

Refugee Sponsorship FAQ

Who is a Refugee?

In the words of a refugee, “To be a refugee means you are an exile. It is a very different experience from being a migrant. Many migrants have come here to get a better standard of living. We have come here because our lives are in danger!” A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. The definition of a refugee is actually a legal instrument of protection in international law and is based on the 1951 Geneva Convention that defines a refugee as being outside the country where they live and as having a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

What is the Private Sponsorship Program?

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program is a program of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada that is a public-private partnership. Sponsored refugees whose cases are successful come to Canada as Permanent Residents, having been duly processed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and sponsored by sponsorship groups, most often faith-based communities. From the Canadian Council for Refugees: “Private sponsors provide financial support and settlement assistance for the refugees they sponsor, usually for one year after arrival.”

Do we sponsor specific types of refugees?

Refugees who come represent the full diversity of human identity; war and violence do not discriminate. If you are a refugee, you are a refugee, and in need of protection. Are some in need or more protection, or more urgent protection than others? – Yes. Organizations such as the UNHCR and the Government of Canada do assessments and try to respond appropriately. The Anglican Diocese of Niagara resettles refugees from any situation (meeting the criteria of the Geneva Convention), regardless of faith, orientation or any other identifier. We do not focus especially on one group or another. We understand it as a Gospel imperative to minister to all who are in need. We are not seeking to proselytize, or to convert newcomers (refugees) - this is actually strictly forbidden when it comes to working with refugees. All refugees are in need, and it is on a case-by-case basis that urgent protection needs are determined by immigration authorities.

How much does refugee sponsorship cost?

Refugee sponsorship means caring and providing for the well-being of newcomers for their first year in Canada. The Government provides a [cost table](#) to help estimate, but exact figures can be challenging to pinpoint because of variables such as the availability and cost of affordable housing. The estimated cost for a family of 4 is \$28,700 for a year. Again, variables will likely affect those amounts, but those are good numbers to start with. This covers monthly living costs – food, housing, clothing, transportation, and some incidentals.

Who pays for the travel costs?

When sponsored refugees come to Canada through either the Government Assisted stream or the Private Sponsorship stream, the government works with its own offices abroad, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN refugee agency) and the International Organization for Migration to organize the necessary medical testing and travel arrangements. The government pays for these up-front, but considers the costs to be a loan that the newcomers are expected to repay after arriving in Canada.

Refugee Sponsorship FAQ continued...

Is it safe to bring refugees here?

All sponsored refugees are screened and must clear background and security checks before they can be granted Permanent Resident status. If they do not clear the checks, they are not accepted for resettlement in Canada. The checks are carried out by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CSIS, and the RCMP. All people immigrating to Canada are subject to this kind of screening. There is a proven track record of our government's screening system that ensures that the refugees who are in need of protection are the ones receiving that protection. There are many rumors and suspicions to the contrary, but the public record, and documented history prove that all of the necessary measures are functioning to provide the necessary aid to those who actually need it, and to screen out those who are not actually refugees.

What kind of health care do refugees receive?

When refugees arrive to Canada, they become permanent residents and therefore are eligible to apply for OHIP. However, they are also eligible to receive additional benefits under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP). These benefits have some limitations, including maximum dollar amounts. Before arrival to Canada, the IFHP covers some overseas health services such as vaccinations, medical support necessary for safe travel, and medical examinations to detect and treat any conditions that would make refugees inadmissible to Canada. After arriving in Canada, the IFHP provides newcomers with basic coverage, including in-patient and out-patient care, diagnostic and laboratory work, and ambulance services. The Canadian government has recently expanded IFHP provisions to include supplemental and prescription drug coverage for the duration of the one-year sponsorship period. Supplemental coverage includes services such as emergency dental care, limited vision care, counseling, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, and assistive devices/medical equipment. Drug coverage differs in each province. In Ontario, newcomers receive coverage for drugs funded by the Ontario Drug Benefit Program. After their first year in Canada, newcomers no longer qualify to receive IFHP coverage.

Are refugees able to work? Do sponsors need to find them employments?

It is the responsibility of the sponsor to make sure that newcomers have access to all necessary resources to find employment. As soon as is reasonably expected, a newcomer will be encouraged to look for work to become self-sufficient. As a permanent resident, resettled refugees are fully entitled to work. They will need to have adequate language skills for this to happen. In the event that the newcomers are not self-sufficient by the end of the year of sponsorship, they would be eligible for social security benefits (welfare) as long as they meet the eligibility requirements.

Additional Resources

- The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program: <http://www.rstp.ca>
- Immigration, Citizenship & Refugees Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees.html>
- The Canadian Council of Refugees: <http://ccrweb.ca/>