

# Frühe Hilfen: Guideline for Group Services

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## Summary

During the implementation of the regional early childhood intervention networks since 2015 and in the context of its evaluation (2015–2017), it became clear that group services are a good complement to the individual family support provided by the regional early childhood intervention networks. Group services have the potential to support the work of family supporters, can pursue different goals and thus offer a variety of benefits. To support the regional early childhood intervention networks in the planning of complementary group services, a guideline was created with the help of the regional implementers and the committees of the NZFH.at, which primarily takes up previous experiences and presents them in a structured way.

The goals of complementary group services can be, for example, the networking of families, which in turn can lead to social contacts, mutual exchange and empowerment of the families. Getting to know *Frühe Hilfen* and its acceptance can also be promoted. Group services can also provide low-threshold counselling, but also bridge the gap before or after the individual family support. Finally, supplementary group services can also be used to provide information or for specific interventions.

It should be considered that such complementary group services cannot replace individual family support. It is also recommended to first check whether existing group services in the regional network can be used. To implement services in the best possible way perceived barriers to participation in group services and possibilities for adaption should be discussed with network partners. Supplementary group services can be aimed exclusively at families who are accompanied by *Frühe Hilfen*, or they can be open to all families. They can be designed as open or closed groups. When planning, it is important to reflect on various aspects, such as the size of the group, the need for childcare, suitable premises, adequate times, weekdays, and frequencies as well as the duration of the meetings. Patience and perseverance are particularly important at the beginning, as well as the willingness to develop the offer regarding the family's needs. Experience shows that it takes a while before a new group offer is well accepted by families in need.

The guideline for group services includes checklists for deciding whether regional early childhood intervention networks offer group services themselves or not and guidelines for concrete planning of group services.