Refugee Resettlement Guide

* Housing: Sponsors should sign any rental agreements as the responsible party. Avoids need for PR cards and employment history
* Banking: Assist newcomers to set up bank account ASAP after arrival. A bank statement will be required for proof of residency for all adults applying for OHIP. TD offers no-fee accounts for refugees. It is useful to obtain a credit card in order to build a credit history in Canada. Ensure money is in account and there is some form of activity so that a statement will be sent.
* Employment: Many options for employment assistance: YMCA Employment Services, Employment Hamilton, Immigrant Working Center, Mohawk College…
* Medical: Can go to any family doctor or walk-in clinic accepting new patients. IFHP covers all visits until provincial coverage takes over. In Hamilton, “Refuge: Hamilton Center for Newcomer Health” is a good clinic option for refugees.
  + If newcomer is under “Medical Surveillance” (usually for inactive tuberculosis), they will need to be assessed within 30 days of arrival in Canada. Hamilton Public Health: 905 546-2489. If it is for TB in Hamilton, the phone number is 905 540 6636.
* Prescriptions: IFHP covers all prescriptions until completion of private sponsorship (1 year). Children under 25 are covered by OHIP+. Once IFHP coverage is over, Ontario Drug Benefit can be applied for if the family pays more than 3-4% of household income on prescription medications. There is a 3-4% of income deductible, so it is not worth applying for if the family pays less than that on medications.
* Dentist: In Hamilton, Wesley Urban Ministries partners with Lily Dental to provide free dental work. Emergency work can be completed by any dentist and is covered by IFHP. Children (under 18) are eligible for the Healthy Smiles program, which provides free dental work. Dental schools can be another economical option, but are time-consuming
* Optometrist: Children are eligible for free eye exams. IFHP will cover limited vision expenses (eye exams plus one pair of glasses including frames and lenses per person).
* Recreation programs:
  + Refugees are eligible for fee assistance for Hamilton Rec Centers by filling out a form: <https://www.hamilton.ca/parks-recreation/registered-rec-programs/recreation-fee-assistance-program>. Includes free access to one rec center, $150 in programming per child per year and 50% fee assistance for sports
  + YMCA: Refugees are eligible for a reduced membership rate (as low as $15 per month). Access application at YMCA Immigrant Services, not a local YMCA recreation center
* ESL classes: Many options. Go to YMCA Immigrant Services for English Language Assessment and they will provide a referral list of places providing ESL classes. Some facilities offer child care, but usually have waitlists
* Transportation: Presto cards are a good option for transit fares in Hamilton. Apps like TeamUp or SignUp.com help facilitate rides arrangements with the congregation
* Phones: Koodo has a prepaid plan with unlimited texting for $15 per month, plus calling boosters which do not expire. International cell phones may not be compatible with Canadian SIM cards. Calling over WiFi with What’sApp, Google Hangouts, Skype, etc are a good option for international calling or calling sponsors if they have WiFi at home. If they need to call more often, VoIP home phones such as through TekSavvy are cost-effective for local and international calling.
* Counselling: Where to go??? Covered by IFHP
* Schools: If planning to send children to Christian school, find out if they are eligible as non-members of CanRC churches, discuss funding avenues, discuss desire for it with newcomer family. Also consider sustainability in the long term, once the one-year of sponsorship is over
* Transferring of qualifications / foreign credentials: Research resources prior to arrival, if possible
* Documents:
  + SIN: Completed at airport upon arrival
  + IFHP: Completed at airport upon arrival
  + PR Card: Application completed at airport upon arrival, and temporary papers provided. Permanent card should arrive in approximately two months.
  + Ontario ID Card: Not necessary, as PR card is more valuable
  + Child Tax Benefit: Apply ASAP. If forms are completed correctly, it should arrive in about two months’ time. Payments are retroactive to when they arrived in Canada. Forms found online
  + OHIP: Proof of Residency (bank statement with names and address) required before it can be applied for. Apply ASAP since IFHP is unfamiliar to most doctors, labs and pharmacies, and is thus more complicated. Can be completed at any ServiceOntario facility
  + Driver’s License: If the newcomer has an international driver’s license, they may drive in Canada for up to 3 months. If they have a driver’s license from their home country, check DriveTest Ontario website to see if it is transferable. A letter from their embassy may be required to confirm driving history, driving tests may be required. The letter will only be valid for 60 days, so ensure you have PR card before going to the embassy. NOTE: Newcomer may not complete any driving exams until they have their PR card.

Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)

* Provides limited coverage to resettled refugees. Available until newcomer is eligible for provincial health care coverage or until one year private sponsorship is over
* Details on what is covered can be found here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-within-canada/health-care/interim-federal-health-program/coverage-summary.html>
* Other resources:
  + Wesley Urban Ministries - has many resources for newcomers, has Private Sponsor Network Meetings once per month with various topics
  + “Foreign to Familiar” by Sarah A. Lanier is a short, but valuable book on understanding Hot- and Cold-Climate Cultures.