

Unaccompanied minors – Your possibilities when you arrive in the Department of the North

I'm a foreign minor, living alone in France. I would like to have a place to sleep, what can I do ?

If you are in France, without your parents or any legal representative, you are, what we call, an « unaccompanied minor ». If this is the case, the department in which you are located must take care of you and you have the right to be put into child protection.

In the region called 'Nord', how can I be put into child protection ?

Before being taken into care by the Department, you must do what we call an « minority and isolation evaluation ».

To do so you will have to go to « EMA », located at **17 RUE DE THUMESNIL**, in **Lille**. There, you will be given an appointment¹ to have the evaluation, which can take place in either Lille, Wormhout or Dunkerque.

Normally, you should be given housing until your assessment. However, there is currently a lack of available places.

If you want to be housed immediately, you can ask a association specialising in housing to contact EMA to know if a place is available.

If no housing is given to you, **you can contest this with a lawyer**. Ask associations specialising in law (as La Cimade) to have contact details of a lawyer.

What is the content and purpose of this assessment?

The assessment is very important to confirm your age and the fact that you are unaccompanied.

To verify that you are a minor, EMA doesn't only focus on your physical appearance. You will be seen by 2 assessors and a translator, if necessary. They will ask you some questions about your identity, your family, your country, your living conditions, etc.

Feel free to speak. No medical tests or x-rays will be necessary at EMA.

As part of the assessment, you will be asked where your parents or legal representative are.

Unaccompanied means that your parents or the person who has « parental authority » for you are not in France with you and that you are alone.

Thus, even if you are with your older brother or sister in France, you will be considered as unaccompanied.

The interview could last between 1½ and 3 hours.

What happens after the evaluation ?

After the evaluation, the EMA writes a report giving their opinion regarding your minority and whether they feel you are unaccompanied. The EMA will inform you of their recommendations and will send the report to the Department, who will make the final decision.

If you explain to the assessors that you are, or have been a victim of violence, EMA will inform the Department and the prosecutor so that this can be taken into consideration when they make their decision.

What happens then if I'm recognised as a minor ?

Once your status as an unaccompanied minor is official, the prosecutor will make an **order of temporary placement** (« OPP » in French), placing you in foster care or in quasi-autonomy in an apartment.

However, not many places exist so it's possible that you will have no accommodation for a while. But, as soon as a place is available, it will be allocated to you. If no housing is given to you, you can contest it with a lawyer.

At this stage, you will be sent to school to start to learn French. However, this procedure can take some time. But, if it takes too much time, you can go to see a lawyer who will contest it.

¹ You can have an appointment between 48 hours and one month, according to EMA's availabilities.

Will I be helped by someone for my French administrative papers?

You will be helped by a caseworker, called a « TRAJET referent ». However, this caseworker has to assist 9 to 12 other minors like you, so if you are living in an apartment, he won't come to see you every day. You will have to learn how to be self-sufficient.

If you are in France because your life is under threat in your country, you can **seek asylum in France**. An **ad hoc manager** (« administrateur ad hoc » in French) will deal with you. This person is appointed by the prosecutor when the asylum procedure starts.

When you seek asylum, you can also ask to join one of your family members, who lives in another European Union country.

If you don't want to seek asylum and want to remain in France **once you are 18**, you will have the possibility to get a «**residential permit** », if you fulfil all the conditions required.

In this procedure, you will be normally helped by your TRAJET referent. He will also help you to enrol at school and begin French lessons.

If you want more details about your administrative situation or if you have some questions that your referent can't answer, you can come at La Cimade to have more information.

What other solutions are offered by the Department if there are no available places ?

The Department asks some « **volunteer host families** » to house you. This procedure will start soon and if a family is available you can live there.

If the Department can't find me housing, are there any other associations that can help me?

Lots of associations deal with young people who have the same issues as you. « **Ozanam** », located at **81 rue Barthélémy Delespaul** in Lille and « **Point Repère de l'ABEJ Solidarité** », located at **9 Place Saint-Hubert** in Lille are 2 associations that offer shower facilities and also have a meal service. You can also see a psychologist and get help with your French paperwork. They can also guide you to the « **Centre de la Réconciliation** », located at **218 Rue d'Arras** in Lille, if some places of housing are available (but first, don't forget to go to EMA).

For more information, you can contact various different associations.

I'm under 14. Will I be placed in a children's home or in an apartment?

If you're under 14, you will be placed in a « **Maison d'Enfants à Caractère Social** » until you're 16.

At the centre, you will be taken care of a group of professionals (caseworkers, psychologists, doctors, etc.).

What can I do if my minority is contested ?

If EMA or the Department think you are an adult and not a minor, you can contest this decision before the Juvenile Court Judge (« Juge des Enfants » in French).

During this procedure, it's better to have a lawyer to help you. You can contact the relevant associations for legal contacts.

