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# Access to Covid-19 vaccinations for homeless people and undocumented migrants in Germany

Vaccines for all? Undocumented Migrants and Homeless People  
Left Behind

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## Médecins du Monde/Doctors of the World Germany

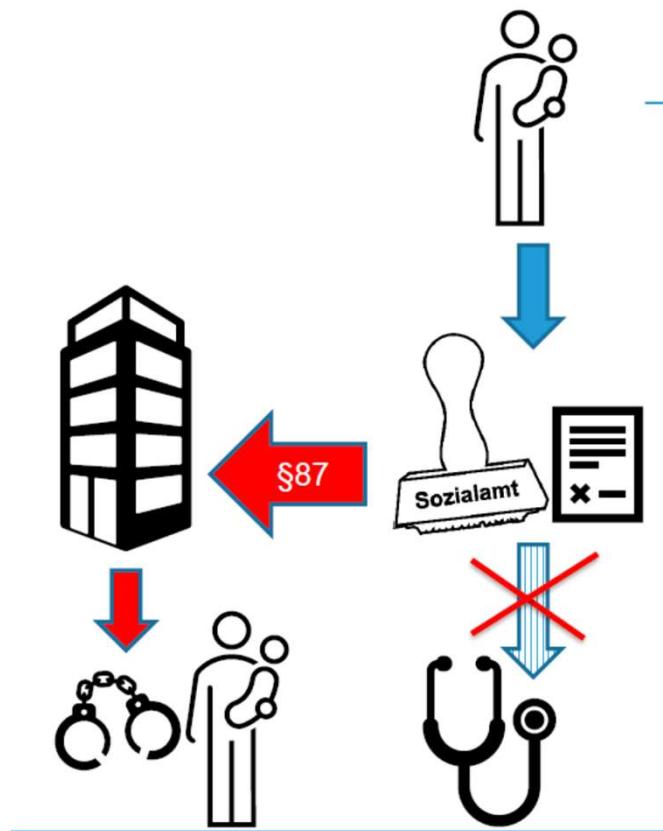
Picture: MdM Germany



Picture: MdM Germany

- » Domestic projects, providing medical services and social support to people with limited or no access to healthcare
- » Services are free of charge and anonymous if wanted
- » Combined with advocacy on the human right to access healthcare as a state duty.
- » Majority of clients are
  - > undocumented third country nationals and
  - > unemployed EU citizens without residence right,
  - > 88% are homeless

## Access to healthcare for undocumented migrants in Germany



- » Legal entitlement to restricted health services (acute illness and pain, asylum seekers benefit act §1 and §§ 4,6)
- » But: Duty to report exists for public authorities (Residence Act §87) including social service departments responsible for covering cost of health services
- » Thus: undocumented avoid medical care
- » Exception for emergency care does not work properly

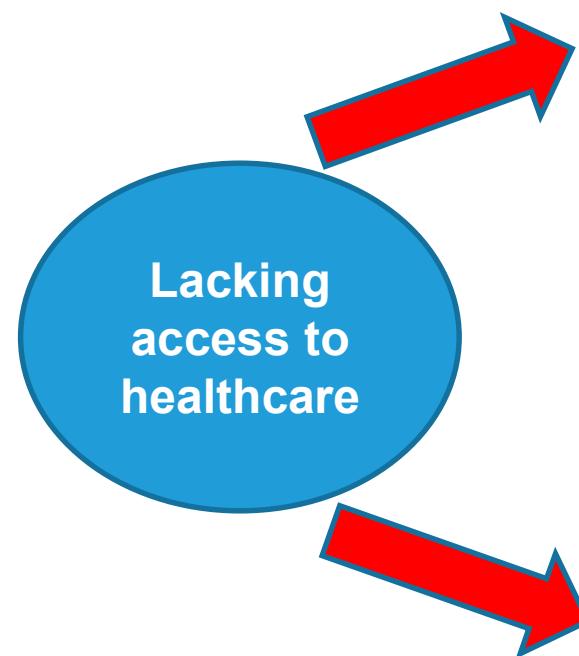
## Access to healthcare for homeless



- » Often, health insurance exists, but due to debt in contributions only entitlement to limited health services
- » New law (2019): health insurance ends if contributions are not paid and person cannot be contacted
- » Many unemployed EU citizens no entitlement to health services (since 2016)
- » Other barriers: language, discrimination, fear/embarrassment



## Consequences for Covid-19-Vaccination



### More important to reach

Undiagnosed and untreated chronic diseases → higher risk of severe consequences of infection

### Not easy to reach

- Not connected to GPs for information/motivation
- Mistrust and fear of health care system

Prioritisation in vaccination strategies!

(WHO, EU Council Bioethic Committee, Red Cross EU Office)



## Access to vaccination: legal situation in Germany

- » Vaccine regulation:
  - > entitlement with habitual residence or registered address
  - > People in homeless accomodations prioritized (prio 2)
- » April 2021: Clarification by the ministry of health: undocumented migrants are entitled to vaccinations (but not prioritised)
- » Vaccination free of cost. But:
  - > no exception on duty to report for public authorities involved (e.g. for cost coverage)
  - > Health insurance card often needs to be shown



## Access to vaccinations: situation in practice

### 1) Administrative barriers:

- > Proof of habitual residence difficult without registered address
- > Prioritized groups were often contacted via their registered address - no possibility for priority groups without registered address
- > Need to have ID
  - in registration process
  - in the vaccination centre
  - for second vaccination
  - for digital vaccination certificate



## Access to vaccinations: situation in practice

### Communication and other barriers

- > homeless/undocumented not linked to regular health system
- > high level of fear and mistrust
- > Low level of information – little adapted information/outreach
- > Language barrier, alphabetisation barrier
- > Discrimination

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## Outreach approaches in different cities (2)

### Munich

- > Mobile vaccination teams, special vaccination dates and vaccination by civil society providers
- > Written confirmation by the city's health department: no reporting in vaccination process.
- > Confirmation of habitual residence is easily accepted.
- > City offers hotel rooms for vaccination reaction
- > MdM provides information for clients, refers to vaccination centres and doctors, and carries out vaccinations



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## Outreach Approaches in different cities

### Berlin:

- > Mobile vaccination teams at 20 service sites for the homeless
  - vaccination also possible without documentation
- > Until end of May, 2278 homeless people vaccinated, mostly with J&J
- > Vaccination through civil society health service providers (including cooperation project MdM/Medizin Hilft)
- > Homeless can get vaccinated in all so-called „focal area vaccinations“ with proof of identity





## Key recommendations

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1. Prioritisation in vaccination strategies: reduction of administrative barriers
2. Adapted information and outreach, developed with participatory approaches
3. Abolishment of the duty to report for those public authorities necessary for accessing healthcare – firewall!

→ Learn lessons from pandemic: ensure sustainable access to healthcare!

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# Thank you!

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Campaign on the duty to report: [www.gleichbehandeln.de](http://www.gleichbehandeln.de)