

# REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUP – NCC GUIDE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	Page 2
Immigration & Documents	Page 4
Finance and Employment	Page 7
Housing	Page 10
Health and Mental Health	Page 15
Family and Education	Page 22
Living in Canada	Page 26
Community Services	Page 35

# INTRODUCTION

## Useful websites:

[www.settlement.org](http://www.settlement.org) / [www.inmylanguage.org](http://www.inmylanguage.org)  
[www.welcomepeterborough.ca](http://www.welcomepeterborough.ca)

Info on everything (also in Arabic)  
Lots of Peterborough-specific info

## Guides

This guide is for Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) Support Groups. This guide is for reference purposes; specific contact information and details for are included in the GAR Team Process document.

GAR families will receive 3 guides (all in Arabic): a federal guide, a provincial guide, and a local Peterborough guide. The government guides provide general information on the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), health (e.g. OHIP and Interim Federal Health Program - IFHP), housing (e.g. landlord / tenant rights), etc. The local guide provides information on Peterborough bus routes, grocery stores, etc., plus additional useful information not provided in the government guides (e.g. handouts on bed bugs and head lice, best parenting practices, etc.).

Your group can have an electronic English version of the federal guide and one hard copy guide. Your group can have the electronic English version of the local Peterborough guide.

## Responsibilities

The RAP is designed to help a family through the early stages of resettlement: temporary housing, orientation to life in Canada, access to essential services / important documents and permanent housing assistance.

GARs will be supported by many different groups working together. The New Canadians Centre (NCC) has put together detailed checklists for each group so that everyone is aware of each other's responsibilities. In general:

- NCC is responsible for overall coordination, working with community partners, supervising staff, reporting to the federal government on the program, and assigning Refugee Support Groups and Housing Units to incoming GAR families.
- Arrival Services include working with a family from arrival until the time they find temporary housing. Each family will be assigned one staff person and one Support Group. NCC will work closely with the Support Group to ensure the clients' needs are met. NCC is responsible for providing orientation sessions, ensuring clients receive essential services and documents, and assisting with permanent housing. Although staff will necessarily provide interpretation during the first month when working with a family, due to funding restrictions they are not available to do this on a general or ongoing basis.

- Settlement Services include meeting the ongoing settlement needs of GARs after they move into permanent housing (e.g. questions on tenant rights, extra ESL options, etc.). Employment services are also available.
- Family and Youth services include assisting families, youth and children with school registration and support as well as youth and family activities.
- Refugee Support Groups are responsible for providing social support, transportation assistance, permanent housing assistance and general support with day-to-day life. The most intense period is in the first few months, but Support Groups are responsible for helping the family for a period of one year, including assisting with transition when government funding ends. As volunteers of the NCC, Support Groups are required to submit police checks, follow the code of ethics and abide by the oath of confidentiality. It is the responsibility of team leaders to ensure all team members are informed and comply with these requirements.
- Volunteer Drivers are available as backup when GAR Support Groups cannot arrange transportation for an appointment within their group.

### **Appointments**

Upon notification of arrival, the NCC will book all appointments in the shared Google calendar. Details (such as who is responsible for transportation, which family members need to attend, etc.) will be included. NCC will contact your group with the relevant details plus the name and contact information of the NCC staff with whom you will be working.

# IMMIGRATION STATUS & DOCUMENTS

## **Permanent Resident Status**

Sponsored refugees come to Canada as permanent residents. Permanent residents have the right to:

- get most social benefits that Canadian citizens receive, including health care coverage (GARs cannot access Ontario Works for one year),
- live, work or study anywhere in Canada,
- apply for Canadian citizenship,
- protection under Canadian law and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Permanent residents must pay taxes and respect all Canadian laws at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. Permanent residents are not allowed to vote or run for political office and cannot obtain a Canadian passport.

Another important difference between citizens and permanent residents is that permanent residents can lose their status in some situations (it does not happen automatically; normally a hearing is involved). A person can lose permanent resident status if:

- they do not maintain residency in Canada. This means being physically present in Canada at least 2 out of every 5 years; the 2 years do not have to be continuous.
- they are convicted of a serious crime.

A person does not lose permanent resident status if their PR card expires.

## **Permanent Resident Documents**

At the airport, each member of the family will receive a Confirmation of Permanent Residence (IMM 5292). This is an important document that proves immigration status and cannot easily be replaced. This document should be kept safe and not kept in a person's wallet or purse unless needed for a specific purpose (e.g. for OHIP application). We will keep a copy at the New Canadians Centre office.

The NCC will also help the family apply for a Permanent Resident (PR) Card.

A PR Card can be used both as identification and proof of status. It is valid for 5 years. Unlike health cards and driver's licences, the government does not send renewal notices for PR cards. However, PR cards can be easily renewed after expiring, even after many years. A valid PR card is most important if a person is travelling, as it is required for re-entry into Canada.

## **Citizenship**

As of October 11, 2017 a person can apply for citizenship after 4 they have been physically present in Canada for at least 1095 days during the five years right before the

date they sign their application. Applicants 18 to 54 must show proof of language and pass a citizenship knowledge test. Once granted citizenship, a person has the same rights as a person born in Canada and can apply for and travel on a Canadian passport.

## **Travel**

A Confirmation of Permanent Resident is not valid for travel / re-entry to Canada. A person must have a valid permanent resident (PR) card to re-enter Canada.

Most refugees will not have a valid Syrian passport when they arrive. They cannot (and should not) try to renew their passport (as a refugee, it can be problematic to deal with the country against whom you have made a refugee claim). However, refugees can apply for a travel document from Passport Canada. The travel document is issued by the Canadian government and is similar to a passport. It allows travel to all countries except the country from which the person fled as a refugee. However, as permanent residents and not Canadian citizens, they are subject to travel restrictions imposed on their country of citizenship / nationality. For example, a permanent resident from Syria would need a visa to travel to the United States. The New Canadians Centre can assist with this application if and when required.

\*\*\* It is very important – both for renewal of the PR card and for citizenship applications – for permanent residents to keep track of any travel outside of Canada, even a day trip to the United States. It is a good idea to keep a journal that includes date of departure, date of return, destination and purpose of trip.

## **Ontario Photo Card and Ontario Driver's Licence**

We often need two pieces of identification, and sometimes two pieces of photo ID. In Ontario, this is generally the driver's licence and / or health card. The Ontario Photo Card was created for people who don't have a driver's licence and can also be used as photo ID. You can't have both an Ontario Photo Card and an Ontario Driver's Licence (although you can switch anytime, or even back and forth).

Many Syrian refugees will want to get a driving licence. As there is no reciprocal agreement with Syria and because GARs will be unable to get letters from their embassy (to verify driving experience), they must start the process again with a G1 licence, where they have to wait a minimum of one year before they can test for a G2 licence. If their ultimate goal is to drive, there is no reason not to start the process early. The test itself can be written in Arabic, but as of this date the guide is not. However, there are online Arabic test questions (see Refugee Network Website).

If a person will not be driving, they should get an Ontario Photo Card. For both the G1 licence and the photo card, a GAR must present their confirmation of permanent residence and a piece of photo ID – which means that unless they come with a valid Syrian passport they will need to wait for their OHIP card or PR Card before applying.

Ontario Photo Card: To get a photo card, the person must be at least 16 years old and a non-driver. You need to take the GAR to the Service Ontario Centre on Water Street and fill out an application (you cannot fill out the application ahead of time). The

GAR needs to have either a valid passport or a PR Card with signature or a Confirmation of Permanent Residence and a Health Card. They should also be prepared to pay the fee (currently \$35)

Ontario Driver's Licence: To get a driver's licence, the person must be at least 16 years old. The first step is to prepare for the written test. The test can be written at the Drive Test centre at 179 Erskine Avenue. To arrange for the test in Arabic, you must call (1-888-570-6110, option 2 from the main menu) a few days prior to taking the test.

Total fee is currently \$125 (+\$10 per rewrite). Must bring 2 pieces of ID, such as health card, valid passport, or PR Card.

Once a person passes the G1 written test, they must wait one year before taking the road test to get their G2 (8 months if registered at a driving school).

# FINANCES AND EMPLOYMENT

## **Responsibilities**

As a GAR Support Group, you are not in charge of the family's budget or financing in any way. The family will receive money directly from IRCC. However, they will need help in learning about Canadian prices and shopping and may ask for your help with budgeting.

In addition to financial orientation, NCC will also help families file for the child tax benefit and HST/GST credit and to get a bank account. An initial budget discussion will take place at the CCRC intake session. One of your roles will be to make a follow-up appointment with CCRC a few months after they have moved into their permanent housing and again during their transition off government funding.

A few days after their arrival, the family will meet with an IRCC officer to sign documents related to receiving their RAP income. The NCC will prepare the family for this meeting.

## **RAP Income**

Although you are not directly responsible for a family's finances, it is useful for your group to understand a little about income provided through RAP. Below is the standard RAP income amounts based on family size – they are very similar to Ontario Works rates. GAR families pay no expenses while in temporary housing (NCC is responsible for their food and housing costs) and do not receive their first cheque until they move into permanent housing. The first cheque may be bigger if the family arrives in the middle of the month (this can lead to false expectations), and the last cheque may be smaller for same reason.

We will also stress to families that RAP Income is not a right, it is a privilege. It can be taken away. E.g. if they won't take housing, if they don't follow conditions, if they won't send kids to school, etc.

Refugees are allowed to work. The family (as a whole) can earn up to 50% of their total RAP income before there is a clawback. Regardless of how much they work or which family member(s) work, however, all employment / income must be reported to IRCC. Notify the NCC if there are any changes in their income. A large donation from the support group may have to be reported – ask us if you are unsure.

## **Taxes**

It is important for the family to submit taxes for the year they arrive, even if they have no income other than RAP. If they do not file taxes, they will not continue to receive the Child Tax Benefit. Free tax assistance is available at the New Canadians Centre at workshops in February, March and April.

## RAP Monthly Breakdowns Allowance

Family Size	Rent Allowance	National Housing Supplement	Food Allowance	Transportation Allowance	Total Monthly Allowance	Canada Child Tax Benefit*	TOTAL
Single	\$376.00	\$75.00	\$230.00	\$79	\$760.00	\$0	\$760.00
Couple	\$590.00	\$100.00	\$453.00	\$158.00	\$1,301.00	\$0	\$1,301.00
Couple +1	\$641.00	\$100.00	\$453.00	\$158.00	\$1,352.00	\$400	\$1,752.00
Couple +2	\$695.00	\$100.00	\$453.00	\$158.00	\$1,406.00	\$800	\$2,206.00
Couple +3	\$750.00	\$100.00	\$453.00	\$158.00	\$1,461.00	\$1200	\$2,661.00
Couple +4	\$777.00	\$100.00	\$453.00	\$158.00	\$1,488.00	\$1600	\$3,088.00
Couple +5	\$777.00	\$100.00	\$453.00	\$158.00	\$1,488.00	\$2000	\$3,488.00

\*Exact amount of Canada Child Tax Benefit is based on individual circumstances. The information provided above is based on an estimate of \$400 per child under 18 years of age. Families will also receive Universal Child Care Benefit of \$160 pr month per child aged 1-5 years and \$60 per month for children aged 6-17 years.

Single parents receive less in food allowance.

**Single parents: \$350.00/month**

### How to Help with Budgeting

- Use simple tools such as calendars, budgeting book, file folders (one will be provided to each family by the NCC)
- Tell the family keeps receipts, warranties, booklets for appliances, etc. .
- Keep some “coin” for school expenses for children, and possibly laundromats
- Explore needs & want (Explain that many Canadians seem to have all the “wants” but they either save or use credit for these things)
- Credit should not be applied for until basic household budget is stabilized.
- Stress value of goals : Saving now = Savings for future



## **Ontario Works**

One important task is at the end of the year when the family's IRCC funding is ending. The family may need your help to apply to go on social assistance. As OW rates are slightly less than income through RAP, the family may need to make some adjustments to their budget.

The application for Ontario Works is somewhat lengthy and involves an initial phone or online application followed by an in-person interview. Details are available on the Ministry of Community and Social Service's website (see below), or you can ask any front line staff at the New Canadians Centre for assistance. If you request an interpreter ahead of time, Ontario Works may be able to arrange one; otherwise, you will need to find a volunteer interpreter.

Ontario Works Application

<http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/social/ow/index.aspx>

## **Employment**

Although this will be of primary interest and importance to families, it is likely that they will not be ready to begin an employment search until several months have passed. English is the number one barrier to employment – especially employment commensurate with a person's skills and abilities – and it is important to stress this with the family and encourage them to keep practicing English.

When a family member is ready to start looking for employment, make an appointment with the employment counselor at the NCC: Olga Stetsyuk at [olga@nccpeterborough.ca](mailto:olga@nccpeterborough.ca). She can discuss employment options, assist with resumes, refer to programs at Employment Ontario agencies, look at credential evaluation / accreditation, etc.

Although connecting with employment services is a good first step, you also need to be active in helping family members look for work. This could mean using your networks to help them get information or job interviews, or helping them practice their interview skills. You should also assign a "job buddy" to each adult who is looking for work to help look for advertisements, practice for interviews, etc.

# HOUSING

## **Importance**

This is one of the hardest and most time-sensitive issues. The ideal is to find permanent housing within 2-3 weeks of arrival. The NCC has some capacity for overflow, but if most families are taking longer than a month to find permanent housing then we will receive fewer GAR families, as allocation is based on temporary housing capacity.

You should assign at least 2 people from your group to help with housing. You can actively assist in looking for housing options as well as accompanying families to viewings.

## **Housing Resource Centre (HRC)**

The HRC (part of Community Counselling & Resource Centre (CCRC)) is our main partner in this area (along with their Credit Counselling Program). Within one week of arrival, new GAR families will do an intake with CCRC / HRC. At this intake, they will discuss the family's basic budget and what they can afford. A member of your team should plan on attending.

## **Housing Search**

Some families may not like the housing that's available in their price range. It is important to know that the federal government can cut off their funding if they refuse to move into acceptable housing. Your group can help by reinforcing that housing costs are high and helping the family to understand what is reasonable to expect for their budget.

Some landlords may require Tenant Insurance. This is not necessarily a reason to reject the unit as insurance can be useful. Generally, insurance is less for contents insurance than for liability in case there is damage to the house

## **To Keep in Mind**

- In the Federal First Steps guide for GAR families, there is a housing search checklist. See introductory section at the start of this guide
- Safe Affordable Housing will make a huge difference. Is it a fit? Sustainable? How much can they afford based on funding? On Ontario Works?
- Search parameters? Number of bedrooms, apartment vs. house, high-rise? Laundry? Yard? Garden? Stairs?
- Location? How will they get around? Bus? Walk? Drive? Bike? Look at bus maps with them, prioritize bus routes. Proximity to schools? Easily able to get to Fleming for ESL classes?

## **Housing Search Tips**

- Landlords NCC has worked with in the past
- Word of mouth -- social media, friends, contacts -- put it out there!
- Housing Resource Centre -- sign up right away for a weekly list of affordable apartments -- e-mailed to you each Friday by 1pm (or pick up paper copy at office)
- Kijiji -- set up an alert so that you are e-mailed listings for apartments that fit your search parameters, follow up daily with phone calls -- the market is competitive.

## **Next Steps**

- Setting up viewings with landlords -- you'll make initial contact, explain you're working on behalf of a Syrian family, set up a time to view the apartment.
- Most landlords will need reassurance: do they have income? How will I communicate with them? Will they take care of my property? (Trust your instincts up front -- you're screening them as much as they're screening you).
- Do your homework: what type of heat? What is included? --the more predictability the better.
- Call the PUC about the utilities. Call Enbridge (if applicable). What are the average utilities? What is the highest month? (need address & unit #)
- You'll ask the hard questions --area safe? --recent history of bedbugs?
- Housing Support Group Role is part mediator, part educator, part catalyst, part reassurance for both parties

## **Cultural Awareness of Specific Housing Needs**

- Many families may not want to rent apartments where there are dogs
- Families may ask about a Bidet Attachment for the toilet -- dry toilet paper is not preferred. Toilet supply line take-off (Home Depot) vs. Bathroom faucet Diverter (Sourced through a translator from a Toronto Mosque--preferred because you can use warm water). Basic solution is a watering can beside the toilet. Ask landlord for permission to use this.
- Privacy -- women can remove their hijab in the privacy of their own home and in the presence of family (and will want to increasingly the warmer it is outside). Windows with blinds or curtains make this possible.
- Area rugs in some key areas in the apartment will allow for more comfortable prayer spot or informal seating areas
- Families may feel anxious about/unaccustomed to stairs (exertion & safety)
- Heating & comfort -- good idea to re-enforce heating range guidelines for apartment esp. if they are paying utilities. Encourage socks & slippers vs. bare feet so the heat can be turned down. Encourage stepping outside if they're hot or turning down the thermostat instead of opening the window. Go over it when they move in and then re-enforce when the first utility bill comes in. Talk through Time of Use electricity use
- Wi-fi -- many families use a wi-fi based smart phone app called WhatsApp to communicate - it helps to deal with isolation, overcome language barrier, provide safety. An internet connection is not optional.

## **When you find a place to rent**

- You can sign an "Intent to Rent" form where you agree on the price but no funds change hands.
- You can ask for a copy of the lease in advance so that your family can go over it with a translator. It's a good idea to run it by the Housing Resource Centre to make sure it's legal and reasonable.
- Lease is a legal document, also an educational opportunity. Should talk through with an interpreter with the family so that they know what they are signing.

## **Permanent Housing & Moving**

Please tell the NCC as soon as permanent housing is found, as we need to notify IRCC. At that point, NCC can also move forward with school registration for children.

Your team will be responsible for moving the family into their new apartment. Everything stays in the temporary housing unit for the next family except food, toiletries and personal items.

The NCC will arrange for furniture delivery – every family receives a set of furniture depending on family size (see list below). Your team can collect other items the family will need.

## **Utilities**

- Once you have a lease signed, you may be able to arrange for utilities
- To get internet hooked up (need landlord's signed permission if drilling through the wall)
- Arrange for utilities (apply by on-line application with your family's permission)
- Once you have signed up for utilities you will be issued an account number:
- Send those account numbers to the HRC and they can issue a form to Enbridge or the PUC waiving the security deposit based on low-income eligibility
- Sign-up for PUC e-mails of their weekly energy costs to build awareness of utilities and associated costs.

## **Move Day**

- NCC will arrange for Government furniture delivery (shipped out of Toronto) and will be there for the delivery. Family will have to sign for the furniture when it arrives.
- NCC can also help orient the family to the new housing (e.g. appliances, garbage day, etc.)

## **Ongoing**

Consider helping sign your family up for automatic withdrawals to manage rent and utilities vs. paying them manually (advantages and disadvantages to both options). Orient them to their new neighbourhood -- schools, affordable groceries, bus stops, etc.

**14461789 Canada Inc. (Charley Furniture)**

89A Montreal Rd., Ottawa, Ontario K1L 6E8  
 Tel: 1-613-747-7373 / Fax: 1-613-741-5632  
 Email: Charles@furnitureinottawa.com

Date Rec'd @ CIC:

SPECIAL ORDER FOR PETERBOROUGH

Standing Offer No: B3275-150511/004/TOR

CLIENT ID #: [REDACTED]

**FURNITURE ORDER Approved by CIC(Shalu)**

CLIENT NAME (Last name, first name)	TELEPHONE #	Family Size
[REDACTED]	705-211- [REDACTED] Michael	single single single

Address for Delivery  
 [REDACTED] street  
 PETERBOROUGH ON K9J 3L6

**PACKAGE 1: Single Person (11 Pieces)**

- 1 single bed set
- 1 bedbug mattress & pillow cover (single)
- 1 chest of drawers
- 1 sofa chair
- 1 standing floor lamp
- 1 three-piece table & chair set

**PACKAGE 2: Single Parent with 1 Dependent (22 Pieces)**

- 2 single bed set
- 2 bedbug mattress & pillow cover
- 2 chest of drawers
- 1 standing floor lamp
- 1 sofa
- 1 sofa chair
- 1 two-piece coffee & end table set
- 1 five-piece table & chair set

**PACKAGE 3: Single Parent with 4 Dependents (42 Pieces)**

- 5 single bed
- 5 bedbug mattress & pillow cover
- 5 chest of drawers
- 1 standing floor lamp
- 1 sofa
- 1 sofa chair
- 1 two-piece coffee & end table set
- 1 seven-piece table & chair set

**PACKAGE 4: Couple (15 Pieces)**

- 1 double bed set
- 1 bedbug mattress & pillow cover (double)
- 1 double dresser
- 1 standing floor lamp
- 1 sofa
- 1 sofa chair
- 1 two-piece coffee & end table set
- 1 three-piece table & chair set

**PACKAGE 5: Couple with 1 Dependent (23 Pieces)**

- 1 double bed set
- 1 single bed set
- 1 bedbug mattress & pillow cover (double)
- 1 bedbug mattress & pillow cover (single)
- 1 double dresser
- 1 chest of drawers
- 1 standing floor lamp
- 1 sofa
- 1 sofa chair
- 1 two-piece coffee & end table set
- 1 five-piece table & chair set

**PACKAGE 6: Couple with 3 Dependents (38 Pieces)**

- 1 double bed set
- 3 single bed set
- 1 bedbug mattress & pillow cover (double)
- 3 bedbug mattress & pillow cover
- 1 double dresser
- 3 chest of drawers
- 1 standing floor lamp
- 1 sofa
- 1 loveseat
- 1 sofa chair
- 1 two-piece coffee & end table set
- 1 seven-piece table & chair set

**ADDITIONAL FURNITURE FOR DEPENDENTS**

- Item #1: single bed set
- Item #2: double bed set
- Item #3: bed bug mattress & pillow cover (single)
- Item #4: bed bug mattress & pillow cover (double)
- Item #5: chest of drawers
- Item #6: double dresser
- Item #7: metal bunk bed set
- Item #8: crib & mattress set
- Item #9: sofa
- Item #10: sofa chair
- Item #11: two-piece coffee and end table set
- Item #12: standing floor lamp
- Item #13: three-piece table & chair set
- Item #14: five-piece table & chair set
- Item #15: seven-piece table & chair set
- Item #16: single chair

PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE DATE:

February 1, 2016

DATE ORDERED: February 3, 2016

RESERVATION DELIVERY DATE:

February 10, 2016

TIME: 9 - 3 pm

# HEALTH

## **Role of GAR Support Group**

The NCC will complete OHIP application forms and set up initial appointments. GAR Support Groups will accompany families to these appointments. Appointments are in Google calendar. They will be marked – who needs to attend, who is responsible for transportation, and who is responsible for interpretation.

After the initial meetings, the GAR Support Group will help the family set up medical appointments and find interpreters as issues come up.

As the group will be accompanying the family to medical appointments and helping to arrange on their behalf, you may:

- Be privy to confidential health information
- Get photocopies of OHIP and IFHP documents if family has difficulty remembering to bring them
- Be the primary contact for the receptionist / health provider to explain situations
- Provide a contact phone number of a GAR support group member to enable health-care providers to communicate with families
- Use What's App and Google Translate to arrange appointments, pick-up times and locations
- Arrange interpreters for medical appointments
- Ask the family's permission to sit in on the health appointment with the interpreter for support, help manage the children, gain understanding about health issues and further diagnostic tests needed or follow up
- Communicate with schools to indicate absences due to medical appointments

## **Health Coverage**

OHIP: GARs are eligible for OHIP immediately and are not subject to the 3-month waiting period. NCC staff will fill out the OHIP applications during intake and set up the appointment at Service Ontario. The GAR Support Group will accompany the family to the appointment.

Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP): Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Syrian refugees (government-assisted and privately-sponsored) are automatically eligible for supplemental (Type 1) benefits under the IFHP for 12 months. IFHP certificates are issued to refugees at the point-of-entry upon arrival in Canada. Once Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) coverage is obtained, refugees still retain IFHP supplemental coverage, including dental, for the remaining period of eligibility (12 months).

The IFHP is administered by Medavie Blue Cross. All medical providers must be registered as an IFHP provider in order to bill for services under the IFHP. To register as an IFHP provider, the provider should visit the Medavie Blue Cross provider website (<https://provider.medavie.bluecross.ca/>) and click on the “Request Account” link.

Medical providers registered with Medavie Blue Cross can verify coverage for specific benefits, including reimbursement rates, either through the electronic claim system or by contacting Medavie Blue Cross at 1-888-614-1880. Only medical providers can use this number.

IFHP coverage includes limited dental, vision and prescription drug coverage. Dental coverage is limited and emergency (see list in dental section). Vision covers eye exam and glasses if needed. Prescription drug covers most drugs prescribed by a physician. For complete and detailed list, see the benefits grid at the Medivae Blue Cross provider website <https://provider.medavie.bluecross.ca/>

### Family Doctor

Families can be registered with a Family Doctor or the VON 360 Degree Clinic.

The VON 360 Degree is Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic. They offer primary care, just like a doctor's office, and can issue prescriptions and referrals to specialists. The Ministry of Health considers them a primary care provider, so if a person is registered with the VON 360 Clinic they cannot be on Health Care Connect. Their focus is on clients who have multiple needs or difficulty making or keeping appointments (for example, if you are a patient of the clinic you can get walk-in service). They have interpretation available over the phone.

Until a family is enrolled with a family doctor or the VON 360 Clinic, or after-hours, the following services may be accessed.

Health Care Providers	Services
<p>Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000 Available 24 hours</p>	<p>This is a free and confidential telephone service for health advice from a Registered Nurse. The nurse can help you decide if you need to go to the emergency department.</p> <p>You do not need your OHIP card.</p> <p>Multiple languages available</p>
<p>Primacy - Lansdowne Place Clinic The clinic is located inside the Real Canadian Superstore 769 Borden Avenue, Peterborough Mon to Fri 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>You do not have to make an appointment before you go. This is a walk-In clinic</p> <p>The clinic is closed for lunch from 1:30pm to 2:00pm. You must arrive 30 minutes before the clinic closes, or a doctor will not see you.</p>



<p>Sat &amp; Sun 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. 705-775-1516</p>	<p>You must bring your OHIP card</p>
<p><b>PRHC's Paediatric Outpatient Urgent Care Clinic</b> 6th Floor of PRHC Monday to Friday 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM</p>	<p>Serves children 0 –18 years old No appointment necessary Urgent Care Clinic is for children who are unwell and appropriate for a walk-in setting but do not require the services of the Emergency Department.</p>

### **Vision**

We know of one optometrist who has registered for IFHP and can do eye exams for clients: Dr. Diane Trevis, Contact: Niki (Receptionist). 234 Hunter Street W. Phone: 705-745-6338

### **Prescription Drugs**

The cost of a prescription drug is the actual cost plus a pharmacy fee. Some pharmacies are cheaper than others. Walmart, for example, has a low fee.

Through our work we have become aware of two pharmacies whose pharmacists speak Arabic, but there may be others as well.

#### Guardian Pharmacy on High Street

815 High St #9, Peterborough, ON K9J 8J9  
(705) 874-8080  
Magdy Kamar

#### Westmount Pharmacy

1293 Clonsilla Ave, Peterborough, ON K9J 5Z3  
(705) 741-5008  
Murad Younis

### **Dental Care**

The NCC has started a Dental Fund as part of our larger Welcome Fund to pay up to \$250 per adult for important dental work not covered under the IFHP (full details follow this section).

Because this is a big undertaking, a dentist is only likely to take on one to two families (and some have already helped privately sponsored refugees).

If we don't have a dentist willing to do this, we also have the option of sending people to the Health Unit's dental clinic. They will do all work at Ministry rates for any number of families. Either option is fine - what we want to avoid is for a dental office to do all the highly covered work and then leave us trying to find someone to cover the cost at a

lower rate. If you would like to approach dentists, let Jack know and he will provide you with an **information package** which explains everything and which you can use when talking to dentists.

**BUT - AND THIS IS IMPORTANT!** - it's not efficient to have multiple people from multiple groups harassing the same dentists. Please check with the other team leaders about what they have done.

Medavie Blue Cross lists the following dental services as covered under the IFHP:

1. Emergency Examinations: Emergency examinations are covered no more than once.
2. Diagnostic Radiography: X-rays are covered with restrictions on number and type.
3. Restorations: Restorations are covered for severely affected teeth only. All restorations must be pre-approved by submitting X-rays. Preapproved fillings on anterior and molar teeth have specific restrictions outlined by Medavie.
4. Extractions: Uncomplicated emergency extractions do not require preapproval. All complicated extraction codes must be submitted with X-rays for justification.
5. Emergency Prescriptions: Only those needed to treat the emergency conditions – there are charges for prescribing emergency medications.
6. Anaesthetics: Anaesthetics are covered with restrictions, dependent on the age of the patient. All anaesthetics must be submitted for predetermination.
7. Complete or partial dentures and relines

Medavie Blue Cross states that the following dental services are **not covered** under the IFHP:

- Root canal treatments
- Orthodontics
- Intravenous sedation and nitrous oxide
- Prophylaxis and fluoride
- Facility fees
- Specialist fees (unless specially approved for Oral Surgeons and Pedodontists)
- Restoration of incipient lesions or those not visible on an X-ray are considered routine care and will not be covered
- Scaling and root planing
- Bitewings will not be covered separately only in conjunction with the Complete series code.

Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO): Administered by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

HSO provides free dental care for eligible children and youth aged 17 and under. HSO dental coverage includes preventive, routine, and emergency and essential treatment services to eligible children.

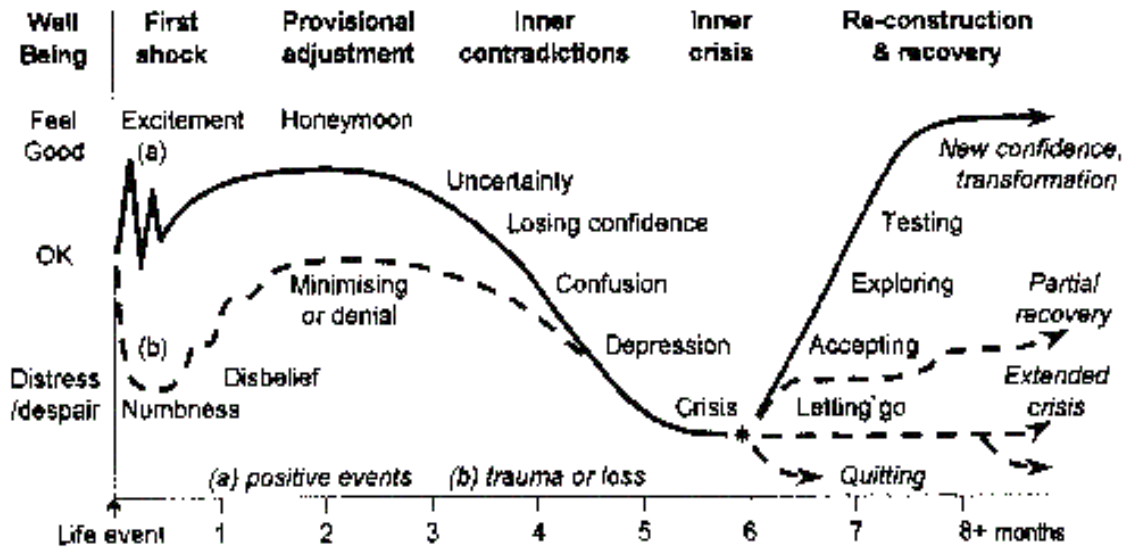
Children/youth and/or families with other insurance, including the IFHP, may be eligible to also receive dental benefits under HSO. Clients are required to access their other dental insurance as the first payer prior to accessing HSO (with some exceptions). When treating HSO clients with coverage under IFHP, benefits will be coordinated with IFHP as the first payer.

Clients must apply for and meet the eligibility requirements of HSO to become enrolled.

## Mental Health

“The majority of refugees, once they reach a place of safety, are able to adapt and cope with challenges (past and present).” MHCC

Although refugee groups show higher rates of certain mental disorders (e.g. PTSD) such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, because of resilience 80-90% of refugees have no mental health problem that needs treatment.



## **How to Help**

Remember - emotional challenges are normal part of the process. Do not assume they cannot manage. Resist the “righting reflex”, need to “fix.” You can foster resilience by providing support, a welcoming environment, a safe environment, and respect. Help families use their usual and familiar ways of coping (e.g. what do they do to relax?)

Among cultures, there are differences in understanding of mental health and the usual or appropriate response to distress. Many refugees have a physical response to distress: frequent complaints of aches/pains, stomach upset. This could in part be because there is great stigma regarding mental illness. Experts recommend avoiding or delaying diagnoses of mental disorders in most situations and to focus on functioning and support.

## **Tips for Supportive Listening**

- Listen closely. Show you are listening;
- Try to find a quiet place to talk;
- Be patient and calm;
- Allow for silence.
- Keep the story confidential;
- Provide simple factual information - if you have it;
- Acknowledge feelings and any losses expressed, i.e., “I’m so sorry. I can imagine this is very sad for you.”
- Acknowledge the person’s strengths and how they have helped themselves.

## **Don’ts**

- Don’t pressure to tell their story or for details.
- Don’t interrupt or rush (e.g., look at watch).
- Don’t touch the person unless you are sure it is appropriate.
- Don’t judge them or their feelings. (“should”)
- Don’t give false promises or false reassurances.
- Resist the urge to fix or solve problems, they are not yours.
- Don’t take away the person’s strength and sense of being able to care for themselves.

## **Professional Help**

If you have concerns, the NCC can arrange for you to speak to a CMHA Social Worker. The CMHA Social Worker can also see family members and refer them for care if appropriate.

# FAMILY AND EDUCATION

## **Legal Differences**

The Orientation Sessions provided by the NCC and will include information on Canadian laws regarding children (e.g. ages left alone, corporal punishment, etc.) and domestic / family law (including where to get help). It is good for you to be aware of the basic laws in case you have discussions with the family about these topics. (See Children's Aid guidelines, following page.)

If you have general questions or concerns, talk to the NCC. If you believe a child is being abused or is in danger, however, then you must report it to the Children's Aid Society.

## **Law and Status**

A permanent resident, no matter how long he or she has lived in Canada, can be deported if they are convicted in Canada of a crime for which the maximum possible sentence is 10 years or more, or if they received a sentence of six months or more.

As many (seemingly minor) crimes can fit into the first category, it is important to notify settlement workers at the New Canadians Centre if a permanent resident has any difficulties with the law.

## **Abuse**

If a family member is being abused, it is possible they will confide in the people in the sponsorship group with whom they are most comfortable. It is important to know where to get assistance if this happens.

## **The START Program (Support Team for Abuse Response Today)**

This program is a collaboration between a number of agencies and provides free and confidential services in Safety Planning, Court Support, Counselling, Legal Advice and more. This is a walk-in program open Mondays from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the YWCA administrative buildings at 216 Simcoe Street in Peterborough (between the Greyhound and Bus Terminals). More information is available at [www.ywcapeterborough.org/START](http://www.ywcapeterborough.org/START) or through [info@ywcapeterborough.org](mailto:info@ywcapeterborough.org) or through **(705) 743-3526**.

It is good for women to know that if they need to leave the house suddenly in an emergency, any cab driver will know where the shelters are located. Shelters generally will cover the cost of the cab. The list of emergency numbers also includes 24-hour helplines for victims of abuse.

Information on abuse and family law are available in multiple languages at:

[www.cleo.on.ca](http://www.cleo.on.ca)

[www.onefamilylaw.ca](http://www.onefamilylaw.ca)

## **Guidelines for the Supervision of Children (Children's Aid Society)**

### **Questions**

- Why is it important to supervise your children?
- Is there a legal age for baby-sitting?
- Can I leave my children alone in a vehicle?
- Can my child look after younger children?

### **Supervision of Children**

Commonly the Children's Aid Society receives inquiries as to the guidelines and legal responsibilities in supervising children, hiring babysitters, or leaving children unattended: For this reason we are pleased to provide the following information to our community and families in our area.

### **Child and Family Services Act**

Section 79 (3) states that: "No person having charge of a child less than 16 years of age shall leave the child without making provision for his or her supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances. When a child is under 10 years of age, the onus is on the parent to prove reasonable provisions were made. If the child is over 10 years, the onus of proof is on the Children's Aid Society.

### **Explanation**

It is the parents' responsibility for providing care and assure the safety of their children at all times. It is an offence to leave any child unattended without making reasonable arrangements for every situation for the supervision; care or safety and criminal charges may be laid.

### **Loitering**

Section 79 (5) (a) of the C.F.S.A. states: "No parent of a child less than sixteen years of age shall permit the child to loiter in a public place between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m."

### **Judging Reasonable Provisions for the Care of Your Child**

In making arrangements for the supervision of your child there are certain things you need to look at so that you may be assured that your child is being cared for adequately in your absence and in your presence.

1. Age of children babysitting - you need to consider the age of the child to be babysat and the age of the babysitter.
2. Number of children to be babysat.
3. Behaviour of the children, their temperament and health.
4. Safety of the home or room.
5. Proximity of other adults other than the parents.
6. Length of time child left unattended.
7. Parents' whereabouts - can they be reached?
8. While a child may be able to care for himself for a pre-determined period of time, he/she may not be able to care for one or more other children

### **In Considering a Babysitter, You Should Ask the Following Questions:**

1. Is this person old enough and responsible enough to care for my child(ren)?
2. Can he/she handle more than one child?
3. Am I comfortable with a male or a female babysitter?
4. Does this person make me feel comfortable?
5. Is my child comfortable with a male or female sitter?
6. Is this person dependable and/or reliable?

### **When Can I Leave My Child Alone?**

You need to consider the following:

1. The age of the child-refer to the guidelines which follow.

2. The behaviour of the child, their temperament and health.
3. Who is the emergency contact person for the child and how can they be contacted?
4. How long is your child going to be left alone?
5. Does your child know where you will be and can they reach you?
6. Does your child know the rules they have to follow when you are not there? It is your job to teach your child the right rules for your situation and what to do when you are not there.

In some situations, having your child stay alone may be the right choice. But if your child is not comfortable staying alone – don't. Your child's responses will help to determine his or her ability to stay alone in any situation. Don't allow your child to stay home alone if you are uncomfortable about it or if you think he/she is not ready. You are responsible for your child's care and safety.

### **Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society Guidelines of "Reasonable Provisions" in the Circumstances**

#### **INFANT - 7 YEARS**

Children of this age inclusively should not be left unsupervised at any time of the day or night. A competent babysitter should be on the same premises as the children.

#### **8 - 10 YEARS**

Short periods of indirect supervision (1-2 hours) may be acceptable for the age range of 8-10 years. Indirect supervision may be provided by:

- (a) An adult in the next house or apartment if the adult is aware of the parents' absence and agrees to look in on the child during a specified period of time.
- (b) A parent who is at work; if the parent calls home regularly and if at least one child can use the telephone and has the parent's phone number.

#### **11 - 13 YEARS**

Longer periods of indirect supervision, from two to five hours with an adult/babysitter available to the children in case of emergency or if simply lonely.

#### **14 - 15 YEARS**

This age should be able to be left alone for a full day or overnight, if an older sibling is in the house. Again, an adult should be aware if parents are absent and available if needed



## Schools

Families will receive an orientation regarding school in Peterborough and all options available, including Public, Catholic and French Immersion, will be presented. The explanation of the school system in Canada will be done by Settlement Workers in School (SWIS) Workers. Please choose one person from your team to be the family's education lead – they are welcome to attend the presentation.

Although your group may have opinions about which schools or school systems are preferable, you should not try to influence or change the family's decision.

Once a family has decided on school, the next steps will depend on the ages of the children. Children are placed in grades according to the birth year that appears on their documents. Most high school aged children will go to ESL class, which is in the public school system at TASS and Catholic system at St. Peters Secondary. Students can usually begin attending high school immediately (a public bus pass will be provided by the school board depending on distance or they may walk).

Elementary aged children will need to wait until they know their permanent address to attend school. If the family knows their permanent address but won't be able to move for several weeks, it may be possible for the children to begin attending from temporary housing, depending on transportation. If you are aware that your family has secured housing, please let the SWIS workers know.

Please do not contact schools or school board representatives on behalf of your family. The SWIS Workers will be the contact to set up all appointments and to make inquiries and will include you on correspondence.

In addition to school registration, SWIS Workers provide support to teachers and to students at the school, run homework clubs, youth groups, children's activities and other programs for families and children.

It is very important to remember that families make decisions regarding their children's education. Schools generally communicate with families directly and are wary about providing information with group members without the parents present – or without written permission of parents. If you will be picking children up from school, please arrange this in writing in advance with the school.

If you have any questions about education please do not hesitate to contact Jess Devlin, SWIS Coordinator at the NCC - at [jessica@nccpeterborough.ca](mailto:jessica@nccpeterborough.ca)

# LIFE IN CANADA

It is very important for a family's integration for them to feel connected to the broader Peterborough community.

## **Peterborough Welcome Pass**

The Peterborough Welcome Pass will be given to the family by the RAP Worker (it is a laminated card with the family's name on it). The Welcome Pass is only valid for one year from date of issue. It gives the family a 3-month free membership at the YMCA (see below for notes on the YMCA) and one-time free admission to cultural organisations such as the canoe museum.

A complete list of partners, along with a map showing all locations, is available at the New Canadians Centre.

## **YMCA**

Before going to the YMCA, you must arrange a tour (in Arabic) with Ghada Hussein ahead of time at [ghada.hussein@gmail.com](mailto:ghada.hussein@gmail.com) or 705-991-0905. This is because there were some safety issues with families not understanding how to use equipment properly, children being unsupervised, etc.

## **NCC Programs and Activities**

The NCC holds a number of activities and programs such as Women's Group, Youth Club, Conversation Classes and trips. All events and activities are free except when there is cost for bus rental.

All of the team leaders have been signed up for the NCC monthly email Newsletter. If other members would like to sign up for the newsletter, contact reception at [info@nccpeterborough.ca](mailto:info@nccpeterborough.ca) with your full name, phone and email. All activities are also listed on our website.

## **Peterborough Refugee Sponsorship Network**

This is a group found on Facebook that may be useful to join to hear about current events and opportunities, as well as free items for families. Please use responsibly and remember to keep any information regarding your family private.

## Daily Living

Lots of small things will come up in day-to-day life and it is impossible to list all of these beforehand. For many people, though, one of the most difficult things to adjust to quickly is the weather – this includes summer, with its high humidity, as much as winter. People also may not be used to the sudden temperature swings that are common in Canada.

You can help families adjust by helping them learn about appropriate clothing for different temperatures (including layering). When you are first planning activities, make sure you prepare for the family not being comfortable – bring along extra warm clothing or make sure there is an “out” – e.g. somewhere cool or warm a person can go. For example, one group took a family skating when it was -10 C and one woman was wearing only a thin coat (as it was the only one that was ankle length), so after awhile one of the support group members took her for coffee while the others skated.

## Shopping

One of the most important things your group can do is to help families understand where to shop and how to save money. You can also help the family sign up for and access food banks and other resources for low-income families.

Help them understand Canadian Currency. They will be more used to Euros, so it may be helpful to compare.

Approximate Canadian Dollar – Euro conversion as of March 2016

CAD	EUR
1.00	68.
2.00	1.35
5.00	3.39
10.00	6.77
20.00	13.55
50.00	33.86
100.00	67.73

## Some cultural financial differences

- Cell phones are very important to families. They may be willing to forego other needs to have a nice cellphone.
- Second hand stores are not common in many countries. Help them understand there is no stigma to shopping at second hand store, and that many Canadians of all income levels do so.
- Prices in Canada vary more from store to store and brand to brand than they do in other countries. Families may assume that an item will cost the same at a convenience store as at a grocery store, or that a more expensive brand is a better brand. We have extensive info on cell phones in the Arabic guides
- In Canada there are strong seasonal costs for produce

### **Backpacks for Kids**

United Way of Peterborough and District runs an annual Backpacks for Kids program, ensuring that children go to school with the necessary tools to succeed academically and socially. The program provides backpacks filled with essential school supplies to primary, elementary and high school students in need at the start of the school year.

If you know a child that needs a backpack and whose family cannot afford it, please have their parent/guardian contact the United Way at (705) 742-8839 to have their child put on the list. Backpacks are then distributed at individual schools with the help of principals and school staff. You can also contact the SWIS Coordinator at the NCC for information – Jessica Devlin at [jessica@nccpeterborough.ca](mailto:jessica@nccpeterborough.ca)

### **Coats for Kids & Grown-Ups Too**

United Way Peterborough & District's Coats for Kids and Grown-Ups Too is a program that collects gently used winter wear, has the items cleaned, and distributes them to local families to ensure that all residents have warm winter wear. Through the generosity of local citizens and dry cleaners, gently used coats, jackets, snow pants and snowsuits are donated and cleaned at no cost. Proof of income is not required to obtain free winter wear.

Distribution Centres: Dates, places and times are announced annually in October/November. If coats are left over after the November distribution, they may still be available. For more information on both programs on how you can get involved, call the United Way at 742-8839 or visit the website at [www.uwpeterborough.ca](http://www.uwpeterborough.ca)

### **Furniture, Electronics, Household Items**

Value Village  
1101 Lansdowne St. W.  
705-741-2644  
[www.valuevillage.com](http://www.valuevillage.com)

Talize  
Portage Place, Peterborough  
1154 Chemong Rd.

Walmart  
950 Lansdowne St. W. and 1002 Chemong Rd.

Dollarama  
950 Lansdowne St. W. (same plaza as Walmart and FreshCo)

Downtown Dollar Convenience  
369 George St N

Dollar Dollar  
Maple Ridge Plaza (near campus opposite No Frills)

## Online

- Kijiji ([kijiji.ca](http://kijiji.ca)) – Choose your city (“Kawartha Lakes” for Lindsay, “Peterborough” for Peterborough)
- Peterborough classified [classifiedextra.ca](http://classifiedextra.ca)
- Ikea ([ikea.ca](http://ikea.ca)) – Large selection of household items and furniture, famous for self-assembling. Four locations around the Toronto area, but does deliver for a charge.

## Food Calendar

[http://www.peterborough.ca/Living/City\\_Services/Social\\_Services/Food\\_Calendar.htm](http://www.peterborough.ca/Living/City_Services/Social_Services/Food_Calendar.htm)  
<https://nourishpeterborough.ca>

## Groceries

You can show your family how to use the app “Flipp” to see all flyers for your location and compare prices.

Although most grocery stores have a selection of international foods (including halal), FreshCo and NoFrills have the most selection at the best cost.

## The Main Ingredient

326 Charlotte Street (close to downtown)

Natural foods and bulk goods. Excellent source for spices.

\*The Main Ingredient has talked extensively to the families about their needs and placed orders accordingly (e.g. for staples and less common items such as ground sumac). The Main Ingredient is providing a free staples kit to each family (these will be stored at the temporary housing location) and will also give a 20% discount card to every family – ask for it when you take the family to the store.

## Goodies on George

429 George St North

Mix of international food

## Food preferences

Most refugees will be practicing Muslims (but not all). The main prohibition is against pork. Meat should be halal (available in most grocery stores).

Following is a list of common Middle Eastern food staples. A selection of these staples will be in the food box prepared by Kawartha Food Share for the family’s arrival, but not all items will be available at all times – feel free to add items to the list or take the families shopping.

Produce	الخضروات	Condiments/ Spices	ملحقات/ توابل
Potatoes	بطاطا	Olive Oil	زيت زيتون
Onions	بصل	Vegetables Oil/ frying Oil	زيت نباتي/ زيت قلي
Tomatoes	طماطم/ بندورة	Vinegar	خل
Cucumbers	خيار	Mayonnaise	مايونيز
Carrots	جزر	Ketchup	كاتشب
Zucchini*	كوسة	Honey	عسل
Cauliflower	قرنبيط/ زهرة	Jam	مربة
Pepper	فليفلة	Salt	ملح
Lemon	ليمون حامض	Pepper	فلفل ( بهار اسود مطحون)
Parsley	بقدونس	Cinnamon	قرفة
Cabbage	ملفوف	Nutmeg	جوزة الطيب
Green onions	بصل أخضر	Paprika	فليفلة حمرا
Mushrooms	فطر	chilli flakes	فليفلة حمرا (حارة ,حادة)
Garlic	ثوم	Cumin	كمون
Green beans	فاصوليا خضراء	Dry Sumac (Main Ingredient)	سماق
Green peas	بازلاء الخضراء	Dry cilantro	كزبرة
Eggplant	باذنجان	Sugar	سكر
Romaine lettuce	خس	All-purpose flour	طحين
Apples	تفاح	Baking powder	خميرة
Oranges	برتقال	Spaghetti	معكرونة
Bananas	موز	Lasagna Sheets	رقائق ازانيا
		Tahini sauce	طحينة

Breads	الخبز	Canned Goods	معلبات
Pita	خبز عربي	Diced Tomatoes	بندورة مقطعة
Toast	خبز محمص	Tomatoes Past	دبس البندورة
Soft Sandwich buns	خبز السندويشات	Pickles	مخللات
		Tuna	سمك طون
		Sardine	سمك ساردين
		Red Beans	فاصولية حمراء
<b>Meat</b>	<b>اللحوم</b>	Kidney Beans (White)	فاصولية بيضاء
Ground Beef	لحمة مفرومة (بقر)	Fava Beans (Red)	فول
Whole Chicken	دجاج	Chickpeas	حمص حب
Cubed Beef Stew Meat	لحمة شقف (بقر)		
Chicken Legs/drums	افخاذ دجاج		
Fish Fillet (white, for frying)	سمك	<b>Grains</b>	<b>حبوب</b>
		Rice	رز
		Split red Lentils	عدس شوربة
		Brown Lentils (Whole)	عدس مجدرة
<b>Dairy</b>	<b>منتجات الألبان</b>	Couscous	برغل
Milk 3.25%	حليب كامل الدسم		
Butter	زبدة		
Margarine	سمنة	<b>Beverages</b>	<b>مرطبات</b>
Eggs	بيض	Orange Juice	عصير برتقال
Yogurt (Balkan-style)	لبن	Apple Juice	عصير تفاح
Cream Cheese	جبنة سائلة	Tea (orange pekoe)	شاي
Feta Chesse	جبنة يونانية	Coffee (Instant coffee)	قهوة سريعة الذوبان
Coffee Cream or coffee-mate	كريم للقهوة	Bottled Water	ماء

## **Syrian Culture**

Below is some general information about Syrian culture and customs (from the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program). There are more resources available at [www.tinyurl.com/refugeenetwork](http://www.tinyurl.com/refugeenetwork) including information on Syrian food and cooking.

While it can be useful, it is not comprehensive. As well, remember that there is a lot of individual differences in how people think, feel and behave – don't assume. Generally, if you're not sure about something, ask. Most people are happy to explain their culture and customs as long as they are approached respectfully.

## **What should we know about the culture and customs of Syrian refugees?**

### Socializing

- Conservative Muslim women do not socialize with men outside their families.
- Greeting: members of the opposite sex shake hands; Muslim women may, instead, nod and put their hands on their hearts. Let them take the lead.
- Syrian men and women are affectionate with members of the same gender.
- It is normal for two men or women to hold hands, lean on and touch each other, and greet each other with kisses on the cheeks.
- Stigma against gays and openly gay behaviour. LGBTI individuals are likely to keep their sexuality very private.
- Normal Syrian interaction can seem intense: standing close to you, loud voices, more gestures for normal conversation.



### Parenting and Children

- Parents help children with schoolwork and monitor activities as best they can.
- Boys often monitor the behaviour of their sisters.
- Syrians are affectionate with children – even the children of strangers – and will hold them on their laps, tousele their heads, and kiss the cheeks of babies and children.
- Children are expected to shake hands when they meet new people and show respect for elders.
- Corporal punishment is common and accepted.

### Health Care

- Place great faith and trust in doctors.
- Prefer to be seen by same-sex health care providers.
- Embarrassed by personal questions, particularly those having to do with sex and sexual problems.

### Food and Drink

- Eating is an important activity.
- Value eating meals with family and friends.
- Inviting others to share one's food is an essential courtesy.
- The person invited is expected to decline the invitation the first time out of politeness.
- Breakfast: tea/coffee with pita bread and either cheese, eggs, hummus, or yogurt, jam, olives.
- Lunch: main meal, around 2 to 3 p.m., is often a cooked stew, with meat or chicken and vegetables, served with rice and salads.
- Dinner: late and similar to breakfast.
- Muslims do not eat pork and devout Muslims do not drink wine

# COMMUNITY SERVICES

## Interpretation

The New Canadians Centre can help with interpretation - however, we do not have unlimited capacity. NCC staff will provide interpretation during the family's first month for all of their important appointments. We are also working with a number of Arabic-speaking volunteers. Although we will continue to support interpretation requests after the first month, our goal is to encourage clients to practice and learn English as much as possible and so become more independent. We may not always be able to provide interpretation assistance for every appointment.

There are times when you definitely need an interpreter, times when you may need an interpreter, and times you can get away without one. Interpretation is in high demand and, although we have an excellent group of volunteers, they are limited in how much they can do. There are several ways your group can help.

When requesting interpretation, give as much lead time as possible. BUT before you do, ask:

- Is an interpreter really necessary? How important is the task?
- Does the organization provide interpretation? (Make it a habit to check ahead of time about an organization's capacity – as of right now, the hospital and schools have interpretation lines and others are looking into it; 911 has immediate interpretation available)
- Can you use Google translate or other communication tools / techniques?
- Can you use Arabic information from [www.inmylanguage.org](http://www.inmylanguage.org) ?
- Can you combine some interpretation requests into one session?

Some examples of when an interpreter is required

YES	MAYBE	NO
First dental appointment	Dental cleaning	No - there are Arabic speaking Pharmacists
First health check-up / Vaccinations	Follow up vaccination	Go for a walk in the park
Lease explanations / Signing	House Viewing	Go grocery shopping
Altercations with the law	Driver's Licence Test	Get a library card
Intake at NCC	OHIP Renewal	Orientation to transit
Getting a bank account	Letters from bank	Practice driving

Most volunteer interpreters are not trained professionals (although the NCC is providing some basic training on these specific issues). Arabic is spoken in many countries; there may be differences in dialect, vocabulary, accent, etc. Give interpreters time to talk to the family and find out if they can understand one another. Because Arabic is a

language common to many countries and cultures, interpreters may not be able to provide cultural advice or context.

When meeting with an interpreter, plan and limit the amount of material to be interpreted in order to make the interpreter's work easier – the family will likely want to know everything that is being talked about.

Generally, it will take longer for an interpreter to explain what you have said – both because of language (it will generally take longer to say something in Arabic), and because things need to be repeated more than once due to the fact that the culture and experience is so foreign.

### **Gender Issues**

It is not always possible to provide gender-specific interpretation. Even for some health exams this can be worked around – e.g. the doctor providing information through the interpreter before the exam and after the exam, with the interpreter not present at the exam.

### **211**

211 is a free telephone helpline and website that provides information on community, social, non-clinical health and related government services. 211 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in over 100 languages.

### **Communication**

It can be helpful to download a dictionary on your smartphone. There is a free live voice and text translator by Apalon Apps (groups report that Android apps haven't worked as well). There are some good websites for learning Arabic, such as at L-Ceps (Google for others). Google Translate is also quite good. We were told by one interpreter that Systranet is good translator, but Yamli is not; it doesn't really translate the meaning of the words from English to Arabic, it just helps Arabic-speakers to verbally pronounce English words in Arabic letters – mostly useful for those at very beginner English levels. He also likes Bing.

Tips for Google Translate & similar software: The more complicated the sentence, the less accurate the translation.

- Use simple sentences in the active voice (time to review your grammar!).  
E.g. don't say or type, "How would you feel about going to the park sometime tomorrow?" but "Do you want to go to the park tomorrow?"
- Avoid large words. Instead of, "Have you decided on a plan?" ask, "What you want to do?"
- Avoid ambiguous phrases. Instead of, "What did you do before?" ask, "Where did you work?"

## **ESL**

There is one free, federally funded language class in Peterborough: LINC (run by Fleming College) and provincially funded language classes run by PACE at KPR District School Board. The Language Assessment (at the NCC) takes about 2 hours and will be booked by the NCC. The family may have to wait to access ESL, but that is okay. The teachers say it is good for them to get settled before starting class; even if they are anxious to begin right away, there is a lot on their plate.

At the assessment, they will be given their CLB level (see sheet) and placed in an appropriate class. They will either be told a day to start attending or will need to wait for the teacher to call them if there is a wait list.

Most students will want and will do better in class, but home study is available instead if they cannot attend for any reason. However, they need to be assessed at a high beginner level and have access to a computer. The assessment for home study is the same as for class.

The LINC classes are at the main Fleming campus – take the stairs near the library down to the basement. You will need to show the family how to get to classes using the bus system. The LINC Coordinator at Fleming (Tracey McConnery) may be able to provide daycare for children at centres or in private homes (wee watch) as long as funding is available.

There are also provincially funded English Language Classes running at the old PCVS / PACE building. These classes are less of a time commitment than LINC and may suit those who find jobs as some are in the evening. These classes do not provide child care. For placement in these classes, students must complete the same LINC assessment at the New Canadians Centre and get a referral to be placed in the appropriate class.

Adults can also be matched with tutors at the NCC and attend drop-in conversation classes at NCC during times they are not in classes. Friday mornings at the NCC is our beginner English conversation class – that currently has free childminding.

You can help out by having conversations with the family and also helping them access materials they can study by themselves. See the list of useful websites or ask at the library for some good beginner books.

## **Transportation**

One of the most important things your group can do is to make sure the family is comfortable with the transit system. It is not enough to show the family the route; it's important to go with them several times.

The RAP Workers will be providing the families with the following:

- Map of Peterborough
- Bus map
- Walking map of downtown
- Destination Cards (these are small cards where the family can write their destination (e.g. "Downtown" or "YMCA") and give to the bus driver, so the bus driver can check if they are on the right bus and tell them when they have reached their stop)

Teenagers attending the ESL Class at TASS or St. Peters may receive monthly bus passes during the school year – depending on distance to school from their home. However, transportation is also included in the family's income allowance.

After they are comfortable with the local transit system, try taking them to Toronto using GO or Greyhound.