Guide to Health and Social Services for Newcomers in Ottawa

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Welcome.

This guide was developed in an effort to assist sponsors, healthcare providers, and newcomers access health information quickly and efficiently. Arriving in a new country, learning a new language, finding all the necessary resources, and trying to settle in a new community can be overwhelming. This guide serves as a tool to assist individuals in the Ottawa area to connect to services in an appropriate and timely manner. The information in this toolkit was compiled from various official websites and community resources.
Health Coverage

Upon arrival to Canada, all Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) and Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) will have permanent residency in Canada, as well as health coverage under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) for up to one year. IFHP certificates will be given to all clients at the airport or point of entry. Refugees will also be eligible to apply for and receive provincial health coverage immediately. To apply for the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), one must reside in Ontario.

How to Apply for OHIP:
When first applying for OHIP, applicants must go to a Service Ontario center in person, and bring the following:
- List of required documents: Confirmation of Permanent Residence (IMM5292, 5688) and a copy of their mortgage, rent, or lease agreement is sufficient for refugees. For a list of accepted documents, click here.
- A complete list of application forms is available here.

NOTE: Continuity of Coverage
If there is a waiting period before your OHIP is activated, then IFHP can be used in the meantime. If OHIP is activated immediately, people will get a temporary certificate which can be used until they receive their photo health card in the mail. The photo health card will have an expiry date and must be renewed before the expiration date in order to maintain provincial health coverage.
Coverage under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP):

IFHP provides health coverage for various services, similar to those covered by a provincial health card. IFHP can provide Basic, Supplemental, and Prescription Drug Coverage. Health care providers who are willing to serve refugees and claim through IFHP must be registered with BlueCross. Providers may visit https://www.medaviebc.ca/en/health-professionals for more information.

All refugees (PSRs and GARs) get Type 1 basic coverage, which includes the following:

Basic Coverage includes most services that insured residents are covered for under their provincial or territorial (PT) health insurance plans, such as:
- in-patient and outpatient hospital services;
- services of medical doctors, registered nurses, and other healthcare professionals licensed in Canada, including prenatal and postnatal care; and
- laboratory, diagnostic, and ambulance services.

NOTE: The benefits above are subject to certain limits and have prescribed maximum dollar amounts (health providers are to refer to IFHP Basic Coverage Benefit Grid to ensure service is covered under IFHP). Basic services are covered only until the beneficiary qualifies for provincial or territorial health insurance.

Visit our Bridged Primary Care section to get additional help: https://onhc.ca/our-services/bridged-primary-care/
**Supplemental Coverage**

This is provided through the IFHP (includes both services and products) is similar to the level of coverage that may be provided by the provincial or territorial governments to certain residents, including residents receiving social assistance, and includes the following:

- limited dental and vision care
- home care and long-term care
- services by allied healthcare practitioners including clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, speech-language therapists, physiotherapists, and others
- assistive devices, medical supplies, and equipment, including:
  - orthopedic and prosthetic equipment
  - mobility aids
  - hearing aids
  - diabetic supplies
  - incontinence supplies
  - oxygen equipment

**Prescription Drug Coverage**

This is provided through the IFHP for prescription medications is similar to the level of coverage that may be provided by PT governments to certain residents, including residents receiving social assistance.

**NOTE:** The benefits above are subject to certain limits and have prescribed maximum dollar amounts. Health providers are to refer to: IFHP Supplemental Benefit Grid to ensure that services and products being prescribed are covered under IFHP.

**NOTE:** Supplemental and Prescription Drug Coverage will expire after 12 months from the date of issue. Providers must refer to IFHP Prescription Drug Coverage to ensure medication being prescribed is covered under IFHP, as the benefits above are subject to certain limits, such as dosage and brand name of the medication.
Finding a Family Doctor

To find a family doctor or nurse practitioner close to where you live, visit the Health Care Connect website to register. Another support service can be Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre (ONHC) which can assist with finding ongoing primary care providers for refugee clients. ONHC has a registry of service providers with specific language capability and locations of clinics, who are accepting new clients/patients. It is encouraged that all clients be registered on Health Care Connect, as some providers will only accept clients who are registered on Health Care Connect. For more information, click [here](https://onhc.ca/our-services/bridged-primary-care/).

Once an ongoing primary care provider is found, clients will be given a “meet-and-greet” appointment with the provider. At this appointment, clients and providers will get to know one another and the provider will review the clients’ medical records. Once the client signs some documents, generally for registration and privacy information, and consent purposes, they will become clients of the new provider.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

A family doctor or nurse practitioner is your primary health care provider, which means they are the person you make an appointment with when you have a new, non-emergency physical health or mental health issue.

**TIP:** You can search for health care providers on the College of Physicians and Surgeons website [here](https://www.cpso.on.ca/). This search engine allows one to search for providers by geographical location and language capability. It does not, however, indicate whether or not a provider is accepting new clients. It’s best to try calling the location of practice of the provider to inquire further.
Hospital resources in Ottawa

1. General Campus Civic Campus Riverside Campus
   501 Smyth Rd
   1053 Carling Ave.
   1967 Riverside Dr.
   (T) 613-798-5555 (T) 613-798-5555 (T) 613-798-5555

2. Queensway Carleton Hospital 3045 Baseline Rd.
   3045 Baseline Rd, Nepean, ON K2H 8P4
   (T) 613-721-2000

3. Montfort Hospital 713 Montreal Rd.
   713 Montréal Rd, Ottawa, ON K1K 0T2
   (T) 613-746-4621

4. Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO)
   401 Smyth Rd, Ottawa, ON K1H 8L1
   (T)(613) 737-7600

Telephone Services:

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000
Mental Health Crisis Line: 1-866-996-0991
Mental Health Helpline: 1-866-531-2600 (3-way call with an interpreter is available)

Online Services:

This website will assist with finding healthcare near your geographical area at the time of need: http://www.iamsick.ca/
HEALTH NAVIGATION SERVICES

Multicultural Health Navigator (MHN) Program

The MHN program enables immigrants and refugees to have increased access to health services. Our vision is to offer culturally appropriate and accessible services for all newcomers.

Services provided:
- Home visits for initial assessment of client needs
- Education about the Canadian healthcare system
- Referral and connection to a primary healthcare provider
- Support during appointments with healthcare providers*
- Referral to community organizations and services as needed
- Advocacy

We serve:

Clients whose primary language of communication is listed below:
- Arabic
- Dari
- Farsi
- French
- Nepali
- Pashto
- Somali
- Spanish
- Swahili

“MHNs may accompany clients to initial or follow-up appointments with primary healthcare providers, and may also support the dialogue and bridge the gap between clients and service providers as required.”

Visit our Bridged Primary Care webpage https://onhc.ca/our-services/health-navigation-services/ to learn more.
Multicultural Health Navigator (MHN) Program (Cont.)

Referral to the Multicultural Health Navigation (MHN) Program:

DID YOU KNOW?

Self-referrals and referrals from the community are accepted. You can access the MHN program referral form PDF by clicking here.

You could also fax the referral form to (613) 288-0909.

For more information or to refer a client please call 613-691-0192.

NOTE: Before referring a client, please ensure that the client is aware of the referral.

To fill out and submit the online referral form, see the instructions below:

Step 1: Go to ONHC’s website
Step 2: Take your cursor over “our services”
Step 3: Hover over Health Navigation Services to see MHN online forms
Step 4: Fill out the form carefully
Step 5: Click submit

Are you a newcomer to Ottawa looking for health services?

Please visit https://onhc.ca/our-services/health-navigation-services/ for more information and to access our MHN services.
MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is an integral part of any individual’s overall health and directly affects their quality of life. It dictates an individual’s capacity to engage in various activities, from studying, working, nurturing relationships, to maintaining peace of mind and being content.

Neglecting mental health care can cause a serious negative impact on a person’s mind, physical health, and overall life.

DID YOU KNOW?

Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre’s Integrated Mental Health Services were designed to provide services to those refugees and vulnerable immigrants experiencing moderate to several mental health challenges. The number and intensity of counseling sessions are tailored to the clients’ needs. You can access the Integrated Mental Health Services form here.

What Factors Affect the Mental Health of Immigrants and Refugees?

Mental health can be affected by largely three major factors: social, political, and economic (Shishehgar et al. BMC International Health and Human Rights, 2015).

https://onhc.ca/our-services/integrated-mental-health-services/
Culture Shock

You may experience culture shock when you move from a familiar culture to one that is new and unknown to you. Being exposed to different traditions, customs, attitudes, food, language than what you are used to may make you feel displaced, anxious, confused, or depressed. It can be helpful to research as much as you can in the early stages of settling into a new place.

It is important to know that not everyone experiences a culture shock when they move to a different place.

However, if you do find yourself feeling angry, extremely homesick, or out of place, here are some ways you can cope with cultural shock (from the Government of Canada):

- **Admit the impacts**: It is absolutely natural and okay to feel these emotions.
- **Learn the local rules and behaviors**: understanding the customs and traditions in a new place can help you feel more comfortable with them.
- **Get involved in the community**: Volunteering or making new friends by socializing with people from different cultures in the host community can help you feel that you are not alone in feeling the way that you do. It can also help you build a support network.
- **Learn the language**: Communicating in the language used by the host country can make you feel more comfortable in your daily life. You can start by taking language training courses like the ones listed here.
- **Take care of your mind and body**: It is easy to fall into bad sleeping habits or substance abuse when you are feeling such mixed emotions. Try to prioritize your physical and mental health. You can take small steps like getting adequate sleep, nutritious food, and exercise for your well-being.

https://onhc.ca/our-services/integrated-mental-health-services/
Language Barriers

Facing constant barriers in communication can be stressful and make you anxious. It is okay to take small steps towards learning a new language in a new place. Find videos and free lessons online, or take official courses offered for learning English or French. You can also attend English or French conversation circles.

Language barriers can have serious consequences due to misinterpretation in health care, e.g. a patient may be prescribed the wrong medication or treatment due to gaps in communication between them and their doctor.

Ottawa Language Access provides interpretation services to refugees and immigrants in Ottawa. If you are a service provider we can help you find someone who speaks the language of your client and assist you in health care settings here.

Winter and gloomy weather

As beautiful as Canadian winter is, it often brings some gloomy days and seasonal depression. The lack of daylight and sun can cause a Vitamin D deficiency and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which can affect your mood, appetite, sleep cycle, cause fatigue, amongst other things.
This may conversely affect other aspects of your life. Taking proper vitamins, light therapy, eating right, and getting the right amount of sunlight may help deal with SAD. However, you should consult your healthcare provider to diagnose your symptoms before trying any of the above. If your symptoms get worse, immediately seek professional help.

**Bullying**

Newcomers, especially young adults and children, may face bullying at school, work, or any other social environment. There are many types of bullying.

- **physical bullying can involve** hitting, shoving, stealing, etc.
- **verbal bullying involves** making rude and hateful comments that can be about your race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.
- **social bullying** can look like being excluded from a group, made fun of insensitively, or be told rumors about.
- **written bullying** occurs when someone writes and spreads insulting or harmful things about someone.
- **Electronic or cyberbullying** is done by engaging in hurtful/hateful speech on digital platforms.

All forms of bullying are harmful and unacceptable.

You can learn how to identify, report, and deal with bullying [here](#).

The Government of Canada provides [resources](#) on bullying at different ages and how you as parents or guardians can prevent it.

If you are over 18 years old and are experiencing mental health issues as a result of bullying, consider reaching out to our [Integrated Mental Health Services](#).
Even though many mental health problems are best addressed and resolved through professional support, there are things you can do to protect and maintain a better mental health state as a newcomer.
• **Set small personal goals for yourself.** Write achievable and time-bound goals that will give you a clear purpose. This can assist you in feeling accomplished and can keep you motivated to achieve bigger goals.

• **Get a good night’s sleep.** Sleeping well gives your body and mind the rest it needs. This can directly affect your day-to-day performance. Try to set a sleep schedule, go to bed and wake up at the same time, and get 7-9 hours of sleep each night.

• **Physical activities:** Exercising helps feel better physically and mentally. There are many free group activities (like yoga or dance) where you can also make new friends. Doing outdoor activities in the fresh air can also help release heavy energy and feel more relaxed, energized, and calm. Learn about physical activity programs for children and youth [here](#).

• **Allow yourself to feel nostalgic.** You probably left a lot behind including your way of life, family, friends, job, etc.

It is okay to remember and miss all of those things. Acceptance is very important to heal, change, and move on. Talking and sharing your feelings with fellow newcomers can also help.

• **Faith and spirituality:**
  If you are a spiritual person, falling back on your faith and taking the time to engage in whichever spiritual activity you prefer can help you feel more calm and hopeful.

• **Counselling and therapy:**
  Seeking help is normal, even if you have been led to believe that it is not. If you are feeling emotionally heavy, depressed, anxious, or suffering from any mental health issue, it is crucial you reach out.
Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre provides integrated mental health services to newcomers in Canada. To determine your eligibility and the appropriate services, click here.

Are you a post-secondary student looking for confidential support?
Services like Good2Talk specifically cater to post-secondary students in Ontario to provide them with over-the-phone professional counseling and information and referrals for mental health, addictions, and well-being. You can call or text them by using the information listed here.

Find multilingual mental health resources available in English, French, Somali, Arabic, and Mandarin here.

If you are facing a mental health crisis, you can call the crisis helpline here to receive help.

Visit our website to learn more: https://onhc.ca/our-services/integrated-mental-health-services/
It is not easy dealing with a mental health crisis and the weight it puts on your life. Suicide is not the answer. You should know that you are not alone and there are many resources available to help you. You deserve a chance.

Canada Suicide Prevention Service
Hours: 24/7/365. Languages: English, French
Learn more
833-456-4566

If you or someone you know could use suicide prevention tips and resources, click here.

For additional resources on warning signs for suicidal behavior, resources for suicide prevention, check out the following links:

https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/
https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/are-you-in-crisis/

“Canada Suicide Prevention Service:
833-456-4566
Hours: 24/7/365

Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of strength.
Addiction and Substance Abuse

Immigrants and refugees can be prone to substance-use disorders due to past trauma, dealing with stress, feeling isolated, etc. People often turn to alcohol or drugs to deal with painful experiences like war, sexual violence, separation from family, etc.

If you or someone you know needs help with battling substance abuse, reach out for help.

Access resources from the government of Canada here.

Find consumption and treatment services near you.

Ottawa Ottawa Inner City Health, Inc. 256 King Edward Avenue, 613-562-4500
Ottawa Sandy Hill Community Health Centre. 221 Nelson Street, 613-569-3488
Ottawa Somerset West Community Health Centre, 55 Eccles Street, 613-238-8210
Pregnancy and childbirth have profound impacts on the physical, mental, emotional, and socioeconomic health of individuals and families. Access to early and regular prenatal care can improve pregnancy outcomes, reduce complications and ensure a healthier pregnancy. All care provided should be specific to the needs of each pregnant individual and their family.
Who can I seek medical care from?

- **A family doctor or nurse practitioner**: a primary health care provider for new, non-emergency health care concerns.

- **Obstetrician**: a doctor who specializes in pregnancy and childbirth. To see an obstetrician, you will need a referral from a general practitioner (e.g., your family doctor or a doctor at a walk-in clinic).

- **Midwife**: a primary care provider who is responsible for all the care necessary for a healthy pregnant individual and the baby throughout pregnancy, birth, and for six weeks afterward. Midwives can attend births at home, in hospitals, and in birth centers. They refer clients and newborns to family doctors or obstetricians if the care becomes complex.

You do not need a referral from a doctor to use midwifery services; you can call a midwife service directly.

- It is best to call as early in pregnancy as possible because waitlists can belong.

- Midwives only provide care to eligible residents within a catchment area.

- You do not need an OHIP card, IFHP coverage, or private insurance to be eligible for midwifery care services; however, uninsured clients may still have to pay hospital fees.

To find midwifery services located in Ontario, visit [www.aom.on.ca](http://www.aom.on.ca)
What are the types of pregnancy care?

- **Prenatal care**: care provided to the pregnant individual at the early stage of pregnancy and typically includes a physical exam, weight checks, and urinalysis. Depending on the stage of the pregnancy, health care providers may also require blood tests and ultrasound exams.

- **Postnatal care**: care provided to the parent and baby immediately after the birth and typically includes informational supports and breast- and bottle-feeding support.

- For additional information on the prenatal and postnatal practices in Ontario, please click [here](#).
1. **Hospital birth**: women in Canada may choose to give birth at a hospital where a doctor oversees the delivery with their Hospital births being the most common option.
   · Pharmaceutical options for pain management are available in hospital births
   · For more information on what to expect at a hospital birth, please visit [this page](#).
   · Depending on your immigration status, there may be costs associated with a hospital birth

2. **Homebirth**: under the supervision of a specialized midwife, women in Canada may choose to give birth at their homes.
   · For healthy low-risk pregnancies, home births are just as safe as hospital births for both women and babies.

3. **Birthing center**: a community-based health care facility that gives women another option for a safe, comfortable place to give birth. In this setting, families can collaborate with different allied health professionals to incorporate culture, traditions, and preferences into their experiences.

There are several physical, emotional, and social changes associated with pregnancy, birth, and adoption. Newcomers are at an increased risk of experiencing postpartum depression and baby blues. Parents are encouraged to seek help and remain informed.
Postpartum depression is a depression that may start during pregnancy or at any time up to a year after the birth of a child.

- Postpartum depression is strongly linked to lack of social support, relationship difficulties, anxiety during pregnancy, lack of prenatal care, and new medical conditions during pregnancy.
- While most often reported by the carrying mother, postpartum depression can affect both new parents and parents who adopt.
- If you think you might be experiencing postpartum depression or would like to learn more, please click here.

For more information about family planning and maternal care resources, please review the resources below.

- **Community Health Center Map**: an online tool to find community health centers in Ontario.
- **Best Start**: an organization that offers multilingual information resources on maternal care specific to the newcomer context.
Sexual and reproductive health is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in all aspects of the reproductive system; it is not just the absence of disease or unwanted outcomes. Listed below are key terms and resources relating to sexual and reproductive health.

- **Consent to sexual activity**: actively agreeing to participate in sexual activity with a partner; both parties must agree to the sexual activity – every single time – for it to be consensual. The person initiating sexual activity needs to take steps to establish consent with their sexual partner.

- There are contraception methods that are reversible (e.g., birth control pills), permanent (e.g., tubal ligation), and natural (e.g., abstinence); it is important to review the options with your healthcare provider to find one that works best for you.

- Condoms are barrier contraceptives and they are the only form of contraception that provide effective protection against STIs as well as unwanted pregnancy.

- **Did you know?**
  - All sexual activity without consent is a criminal offense in Canada.
  - You have the right to withdraw consent at any time during sexual activity.

- **Contraception**: broad classification of different methods and/or devices intended to prevent pregnancy

- **List of contraception methods**
- **Decision-making about unplanned pregnancy**
How do I find a sexual health clinic near me?

To find a sexual health clinic near you, please visit https://sexualhealthontario.ca/en/find-clinic

For more information about sexual and reproductive health, please review the resources below.

**Sexual Health Infoline Ontario & eChat:**
free and anonymous live counseling from anywhere in Ontario.

**Planned Parenthood Ottawa:**
a not-for-profit organization that provides a range of free services and information for people in the Ottawa area to make healthy decisions about their health, bodies, and relationships
It is known that women, girls, and young women, Indigenous women and girls, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, women living with a disability, and women living in rural/remote areas are at a greater risk of violence.

GBV impacts all communities and is defined as any form of violence experienced on the basis of a person’s gender, gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender. In Canada, GBV is a violation of human rights.

Examples of GBV include physical violence, words/actions/Attempts to degrade, humiliate, intimidate, coerce, deprive, threaten or harm another person.

• Neglect, discrimination, and harassment can also be forms of GBV.

• Certain barriers that make immigrants and refugees more vulnerable to experiencing GBV include:
  • Social isolation
  • Language barriers with service agencies
  • Fear of losing children
  • Fear of losing immigration status
  • Not familiar with Canadian laws and/or women’s rights

What is gender-based violence (GBV)?

If you or someone you know is in urgent danger, call 911.
How can I get help if I am experiencing GBV or know someone in an abusive situation?

**Assaulted Women’s Helpline:** free, anonymous, and confidential 24-hour phone and TTY crisis telephone line to all women in Ontario who have experienced any form of abuse. Support is offered in over 200 languages.

**Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic:** a specialized clinic for women experiencing violence. Offers free counseling, referrals, legal and interpreter services, family and immigration law advice, and representation (independent legal advice for survivors of sexual assault)

**Fem’aide:** une ligne provinciale de soutien téléphonique s’adresse à toutes les femmes ainsi qu’à toutes personnes touchées par la violence faite aux femmes, s’exprimant en français et vivant en Ontario au Canada.

**Immigrant Women Services Ottawa:** a non-profit organization that provides immigrant and visible minority women and their families in the City of Ottawa and the surrounding area with crisis intervention and counseling, interpretation and translation and settlement and integration support.
Parenting in Canada

The nature and style of parenting that you adopt towards your children, will have a huge impact on your relationship with them. This can also directly or indirectly influence their mental and physical health, their outlook towards life, their personality, etc.

Children, regardless of their age are seen as individual entities who deserve respect and protection from harm. Many practices that can be abusive to children are deemed illegal in Canada. While living in Canada, it is important to be aware of the acceptable styles of parenting versus the actions that are illegal or frowned upon that may have been legal in your country of origin.
"The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa is here to provide families who need support and assistance in keeping their children safe and healthy. Families often face issues such as mental health, challenges, poverty, addiction, all of which can impact their ability to care for their children. People are encouraged to contact CAS before family struggles get out of control. CASO can help you by providing information and referrals to other community services." (The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, n.d.).

The Children’s Aid Society of Ottawa provides parenting resources on their website that explain important topics regarding parenting.

Childcare overview
There are two types of child care available
1. Licenced home care
2. Licenced center-based care
For information on choosing between the options, searching for child care, and understanding payment options, please refer here.

There are also EarlyON centers that offer free, high-quality programs for families and children from birth to 6 years old. You can learn and play with your child, meet people and get advice from early childhood professionals.
Children in Ontario are not required to attend school until they are 6 years old, although most parents in Ontario choose to enroll their children in kindergarten, a program offered to children 4-5 years of age where they engage in structured learning.

For information, in many languages, about full-day kindergarten (including what your child will learn, who will take care of them, and what the cost is) please refer here.

**Did you know?**

Education in Ontario’s publicly-funded schools is paid for by tax dollars and is made available free of charge to all children of school age living in the province. Schools are grouped by area into ‘School Boards’.

There are no fees charged for attending publicly-funded schools. The costs of materials and activities for elementary and secondary education are provided to schools by the Ministry of Education. In some schools in Ontario, there are people called Settlement Workers in School (SWIS) who help newcomer families settle into school and their new lives. For more information on various topics regarding early child education please refer to the Elementary Guide for Newcomers to Ontario.
Interpretation Services

One of the biggest challenges when serving refugees will be communication/language. Most clients will have limited English and/or French proficiency. Primary Community Hubs (PCHs), where clients can be seen for their initial medical visits, are equipped to provide interpretation for medical visits.

Two methods of interpretation may be used: face-to-face interpretation or over-the-phone interpretation. In both cases, trained interpreters will generally be preferred by the PCHs.

**Face-to-face interpretation** occurs when an interpreter is physically present at the session and interprets the conversation that occurs within that setting between clients and healthcare providers (and others present in the room).

**Over-the-phone interpretation** occurs when the healthcare provider calls an interpreter (through an agency) and the interpretation occurs with the use of a phone (either speakerphone or with two handsets/headsets/receivers).

It is preferable to always use trained interpreters, especially for medical and legal appointments. This is to ensure accurate interpretation takes place, maintaining client safety. Trained interpreters will always speak in the first person and will interpret the messages between two parties directly and in the same register as the speaker/listener.

If an interpreter needs clarification or has concerns during interpretation, then he/she may interrupt the session by clearly stating the reason for interruption.

There are a few agencies in Ottawa that provide face-to-face interpretation. Over-the-phone interpretation may also be available for sponsors at a reduced fee. For more information, contact OLA at ONHC at 613-691-0192, ext 6007, or click here. Find more details on the next page.
What is Ottawa Language Access (OLA)?

Ottawa Language Access (OLA) is one of the Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre’s programs. OLA was established in 2015 to bridge the language gap that exists between health care providers and their service recipients. OLA provides interpretation services to programs and entities in Ottawa whose clients require language interpretation.

We are proud of the support that we have been able to extend to our end service recipients: individuals and families in the Champlain region who require interpretation to communicate with their mental and physical health care providers.

**Note:** If you or your organization provide services to individuals who require interpretation support, please email ola@swchc.on.ca to learn more about OLA’s interpretation services.

NOTE: Most departments at hospitals have access to interpretation services. Please ensure that you are always asking for an interpreter when scheduling an appointment if one is required. When an appointment is booked at the hospital with an interpreter, the client will usually get a reminder call from the interpreter, who will provide the details of the appointment (date, time, location, related instructions, etc.).
Labs, Diagnostics, and Imaging

The majority of the tests completed prior to coming to Canada are mainly to screen for communicable diseases.

Upon arrival to Canada, clients will require some lab work and screening tests. These tests are mainly to ensure that clients are in good health. Requisitions will be given to clients and they will be asked to have the tests done in a timely manner.

The results of the tests will determine the length of duration that a client remains with a PCH. If the client has obtained OHIP by the time these tests are given, then they are to take their OHIP card with them to the lab. If OHIP hasn’t been obtained, or for some reason isn’t activated, then clients can use their IFH certificate at the labs. Some labs may not accept IFHP.

Gamma Dynacare (https://www.dynacare.ca/) accepts clients who are covered under IFHP.

"TIP: Diagnostics and Imaging can also be done at hospitals. Hospitals can provide interpreters for scheduled appointments. If an interpreter is required for the client, then mention this when scheduling the diagnostics or imaging appointment."
Lab tests do not require an appointment. Some may require a fasting blood test, in which case, the blood tests will need to be completed early in the morning. Most X-rays usually do not require an appointment. Diagnostics and imaging tests may require appointments. The PCHs may not make these appointments for all clients—if clients have support from a sponsor, volunteer, navigator, or settlement counselor.

It would then be the responsibility of the individual(s) helping the clients, to call and arrange an appointment and ensure all instructions (if any) are communicated appropriately to clients, as well as to arrange for transportation. For a list of diagnostics and imaging centers, you can search on the following website: http://cmlhealthcare.com/clinic-locator/.

Did you know?

Generally, all blood tests and diagnostic imaging are usually covered by OHIP or IFHP. However, it’s best to always ask. For example, the testing for Vitamin D now costs about $30, and most labs will charge this fee (and it is NOT covered by IFHP or OHIP). However, if the client accesses a hospital laboratory, this testing will be free of cost.
Immunizations

Some clients may arrive with immunization records, and others may not have any records. PCHs, where clients are first seen for their health needs, will ensure that the immunization is up-to-date with the help of Ottawa Public Health. Yellow Immunization Cards will be provided to all clients indicating the vaccinations that were provided. It will be important for the clients to hold on to their Yellow Immunization Cards. Publicly funded immunizations will be free of cost. Immunizations that may be required for some clients, but that are not publicly funded, may be covered under IFHP. Once again, consult with the health care provider who can provide a prescription after checking the IFHP benefit grid for prescription medication.

Did you know?

Some children will be eligible to get immunizations at school at certain grades. If they have missed these immunizations at school, they will be able to get them from their health care provider.

It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that their children’s immunization records are up-to-date and that an updated report is sent to Ottawa Public Health (OPH). Every time a child is immunized, the record should be sent to OPH in order to update the child’s electronic immunization record in the OPH system. This can be done in various ways: online, fax, phone.
Clients are encouraged to deal with only one pharmacy so that refills are always obtained from the same location and the pharmacy can have a consistent record of the client.

Government-sponsored refugees and private-sponsored refugees will have prescription medication coverage for 1 year through the IFHP. The list of medications covered by IFHP is quite broad. However, there are some medications that are not covered by IFHP.

This is not something that a client (or sponsor or settlement counselor) can figure out themselves—only a provider or a pharmacist will be able to assist with finding out which medication and dosage are covered by IFHP. So in order to reduce confusion and increase efficiency, it’s best to ALWAYS mention to the health care provider (and in some cases the admin person/booking coordinator) that the client has coverage through IFHP.

The provider will then be aware that they will have to prescribe medications that are covered by IFHP.

There are pharmacies that do not bill IFHP. Therefore, it is always good to find out if the pharmacy will accept IFHP, before processing the prescription.

The client must always ensure to have their IFHP form with them.

Please note that if a certain medication is not covered under IFHP, an alternate medication may be suggested by the pharmacy or healthcare provider. However, if the client does not want to wait and decides to pay for the prescription on hand, instead of seeking a different prescription from the provider, IFHP cannot reimburse the client at a later date. IFHP never reimburses clients.
NOTE: In some cases, a little advocacy is all that is needed to make a small difference. It is best to learn about IFHP so that you are able to work with the pharmacy to meet the clients’ needs.

Clients will only have IFHP coverage in the first year after arrival. After 1 year, clients will no longer have coverage under IFHP and will have to look for other options to pay for their prescription medications.

If the medication costs in the household surpass a specific amount, clients who are working, without ‘benefits’, and are low income can apply to the Trillium Program for help in paying for their medications. Usually, anyone who registers with the Trillium Program pays a maximum of 4% of their yearly after-tax income towards their medications. For more information, please click here.

Income support can be arranged from Social Assistance either through Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). OW or ODSP provides recipients of the program a monthly drug card. With this drug card, clients can receive medications for free. Certain medications are covered, just like in the case of IFHP- according to the Ontario Drug Benefit grid. For more information, click here.
Those over the age of 65, and who are considered low-income, can get prescription medication at a reduced price. For more information please click here.

*It is always good to understand the rules at each pharmacy. Some pharmacies communicate by fax with the clients’ health care providers, but not all will do so. The cost of filling a prescription varies from pharmacy to pharmacy.*
Dental and Optometry Services
Clients who have emergency dental coverage through IFHP will be able to see dentists who claim to IFHP for dental care. Not all dental clinics claim to IFHP, so they will not be able to serve clients who are covered under the IFHP. There are a number of dentists who provide dental services to clients that are covered under IFHP. Clients can make an appointment as usual and must present their IFHP certificate to the dental clinic in order for the claim to be processed, and the visit to be billed to IFHP. It is always best to mention that the client is covered under IFHP when making the appointment.

The usual visit will consist of an x-ray (covered by IFHP) which will determine whether or not the service can be covered fully by IFHP. If the dental care cannot be covered by IFHP, then the client has the option of postponing the care or paying for the service out of pocket or through other streams of coverage (privately purchased insurance).

The City of Ottawa also offers dental screening sessions, free of cost, at various community health centers around the city. If there are any dental findings that will require a visit to the dentist, then clients can be booked in to see dentists who claim through IFHP for providing certain services.
Optometric care is also covered under IFHP. An appointment can be arranged as usual and clients will need to present their IFHP certificate in order for the optometric clinic to process the claim.

After the visit, the client may require glasses and will be provided a prescription for glasses. IFHP can cover the cost of glasses and frames (up to a certain amount). The optometrists’ office can help with the selection of a pair of glasses so that the client stays under the limit covered by IFHP.

*Did you know?*

Emergency dental and optometric care are covered under IFHP for up to 1 year, after which the client will have to seek private coverage or coverage through the city’s social assistance program. In order to apply for a social assistance program (OW), inquire more at a settlement agency well ahead of the expiration of the IFHP certificate, to ensure health coverage is maintained.
Disclaimer

The content in this guide is purely to support individuals find community services and resources, content added does not imply endorsement by the creators of the guide, nor does exclusion indicate lack of endorsement. This guide is for information purposes only. The websites provided as links in the guide are subject to change, please ensure to check with the organization cited for up-to-date information.

Note that some websites referred to in this guide offer translation capabilities. The accuracy, page structure, and accessibility may vary across languages and is the responsibility of the owners of those websites.
Appendix
About COVID-19

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2[1].

Who is at risk?

While all adults are at risk some individuals are at an increased risk of COVID-19, the following are at an increased risk of COVID-19[2]:

- Older adults (increasing risk with each decade, especially over 60 years).
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions including:
  - lung disease
  - heart disease
  - hypertension (high blood pressure)
  - diabetes
  - kidney disease
  - liver disease
  - dementia
  - stroke
- People of any age who are immunocompromised, including those:
  - with an underlying medical condition (e.g., cancer)
  - taking medications that lower the immune system (e.g., chemotherapy)
- People living with obesity (BMI of 40 or higher).
COVID-19 Symptoms:

There are many common and apparent systems like fever, dry cough, and fatigue. Many other less common symptoms can occur when someone contracts COVID-19. There are also asymptomatic patients who don’t show or experience any symptoms even after contracting the virus.

For more detailed and updated information on the coronavirus symptoms, click here.

When to get tested for COVID-19 in Ottawa

1. If you are experiencing any of the above-mentioned symptoms of COVID-19
2. You have been exposed to a confirmed case of the virus, as informed by Ottawa Public Health or exposure notification through the COVID Alert app. OR
3. You are a resident or work in a setting that has a COVID-19 outbreak, as identified and informed by Ottawa Public Health. OR
4. You are eligible for testing as part of a targeted testing initiative directed by the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Long-Term Care.

Where can I get tested in Ottawa?

Visit the Ottawa Public Health website to get the most updated information on testing centers and hours in the Ottawa area to find the closest location to you.

You can find up-to-date information on testing centers and guidance with booking your appointment here.

Status of COVID-19 in Ottawa:

Visit the COVID-19 Dashboard created by the Ottawa Public Health for the latest information on cases and sources of COVID-19 Cases in Ottawa.
How COVID-19 Spreads:

The most common way COVID-19 spreads is from person to person, mainly from the following routes:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, breathes, sings or talks.
- Respiratory droplets cause infection when they are inhaled or deposited on mucous membranes, such as those that line the inside of the nose and mouth.
- People who are infected but do not have symptoms can also spread the virus to others.

Think you might have COVID-19?

Use the Self-assessment tool to find out.

What to do if you get a symptom of COVID-19?

- Symptoms of COVID-19 can:
  - take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus
  - be very mild or more serious
  - vary from person to person

Read more about commonly reported symptoms and what to do if you are experiencing any of them by clicking here.

The following symptoms should be considered urgent:

- significant difficulty breathing (e.g., can't catch a breath, gasping)
- chest pain or pressure
- new confusion or difficulty waking up

- If you develop these urgent symptoms, call 911 or your local emergency helpline and inform them that you may have COVID-19 and are at high risk for complications.
COVID-19 Resources:

Stay informed about the possible side effects and latest information about the vaccines that have been approved in Canada by visiting:

https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines.html

and


For travel restrictions by province click here. For more information visit: Canada.ca/coronavirus or call: 1-833-784-4397
For more information about COVID-19 in Ottawa, click here.
For updated news, recalls and announcements, click here.
For updated information on Assistance in Ottawa. click here.
For information on COVID-19 emergency reliefs by the government of Canada, click here.
For legal FAQ in Ontario, click here.
For information for refugees, asylum claimants, sponsors, and PRRA applicants click here.
Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre

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