

Black German Heritage & Research Association



German Adoption Records: State Directory

ENGLISH

Official archive and youth-office routes across all 16 German states, plus leads for homes, agencies, birth registers and courts. These are routes to potential records; holdings for any individual must be confirmed.

Start with the placement service or local Jugendamt involved at the time. The state service can help route the request. For a home, identify its name, operator, town and dates; ask successors, municipal archives and church or welfare archives as appropriate. Birth registers and court proceedings are separate record types. State boundaries and responsibilities changed over time; a state archive does not automatically hold a personal file.

Search and filter online: <https://bghra.org/german-adoption-records-state-directory/>

All 40 entries and official source links are included. Program availability, access conditions, fees and funding cycles may change. Check the provider before applying or making arrangements.

STATE ARCHIVES

Baden-Württemberg: Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg

State archive entry point for Baden-Württemberg. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Baden-Württemberg | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.landessarchiv-bw.de/de>

STATE ARCHIVES

Bayern: Staatliche Archive Bayerns

State archive entry point for Bayern. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Bayern | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.gda.bayern.de/>

STATE ARCHIVES

Berlin: Landesarchiv Berlin

State archive entry point for Berlin. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Berlin | Germany · Online

Source: <https://landesarchiv-berlin.de/>

STATE ARCHIVES

Brandenburg: Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv

State archive entry point for Brandenburg. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Brandenburg | Germany · Online

Source: <https://blha.brandenburg.de/>

STATE ARCHIVES

Bremen: Staatsarchiv Bremen

State archive entry point for Bremen. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Bremen | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.staatsarchiv.bremen.de/startseite-1459>

STATE ARCHIVES

Hamburg: Staatsarchiv Hamburg

State archive entry point for Hamburg. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Hamburg | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.hamburg.de/politik-und-verwaltung/behoerden/behoerde-fuer-kultur-und-medien/einrichtungen/staatsarchiv>

STATE ARCHIVES

Hessen: Hessisches Landesarchiv

State archive entry point for Hessen. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Hessen | Germany · Online

Source: <https://landesarchiv.hessen.de/ueber-uns/adressen-kontakt>

STATE ARCHIVES

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern: Landesarchiv Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

State archive entry point for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.kulturwerte-mv.de/Landesarchiv/>

STATE ARCHIVES

Niedersachsen: Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv

State archive entry point for Niedersachsen. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Niedersachsen | Germany · Online

Source: <https://nla.niedersachsen.de/startseite/landesarchiv/das-niedersaechsische-landesarchiv-85942.html>

STATE ARCHIVES

Nordrhein-Westfalen: Landesarchiv NRW

State archive entry point for Nordrhein-Westfalen. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Nordrhein-Westfalen | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.archive.nrw.de/en/landesarchiv-nrw>

STATE ARCHIVES

Rheinland-Pfalz: Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz

State archive entry point for Rheinland-Pfalz. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Rheinland-Pfalz | Germany · Online

Source: <https://lav.rlp.de/>

STATE ARCHIVES

Saarland: Saarländisches Landesarchiv

State archive entry point for Saarland. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Saarland | Germany · Online

Source: https://www.saarland.de/landesarchiv/DE/bestaende_und_benutzung

STATE ARCHIVES

Sachsen: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv

State archive entry point for Sachsen. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Sachsen | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.staatsarchiv.sachsen.de/>

STATE ARCHIVES

Sachsen-Anhalt: Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt

State archive entry point for Sachsen-Anhalt. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Sachsen-Anhalt | Germany · Online

Source: <https://lha.sachsen-anhalt.de/>

STATE ARCHIVES

Schleswig-Holstein: Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein

State archive entry point for Schleswig-Holstein. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Schleswig-Holstein | Germany · Online

Source: https://www.schleswig-holstein.de/DE/landesregierung/ministerien-behoerden/LASH/lash_node.html

STATE ARCHIVES

Thüringen: Landesarchiv Thüringen: Archive Portal

State archive entry point for Thüringen. Ask which location holds relevant archived government, court or institutional records for the town and period. Individual adoption, Jugendamt or home files may remain elsewhere; ask for referrals and transfer references.

Thüringen | Germany · Online

Source: <https://tharchivprod.thueringen.de/de/>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

KVJS: Adoption

A routing point for adoption questions in Baden-Württemberg. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Baden-Württemberg | Germany · Online

Source: <https://kindertagesbetreuung-jugend.kvjs.de/de/ansprechpersonen-41>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

Bayerisches Landesjugendamt: Adoption Services

A routing point for adoption questions in Bayern. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Bayern | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.blja.bayern.de/institutionen-anlaufstellen/adoptionsvermittlungsstellen/>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

Berlin & Brandenburg: Joint Central Adoption Service

A routing point for adoption questions in Berlin, Brandenburg. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Berlin · Brandenburg | Germany · Online

Source: <https://mbjs.brandenburg.de/kinder-und-jugend/adoption.html>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

GZA: Bremen, Hamburg, Niedersachsen & Schleswig-Holstein

A routing point for adoption questions in Bremen, Hamburg, Niedersachsen, Schleswig-Holstein. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Bremen · Hamburg · Niedersachsen · Schleswig-Holstein | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.hamburg.de/gza>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

Hessen & Rheinland-Pfalz: Joint Central Adoption Service

A routing point for adoption questions in Hessen, Rheinland-Pfalz. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Hessen · Rheinland-Pfalz | Germany · Online

Source: <https://lsjv.rlp.de/themen/kinder-jugend-und-familie/gemeinsame-zentrale-adoptionsstelle>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

LAGuS: Central Adoption Service

A routing point for adoption questions in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.lagus.mv-regierung.de/LJA/Zentrale-Adoptionsstelle/>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

NRW Rheinland: LVR Adoption Service

A routing point for adoption questions in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Nordrhein-Westfalen | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.lvr.de/kindheit-und-jugend/weitere-aufgaben/zentrale-adoptionsstelle/fuer-adoptierte/>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

NRW Westfalen-Lippe: LWL Adoption Service

A routing point for adoption questions in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Nordrhein-Westfalen | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.lwl-landesjugendamt.de/de/unsere-handlungsfelder/adoption/>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

Saarland: Landesjugendamt Adoption Services

A routing point for adoption questions in Saarland. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Saarland | Germany · Online

Source: https://www.saarland.de/masfg/DE/portale/landesjugendamt/home/verwaltunglja/adoptionsstellen/adoptionsstellen_node.html

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

Sachsen: Central Adoption Service

A routing point for adoption questions in Sachsen. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Sachsen | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.landesjugendamt.sachsen.de/zentrale-adoptionsstelle-3982.html>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

Sachsen-Anhalt: Central Adoption Service

A routing point for adoption questions in Sachsen-Anhalt. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Sachsen-Anhalt | Germany · Online

Source: <https://lvwa.sachsen-anhalt.de/das-lvwa/landesjugendamt/familien-und-frauen/zentrale-adoptionsstelle>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

Thüringen: Central Adoption Service

A routing point for adoption questions in Thüringen. Ask for the municipal Jugendamt or placement service responsible at the time, and the current custodian if an agency closed. The central service is not necessarily the holder of the individual file.

Thüringen | Germany · Online

Source: <https://bildung.thueringen.de/jugend/erzieherische-hilfen/adoptionsstelle>

YOUTH OFFICES & ADOPTION SERVICES

Find the responsible local Jugendamt

Begin with the office or adoption service involved in your placement, rather than only your present address. If unknown, ask the central adoption service for the relevant state to help identify the office and any successor authority.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source: <https://familienportal.de/familienportal/lebenslagen/kinderwunsch-adoption/adoption/wie-kann-ein-adoptivkind-erfahren-wer-seine-leiblichen-eltern-sind--125924>

ARCHIVE FINDERS

Archivportal-D: Municipal, Church & Other Archives

Find archives by state and archive type, then search old names, towns, organizations and dates. A missing online result does not establish that a personal file never existed; contact the relevant archive for its finding aids and referrals.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.archivportal-d.de/?lang=en>

CHILDREN'S HOMES & AGENCY RECORDS

Children's Homes: Identify the Institution & Operator

List every known home name, address, denomination and residence date. Ask the successor operator, local Jugendamt and municipal archive about admission registers, resident files, correspondence and transfers. The Baden-Württemberg guide offers a practical model and regional home directories.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/de/recherche/rechercheratgeber/71626>

CHILDREN'S HOMES & AGENCY RECORDS

Closed or Renamed Adoption Agencies

Use the state central adoption service to trace the successor or file custodian. The federal register lists currently recognized intercountry agencies; it is not a complete register of historical postwar agencies. Search historic names separately.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source: https://www.bundesjustizamt.de/DE/Themen/Familieinternational/Adoption/Anschriften/Auslandsvermittlungsstellen/Auslandsvermittlungsstellen_node.html

CHILDREN'S HOMES & AGENCY RECORDS

Protestant / Diakonie Institutional Records

The Archive for Diakonie and Development holds records of national predecessor organizations. For a particular home, also ask the regional church archive, Diakonie organization and successor operator; national institutional holdings do not imply that a resident's file is present.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.diakonie.de/informieren/der-bundesverband/archiv-und-bibliothek>

CHILDREN'S HOMES & AGENCY RECORDS

Catholic / Caritas Institutional Records

The German Caritas Association archive documents national welfare organizations and institutional history. Use it to identify historical organizations; ask the local operator, religious order or diocesan archive about a specific home's personal records. Do not assume the national archive holds them.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.caritas.de/diecaritas/deutscher Caritasverband/standorte/arbeitsbereiche/archiv/caritasarchiv>

DDR & CROSS-BORDER TRACING

DDR Adoption: ZAuV Origins Search

The federal Central Information and Mediation Office provides guidance for origins research connected with politically motivated adoption in the GDR. Court files may provide additional leads; use the office's guidance to identify the relevant route.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source:

<https://zauv.bund.de/auskunft-und-information/auskunftsrechte-und-akteneinsicht/die-suche-nach-den-wurzeln>

DDR & CROSS-BORDER TRACING

DRK Search Service: Childhood Separation

The German Red Cross search service works with wartime separation and other eligible family-tracing cases, including some GDR forced-adoption enquiries. Ask whether your case fits its remit; this is not a universal adoption-file repository.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source: <https://www.drk-suchdienst.de/wie-wir-helfen/suchen/zweiter-weltkrieg/kindersuchdienst/>

REQUEST GUIDANCE

Adoption-File Access: Official German Service Information

Official guidance describes access to information about origins and life history, subject to applicable interests and restrictions. Ask the holder about the procedure, identity verification, copies and support; do not assume unrestricted access to every document.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source: <https://verwaltung.bund.de/leistungsverzeichnis/de/leistung/99013008109000>

BIRTH REGISTERS & COURTS

Standesamt: Birth Register & Certified Extracts

Ask the register office for the place of birth which certified birth-register extract is appropriate for origins research, including available subsequent entries. A standard birth certificate may show current legal parentage. Berlin's official service page is an example; use the relevant municipality elsewhere.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source: <https://service.berlin.de/dienstleistung/318960/>

BIRTH REGISTERS & COURTS

Court Records: Find the Relevant Amtsgericht

The court decision and guardianship or adoption proceedings can be separate from the agency file. Identify the court named in existing papers, then ask for the file reference, successor registry or archive. The official court-directory guidance helps locate a court; historic jurisdiction must be checked.

All 16 states | Germany · Online

Source: https://www.bmj.de/DE/themen/wege_zum_recht/gerichtsverfahren/gerichte_staatsanwaltschaften/gerichte_staatsanwaltschaften.html

DDR & CROSS-BORDER TRACING

ISS Network Records & Cross-Border Origins Search

ISS-USA offers adult origins-search services, including locating records for adoptees adopted through the ISS network. Germany's ISD refers individual adoption and origins-search work to familie international frankfurt (fif). Ask which partner holds any historic case file and confirm service scope and costs.

All 16 states | International · Online

Source: <https://www.iss-usa.org/our-services/services-for-adults/>

U.S. archives and military records: <https://bghra.org/adoption-childhood-studies-resources/>

Requests and next steps

Collect names before and after adoption, date and place of birth, homes, towns, dates and file numbers. Log requests and replies. Ask how to verify identity securely. If nothing is found, ask what holdings were searched, whether transfers or destruction are documented, and which other custodian may help.

Request template in English

I am seeking information about my own childhood and adoption. My names at the time were [names], born [date/place]. I lived at [home/town] around [years]. Please let me know whether you hold records about me, what access or copies may be available, and how I should verify my identity securely. If records were transferred, please identify the current custodian and any transfer or file reference. Please tell me about any fees before incurring costs.

Records can be difficult to read. You may involve a trusted person or adoptee support network. Access depends on the record type, holder and protected interests of others; neither full access nor surviving records is guaranteed.

Community recommendations and corrections are welcome: info@bghra.org. Logos and publication artwork identify the linked organizations; rights remain with their owners.