfare matters. When required, Bufetat assists the Child Welfare Service in finding placements for children outside their homes. Bufetat is also responsible for recruitment, information services and general training provision for foster homes. Bufetat runs state child welfare institutions and accredits municipal and private child welfare institutions. In addition, Bufetat offers alternatives to placement outside the home.

Families can turn to their local authority Child Welfare Service if they need assistance. The local authority Child Welfare Service receives reports of concern about children's situations, is responsible for preventive work and can implement assistive measures in the child's home.



Child Welfare Response and Consultation Teams

There are 26 regional Response and Consultation Teams located across Norway. These teams are the central child welfare authority's liaison with the local authorities. To ensure professional breadth, the teams include psychologists, child welfare officers, trained social workers and teachers.

The Response and Consultation Teams:

- work to find local solutions in collaboration with local authorities
- render professional assistance in difficult child welfare cases
- assist local authorities with placement outside the home

Assistive measures in the home with state support

Bufetat offers a range of programmes as alternatives to placement outside the home. These include Parent Management Training Oregon (PMTO), Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST).

Parent Management Training-Oregon (PMTO)

PMTO is a behaviour intervention programme for parents whose children aged between 3 and 12 years exhibit clear signs of a high level of aggression and frequently come into conflict with other children and adults. The programme emphasises the influence of

the social environment in the child's adaptive skills. PMTO is also used in foster homes and child welfare institutions.

Functional Family Therapy (FFT)

FFT is an intervention programme for families in which an adolescent (aged 12 - 18 years) exhibits or is at risk of developing serious behavioural problems. Underlying issues may be high-level conflict in the home, problems at school, disruptive influence of peers or substance abuse.

Multisystemic Therapy (MST)

MST is a voluntary programme for families with adolescents aged 12 to 18 years with serious behavioural problems. The youngsters may be violent or aggressive, have problems at school, be substance abusers/ drinkers, or suffer from disruptive peer influence. For some adolescents, MST is a good alternative to placement outside of the home.

Foster homes

The Foster Care Service is responsible for recruitment and coordination of families who assume responsibility for fostering a child or young person, and for ensuring that the families receive the necessary training and guidance. The Foster Care Service assists the local authorities with placement,

monitoring and termination of foster care. Bufetat can also assist local authorities with the recruitment, training and guidance of supervisors.

Centres for Parents and Children

The Centres for Parents and Children are part of a voluntary programme for pregnant women in difficult circumstances and lone parents, or couples with one or more children of different ages, where the Child Welfare Service has concerns about the child's care. The centres have a preventive and problem-solving role.

Child welfare institutions

Bufetat runs its own institutions nationwide in Norway, and also procures places in private institutions. There are various types of institutions: children's homes, juvenile homes, combined children's and juvenile homes, residential and working collectives and emergency and evaluation institutions.

«MultifunC»

MultifunC is an intervention programme run in institutions and the community for adolescents with serious behavioural problems. A founding principle of the programme activities is that delinquent behaviour may be a result of risk factors in the immediate surroundings. The therapy is therefore geared to changing risk factors in arenas such as the family, peer relationships and school. MultifunC has been established in all of Bufetat's five regions, and in Oslo.

Care Centre for lone juvenile asylum-seekers and refugees

At the end of 2007, the child welfare authorities took over the care responsibilities for juvenile (under age 15) asylum-seekers. Bufetat's

Regional Office in Eastern Norway has been responsible for developing and establishing a care centre based in Eidsvoll municipality. The aim of the Centre is to improve conditions for lone juvenile asylum-seekers from arrival to settlement in the municipalities or until such time as they might depart from Norway. The Centre is required to possess sufficient resources and expertise for assessing and meeting the juveniles' need for care, follow-up, help and support. The County Governor is the supervisory authority for the Centre. A programme for asylum seekers in the age-group 15-18 years is in preparation.

Other programmes

Family counselling

Family counselling is an approach whereby the family itself and its network are actively involved in finding constructive solutions to dysfunction in the family. This programme focuses on the family network's capabilities/resources and sense of responsibility. Family counselling is coordinated with the Child Welfare Service, where the aim is to arrive at a plan that serves the best interests of the child.

For more information, see www.bufdir.no/familieraad

Parental Guidance Programme

The Parental Guidance Programme is a basic, health-promoting and preventive programme, the aim of which is to improve child and youth care and parenting, through parents' groups, set up under various local authority services. The programme is aimed at all parents and guardians with children aged 0-18. The Norwegian Parental Guidance Programme is based on ICDP (International Child Development Programme).

For more information about child welfare, see www.bufdir.no



Family Counselling

Family Counselling is a free, low-threshold service available nationwide to couples, families and individuals. Anyone who wants to can contact a family counselling office. The offices offer therapy, advice and counselling when problems, conflicts and crises arise in the family. It is advisable to contact the family counselling office as early as possible before the problems become overwhelming.

There are 64 family counselling offices located across Norway. Two-thirds of the offices are state-run and directly connected to Bufetat, while the remainder are owned by church foundations and operate under an agreement with the central authorities. All the family counselling offices are subject to the Act relating to Family Counselling Offices.

You can find your nearest family counselling office and information about the offices at www.bufdir.no

Family Counselling assists in problems between couples

- lack of feelings for each other, disagreement about sharing responsibilities, rowing, non-communication, poor communication
- sexual problems, infidelity, pregnancy

- a wish to strengthen the relationship
- doubts about whether the relationship can continue or a desire to break up the relationship on the best possible terms
- alcohol problems in adults, violence/threats/abuse, jealousy between adults
- living with somatic/mental illness, grief reactions in adults
- ethical/cultural differences between adults

between parents and children

- interaction between parents and children/adolescents, parenting skills, neglectful care
- behavioural problems, alcohol problems, somatic/mental illness, grief reactions
- violence/threats, sexual abuse of children/adolescents
- ethical/cultural differences between parents and children/adolescents
- when the family structures changes: new family/step-family

when parents do not live together

- cooperation in relation to the child with the ex-partner
- emotional reactions following a break-up in the family
- agreements concerning where the child lives, custody, visiting rights/timesharing, travel, holidays, etc.

in relation to other family members/others

- interaction with the extended family/parents-in-law/others who are close
- alcohol problems, violence/threats/abuse from the extended family/outside the family

Couples therapy

Family Counselling offers counselling sessions for married couples, cohabiting couples, separated couples, and same-sex and heterosexual couples. The sessions are usually attended by both parties, but one party can also attend alone if the other party declines. The counselling sessions may last for up to 90 minutes, and 3-7 sessions are common. The emphasis is on shedding light on the viewpoints of those affected.

Family therapy and group therapy

When key issues concern children, parents, parents-in-law, grandparents or others, it may be helpful for more of those who are affected to take part. Family Counselling also offers group programmes.

It is well-documented that couples and family therapy help many people to resolve dysfunctional relationships.

Parental cooperation and timesharing arrangements

Good cooperation and good timesharing arrangements are important in ensuring children of sound development.

Parents with joint children and who live apart can also obtain help in improving their cooperation on their child(ren) and in creating or revising timesharing agreements.

Compulsory mediation

The family counselling offices provide mediation services in accordance with the Act relating to marriage and the Act relating to parents and children. The following circumstances are subject to obligatory mediation

- separation of married or cohabiting couples with joint children under the age of 16
- the parents do not live together and one of the parents intends to take legal action concerning the child's residence, custody and timesharing rights

A lone provider applying for increased child benefit is required to produce a mediation certificate. Up to 7 hours of mediation can be provided in order to achieve a viable cooperation agreement for the child(ren) and adults.

Other preventive activities in Family Counselling

The family counselling offices also run other preventive activities such as relationship-building courses, groups following relationship break-ups and groups for whom violence has been or is a persistent problem in the family.

The family counselling offices are also very active in organising the med talks in local communities and may work jointly with local health centres, nursery schools/schools, the Child Welfare Service and women's crisis centres.

«**What about us?**» is a national programme of courses on special-needs parenting for parents of children with disabilities. The programme is also a forum where parents can share experiences, the latest insights and facts of family life. «What about us?» courses are also offered to lone providers who have a disabled child. **More information about the «What about us?» courses is available from the website www.hvamedoss.no**

«**Happy couples!**» is a free relationship-building course for new parents. The course is designed to support and inspire parents in a period of great upheaval and change in everyday life and in their relationship. The local health centres are responsible for arranging the «Happy couples!» courses.

More information about the «Happy couples!» courses is available at www.godtsamliv.no

Adoption



The main purpose of adoption is to provide a good, permanent home for a child whose biological parents are not able to look after it. Adoption must be in the best interests of the child.

The Regional Offices for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat) handle most applications for adoption in accordance with the Adoption Act. These applications are for both prior approval for adoption from abroad and permission to adopt a Norwegian child. The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) is the appeals body for such cases.

With the exception of applications to adopt step-children, the adoption process starts in the applicant's own local authority. The local authority assesses applicants and writes a social report. In the case of an intercountry adoption, the application will then be forwarded to the relevant Regional Office for processing. If the application is granted, it is forwarded to one of the three accredited adoption organisations in Norway: Children of the World - Norway, InorAdopt or Adopsjonsforum. These organisations are responsible for finding children for the applicants. It is important to note that the processing time may vary considerably from one country of adoption to another.

Applications concerning children born in Norway must be sent to Bufdir. Bufdir supervises the activities of the adoption organisations in Norway and in the countries with which Norway has intercountry adoption agreements. Bufdir is also responsible for cooperation with the adoption authorities in these countries. When a child is adopted from abroad, Bufdir pays a lump-sum grant to the adoptive families after the adoption process has been completed. Bufdir is also responsible for maintaining the national adoption register, in which all adoptions since 1917 are recorded.

Preparing-for-adoption courses

Preparing-for-adoption courses are voluntary programmes offered free of charge to first-time adoption applicants. The aim of the course is to prepare prospective adoptive parents for what is entailed by adoption in order that they may be better equipped to receive the child and deal with any challenges ahead. The course is based on experience of and research about the challenges faced by adoptive families. The course has been designed by Bufdir and is open to first-time adoption applicants nationwide in Norway.

Course enrolments may be made at www.bufdir.no

WHO DOES WHAT IN ADOPTION CASES?

Ministry of Children and Equality
- The national adoption authority with special responsibility for the relevant legislation and regulations.

Adoption organisations:

Following approval: responsible for arranging placements of adoptive children from overseas for applicants resident in Norway

Professional Board for Adoptions:

Approves entrustment by the country of origin to adoptive parents of children with special needs.

Entrusts children to parents in domestic adoptions.

The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir)

The Directorate's National Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs processes applications for intercountry adoption made outside of an accredited Norwegian adoption organisation.

The central authority under the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption.

Supervision and monitoring of the activities of the adoption organisations

Appeal authority for regional decisions concerning adoptions

Register of applicants for domestic adoption in which the biological parents consent to adoption

National name authority for intercountry adoptions

Responsible for preparatory courses for adoption

Keeping of the national adoptions register.

County Committees for Social Affairs:

give consent on behalf of the biological parents and grant applications from prospective foster parents for adoption of a foster child provided that the condition laid down in the Act relating to adoption that the adoption is to be in the best interests of the child is met (see Sections 4-20 of the Child Welfare Act and Section 2 of the Adoption Act).

Regional Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, Western Norway:

Regional body that initially processes applications for adoption

Name authority for domestic adoptions

Regional Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, Southern Norway

Regional body that initially processes applications for adoption

Name authority for domestic adoptions

Regional Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, Central Norway:

Regional body that initially processes applications for adoption

Name authority for domestic adoptions

Regional Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, Northern Norway:

Regional body that initially processes applications for adoption

Name authority for domestic adoptions

Norwegian local authorities:

Assessment authority
Assists in providing information on the case

Young people



Ung.no

The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) is responsible for providing young people with accurate and useful public information. This is done on the dedicated ung.no website, which tells young people (aged 14-20) all they need to know about e.g. driving licences, rights, relationships, crime, bullying and more. The information is divided up into more than 100 topics. All the articles are to be kept up-to-date, quality assured, and, not least, adapted to their readership. The website is keenly visited, either for reading up on topics of interest, discussing themes, testing knowledge using the many quizzes or voting on current issues.

Boy, 17: «It's no easy task finding out all about driving licences before you pass»

For more information, see www.ung.no

Eurodesk.no

Bufdir provides information about international opportunities for young people through www.eurodesk.no. Eurodesk is an information network targeting young people up to the age of 30, with the object of answering questions from young people about international opportunities, including educational grants, funding schemes, studying and working abroad. The

network exists in 27 European countries, and receives funding from the European Commission through the Youth in Action programme.

For more information, see www.eurodesk.no

Youth in Action

Youth in Action is the EU's youth programme for non-formal learning. Youth in Action is the successor of the YOUTH Programme. The Youth in Action programme offers young people opportunities for acquiring new competences and skills by taking responsibility and initiating their own projects. The programme supports local and international projects for young people aged between 13 and 30, and youth workers.

The objective of Youth in Action:

- to promote international understanding, tolerance and solidarity among young people
- to reinforce active citizenship, participation and social commitment among young people
- Promoting youth support systems in Europe and contributing to increased European cooperation in the field of youth

For more information, see www.aktivungdom.eu

Grants



The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) administrates a number of grant schemes on behalf of the Ministry of Children and Equality.

Allocations Committee

Bufdir allocates funds to nationwide voluntary child and youth organisations through the Allocations Committee, a dedicated body under the Ministry of Children and Equality. These funds are allocated as national and international operating grants. The Allocations Committee's remit includes any necessary supervision of the organisations that receive funds in accordance with the regulations governing the grant scheme.

For more information, see www.fordelingsutvalget.no.

Family and equality policy measures

Bufdir administrates grants for organisations in the policy areas of family and equality, and especially for family policy organisations. The purpose of the scheme is to ensure operation and activity among organisations working in these policy areas.

Relationship-building projects

Bufdir also allocates grants for relationship-building projects. The purpose is to promote lasting family relationships and a secure and stable home environment for children. Projects for parental cooperation following the break-up of a relationship are also supported.

Projects to prevent domestic violence

Organisations working to prevent domestic violence can also apply for grants from the scheme. The purpose of the project has to be in line with the intentions of the governmental action plan on violence in close relationships.

Grants for women's crisis centres, rape crisis centres and incest crisis centres

Bufdir is responsible for administrating grant schemes for crisis interventions and a number of development projects connected with Norwegian women's crisis centres.

Violence prevention and crisis interventions

The women's crisis centres provide advice, support and counselling for The women's crisis centres provide advice, support and counselling for individuals who have been the victims of domestic abuse, assault or violence.

The women's crisis centres also offer the victims and their children temporary shelter. There are a total of 51 women's crisis centres, spread across all the counties.

The rape crisis centres provide advice, support and counselling for rape victims, and offer participation in self-help groups. There are two rape crisis centres («Dixi Centres») in Norway, located in Oslo and Stavanger.

The incest crisis centres provide advice, support and counselling for past victims of incest or sexual abuse, and relatives of at-risk children. There are 20 incest crisis centres nationwide in Norway, distributed among all the counties, with the exception of Sogn og Fjordane.

Bufdir provides operating support for the national helpline for victims of incest which is run by the Incest Crisis Centre in Vestfold.

For more information about the grant scheme and crisis interventions, see www.bufdir.no

Marriage contracts

The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) is the appeals body for decisions made by the County Governor pursuant to the Marriage Act or regarding recognition of foreign separations and divorces (the Recognition Act). If the formal rules for contracting marriage are not complied with, the marriage will be regarded as invalid. An invalid marriage, may, on petition by one of the parties, subsequently be approved by Bufdir. A marriage may be declared invalid, if, for example, two witnesses were not present during the marriage ceremony, or if the solemnizer was not qualified for the task or if a certificate of no impediment to marriage from the Population Registry was not produced. The certificate of no impediment to marriage shows that the conditions for marriage, as laid down in the Marriage Act, have been fulfilled. Bufdir also approves marriage certificates for registered religious communities and issues certificates of no impediment to marriage for Norwegian nationals living abroad who intend to get married abroad. **For more information about marriage contracts, see www.bufdir.no**

Ex gratia compensation payments



Ex gratia compensation is intended as a last resort in obtaining financial recompense for any damage or injustice suffered as a result of criticisable circumstances on the part of the public sector. The decision as to whether or not compensation can be granted is based on a reasonability assessment and the amount is discretionary.

Ex gratia compensation is intended to constitute an acknowledgement and recognition that the recipient has been particularly unfortunate in relation to others it would be natural to compare him/her with. A condition for ex gratia compensation is that the damage/injustice is connected with criticisable events on the part of the public sector.

Proceedings

The Secretariats of Justice receive applications for ex gratia compensation and forward the applications to various expert bodies. Bufdir is the expert body in cases concerning circumstances sorting under the domain of the Ministry of Children and Equality, including criticisable circumstances on the part of the child welfare authority.

The Directorate writes a statement/recommendation and returns this to

the Secretariats of Justice. The Secretariats of Justice forward the case to the Storting's Ex Gratia Payments Committee, which makes the final decision on the case. There are currently two Ex Gratia Payments Committees, each of which is composed of a retired supreme/high court judge and two members of the Storting. There is no access to appeal a decision concerning ex gratia compensation.

Bufdir obtains the necessary documentation in the cases it considers. **For more information about ex gratia payments, see www.bufdir.no**

Research and development (R&D)



The Ministry of Children and Equality has charged the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) with a special remit of eliciting and disseminating knowledge concerning interventions with a documented positive effect for children assisted by the Child Welfare Service.

The regional offices for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat) are to achieve these objectives by systematic and focused seeking out of existing knowledge, by listening to the users of knowledge, by defining needs and implementing new research. Knowledge gained from research will be applied in ensuring the provision of sound and secure services for children, young people and families. A systematic focus on research, development and evaluation will serve to raise quality and competence, and develop effective, reliable interventions and knowledge-based methods. The development of knowledge-based child welfare and family counselling services is also vital in ensuring openness and encouraging greater user participation. For the Child Welfare Service, the drive for research and development has resulted in improvements, such as

competency building of the Child Welfare Response and Consultation Teams.

National library for child welfare and family counselling

Bufdir has established a digital library resource for the benefit of the whole of the national child welfare and family counselling system.

The aim is to provide staff with a tool for readily looking up relevant, quality research for use in dealing with children, young people and families in need of assistance. Irrespective of their geographical location and employment status, all employees are to have good access to research and a knowledge-based foundation for the decisions they make.

For more information about research and development, see www.bufdir.no

List of addresses

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