



Women who keep their pregnancy a secret are very scared of opening up to other people, they are in despair and feel isolated. But no woman in Germany has to give birth to her child on her own without medical care.

The act expanding the assistance for pregnant women and regulating confidential birth aims to provide women with legally sound assistance –

| through professional and if required anonymous advice and ongoing sensitive support before and after the birth;

| by enabling the confidentiality of the birth, including safe and medically supervised childbirth.

The law is also designed to help the children, because to know where you come from is a basic need of every human being. A confidential birth means that a child can find out about its origin at the age of 16.

Information about the
act expanding the assistance for pregnant
women and regulating confidential birth

The principle underlying the law – help in two stages

The first priority is to provide women who hide their pregnancy with comprehensive advice and support, so that they may be able to resolve the conflict and decide in favour of a life with the child. Women who wish to maintain their anonymity after the consultation now have the option of a confidential birth.

STAGE 1 More help for pregnant women wishing to remain anonymous

0800 40 40 020

The 'pregnant women in distress' support hotline – anonymous and safe: this free hotline has been available since 1 May 2014; it can be called around the clock, help is provided in several languages and will soon also be accessible to the hearing impaired. It provides pregnant women with initial support and refers them to the local pregnancy counselling centres.

www.geburt-vertraulich.de

Comprehensive and easy-to-understand information is available on the internet. This service also includes advice by email and chat options.

Making people aware of the available support

The BMFSFJ offers information about the right to unconditional, anonymous advice. This lowers the threshold for seeking the help of a counselling centre, especially for women who are keeping their pregnancy a secret.

Professional counselling

In the more than 1,600 pregnancy counselling centres in Germany, experts offer comprehensive support and advice in personal, and on request anonymous, meetings. The counsellors are trained in psycho-social conversation techniques and help women in such a way as to enable them to resolve the conflict that has resulted in them keeping the pregnancy a secret. The women are helped in relinquishing their anonymity and finding a way forward for themselves and their child.

Active support

The counsellors provide the women with specific support in finding additional help and advice services. Regardless of whether the woman chooses a confidential birth, the counsellors are there for her continuously, before the birth and afterwards.

A strong help network

The pregnancy counselling centres are the central point of contact for the affected women and for managing the confidential birth process. They enjoy the trust of the women seeking advice. However, the new law also builds on the cooperation of all involved partners: the obstetrics clinics, youth welfare offices, adoption agencies, family courts, registry offices and other institutions. They and their respective responsibilities all play an important role in the help network for pregnant women wishing to preserve their anonymity.

STAGE 2 Confidential birth as a way out

Women who do not wish to relinquish their anonymity, despite the comprehensive advice and individual help services, have the option of a confidential birth. A confidential birth is a legally regulated service for all women wishing to remain anonymous and is part of the wider range of anonymous help and advice services. It allows women to give birth under medical supervision. It serves to protect the women and their new-born. At the same time, it also safeguards the right of the child to find out about their origin at a later time. Knowing about where you come from is very important for a person's identity and a basic right of every human being.

How does the process of confidential birth work?



The **anonymity** of the woman is guaranteed. She only needs to reveal her personal details once to the counsellor. The counsellor is bound to maintain confidentiality and checks the information and identity of the woman based on a valid identity document of the pregnant woman.



The woman's first name and surname are securely stored in a **sealed envelope** and labelled such that it can later be traced to the child.



The woman gives herself a **pseudonym** (first name and surname) and chooses a girl's and a boy's name for the child. The counselling centre registers the woman with a clinic or a midwife (as requested) under the pseudonym. And she informs the youth welfare office of the confidential birth.



The woman can now give birth to the child **safely and under medical supervision** in the facility of her choice. On request, the counselling centre will continue to provide help and support after the birth.



Maternal custody is suspended. The child is assigned a **legal guardian**.



The **clinic or the midwife immediately informs the counselling centre** about the birth. The counselling centre writes the child's date and place of birth on the envelope and, together with proof of origin, sends it to the Federal Office of Family Affairs and Civil Society Functions (BAFzA), which adds the child's name to the envelope.



Within one week, the clinic or the midwife provide the registry office with the birth data. The registry office **registers the birth** of the child.

How does the process of confidential birth work?



The **adoption process** is initiated.



At the age of 16 the child can view the proof of origin at the BAFzA and find out about its **origin**.



For very important reasons, the mother can request to remain **anonymous** for her own protection. The reasons are examined by the family court.

The mother chooses life with the child



This is generally possible until the adoption order under certain conditions. For this to happen, the mother has to **relinquish her anonymity**. In addition, there must be no doubt as to her maternity. The family court makes the decision, taking into account the child's welfare.



If the mother wishes, she can receive additional **help and support**, such as from a family midwife, to improve life with her child.

Help us make people aware of this service!

The desired number of copies of these materials can be ordered directly from the publisher:

The compact **information leaflet** contains the most important information in several languages which the affected women (may) initially need. The focus here is on the services offered by the hotline and the pregnancy counselling centres.

The cards can be discreetly passed on, for example, to women who may be hiding a pregnancy or to someone in their environment.

The A4 posters make people aware of the hotline and can be hung up anywhere. Tabs with the hotline telephone number at the bottom of the poster can be torn off.

The **stickers** with the hotline number on them can be positioned in a prominent place. There is also a QR code providing direct access to the database of the pregnancy counselling centres.

The website at www.geburt-vertraulich.de offers the most important information in an easy-to-understand and sensitive way. In the future, an anonymous online advice service will also be available as well as help via chat.



You can find more details in the **brochure** “Confidential birth. Information about the act to strengthen the assistance for pregnant women and to regulate confidentiality of childbirth” at www.bmfsfj.de.

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0800 40 40 020

Free, available around the clock, hearing impaired and multilingual access

Advice and help online at:

www.geburt-vertraulich.de

Available from:

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