



FamilienRat (Family Group conference)

Information for Adults

Supporting families in times of crisis

What is a *FamilienRat*?

You or your family members are facing a number of problems and wish to find good solutions. Or you may be going through rough times and are looking for support. Wouldn't it be great to discuss these problems and solutions with people whom you know well and whom you trust? In those cases the *FamilienRat* is just perfect for you. A neutral coordinator supports you when preparing and organizing your *FamilienRat*. Citizens, who practice other professions, are specifically trained for this task. The programme was developed based on an initiative taken by the Stuttgart Youth Welfare Office and is free of charge for you.

How does the *FamilienRat* work?

You as family decide to get together with your relatives, friends and the people who are important for you and, in a joint effort, decide which solutions are right for you. After all, you and the people closest to you together know best what solutions are needed at this time, how you can support each other and whether you wish to accept any outside support, for instance from the Youth Welfare Office. Many people find it difficult to seek help and to admit that they have problems. However, previous experiences with the *FamilienRat* suggest that it is worthwhile taking this step as you will find people who are on your side.

Why have a *FamilienRat*?

A *FamilienRat* deals with many issues: for instance when a parent is not available in child raising and childcare has to be secured, when parents separate and therefore many arrangements have to be made or clarified or when children have problems at school. Another reason to set up a *FamilienRat* is whenever there are diverging opinions and conflicts about the best solutions available. There are numerous other reasons for calling in a *FamilienRat*. And you are the ones to decide. The Youth Welfare Office or another agency can initiate a *FamilienRat*, whenever your case officer thinks that this makes sense.

Who can attend a *FamilienRat* meeting?

FamilienRat meetings may be attended not only by children and their parents, but also by grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, neighbors and other people who are close to you. During the first stage of the *FamilienRat* process, professionals (e.g. teachers and educators, Youth Welfare Office officials) may also be present who will share important information about the current situation.

The family group conference coordinator helps you clarify all unresolved questions which may arise prior to and during the *FamilienRat* process.

How do you set up a *FamilienRat*?

You can either contact the *FamilienRat* secretariat yourself or the Stuttgart Youth Welfare Office contacts the *FamilienRat* secretariat with your approval. The



secretariat will then entrust a neutral person with the family group conference coordination.

When and where is the *FamilienRat* meeting held?

Meeting date, time and location of your *FamilienRat* meeting depend on your wishes and ideas. You and the coordinator prepare all persons present for the meeting and discuss what you need, in order to feel comfortable and safe. Children and adolescents – and sometimes other family members – are encouraged to express their own opinion. You are choosing your support person with the assistance of the family group conference coordinator.

What usually happens at a *FamilienRat*?

1. Welcome and information

After you have welcomed your family and friends, the coordinator presents the agenda and the rules and moderates the first part of the meeting. Whenever professionals are present, they share their concerns about the family and discuss the issues which require clarification from their point of view. Whenever children's security is involved, requirements are laid down which need to be addressed in your future plan. You have the possibility to ask questions and to obtain information about support services available to them. This is vital for the development of a viable plan later on during the process.

2. Family time

Once all open questions have been resolved, the experts are leaving the room. Now the time has come for you as a family, your relatives, friends and acquaintances to evaluate the information provided, to identify the issues and propose solutions, what you are prepared to do yourselves and whether or not you want professional help. It is an opportunity for you to develop a solution which you all agree on. In doing this, there is no need to rush. Take the time you need. Your coordinator will stay nearby to answer any questions that you may have.

3. The plan

Once you have taken joint decisions and developed a plan, it will be put into writing. The coordinator will go through this plan with you and ensures that the agreements made have been worded accurately, and persons in charge for its implementation have been identified. Whenever a Youth Welfare Office official is involved, please present your plan to her or him after the meeting. For your plan to be accepted by her or him, it must be clear, safe and legal.

And what happens next?

Everyone who attends the *FamilienRat* meeting, shall receive a copy of the plan, as soon as possible. The family members – as well as the professionals involved – will do everything to make it work. After an agreed period of time, you will be asked to give a progress report on the implementation of the plan. If there is a need for any changes, very often another meeting will be arranged at the first *FamilienRat*.

Good luck!



Your coordinator whom you can call at any time:

Name

Phone

For further information, please contact:

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