

GROWING UP IN A NEW LAND

A Guide for
Newcomer Parents

*best start
meilleur départ*

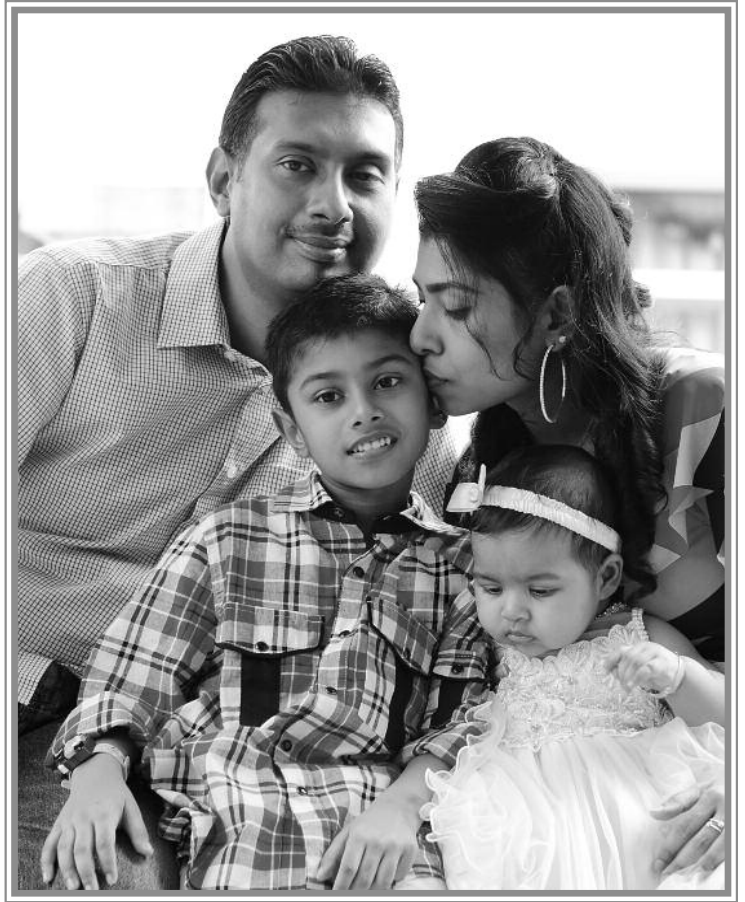
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Introduction

Being a new parent is a joy and a challenge! Being in a new land, with a new lifestyle and new languages can add to the task. If you arrived in Canada recently, this booklet will help you take care of your children aged 0-6.

This booklet has information on:

- Supports for parents (see below)
- Parenting in Canada (page 3)
- Helping your child learn (page 10)
- Helping your child talk (page 16)
- Keeping your child healthy and safe (page 23)
- Taking care of yourself as parents (page 32)
- Additional services for newcomers (page 35)



Supports for Parents

There are many programs in Ontario to help parents of children 0 to 6:

- **The Ontario Early Years Centres.** Parents and caregivers can learn and play with their children. Centres are located in many communities of Ontario. Workshops and discussion groups are available for parents and caregivers. Children can play with other children and with a variety of toys. Sometimes, the staff at the Early Years Centres speak other languages, in addition to English. www.ontario.ca/earlyyears
- **The Parenting and Family Literacy Centres.** These centres help prepare children for starting school. They may help children learn their letters and numbers using stories, music, reading and playing. They help children understand school routines. They can also help parents understand what to expect when their child goes to school. www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/pflc.html
- **Family Resource Programs.** Many communities offer parent-child programs through neighbourhood agencies. Some are listed at: www.frp.ca/directory.

- **Public Health Units.** All areas of Ontario are serviced by a Public Health Unit. They provide many programs and services for families. They can also direct you to other local programs. To find the Public Health Unit in your area, contact www.ontario.ca/serviceontario, 1-866-532-3161.
- **Healthy Babies Healthy Children.** This Ontario government program helps children aged 0 to 6 get a healthy start in life. Public Health Nurses or Home Visitors visit parents at their house to provide support and let them know about available services. www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/health/index.aspx

For information on these programs, call the Service Ontario **INFOline** at 1-866-532-3161 or dial 211.

Parenting in Canada

Adjusting to Parenting in Canada

Friendships are important for all new parents. They may be even more important if your family is far away. Friends who understand what you are going through may help you deal with everyday challenges. You may be able to share child care with other parents.

The following suggestions may help:

- Find out about the services offered through the Newcomer Settlement Program of Ontario. Community settlement agencies deliver this program. This includes language training programs where child care is sometimes available. www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/keyinitiatives/newcomer.shtml
- Visit parent-child centres in your community. See page 2. Most of these programs are free.
- Contact your Public Health Unit to see if you can have a visit from a Healthy Baby Healthy Children staff. See above.
- Visit local parks and other locations where there are families with young children.
- If you are working or studying, talk with others on your breaks.
- Find out about local groups related to your interests (crafts, cooking, walking, etc.). Most towns and cities have low-cost recreation programs.
- You may be able to have free access to computers with internet to search for parenting information and groups. Many libraries, settlement centers and employment centers have computers.



Resources on Adjusting to Parenting in Canada

Welcome Here

Resources, information and links for immigrant families. Parenting tip sheets in many languages. www.welcomehere.ca



Best Start Resource Centre

Handouts for parents in many languages. Topics include breastfeeding, nutrition, postpartum mood disorders, attachment, etc. www.beststart.org/resources



New to Canada?

Information on: immigration, citizenship, housing, health, employment, education, community, legal services and daily life. Some information is translated in more than 30 languages. www.settlement.org



Welcome to Ontario

A booklet with information on living and working in Ontario. Available in 17 languages. 1-800-267-7329 www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/publications/welcometoontario.shtml Also visit www.inmylanguage.org for information on immigrating to Ontario.



Keeping your Culture

Culture affects many day-to-day activities. Canada is very multicultural and understands that parents may want to keep their language and customs in their family. Connecting with your cultural community may help you adjust to your life in Canada.

Ways to keep your culture in everyday life

- ✓ Speaking to your child in your own language.
- ✓ Singing songs from your culture.
- ✓ Feeding your child foods from your culture. You may need to change some ingredients but the flavour, texture and taste may be similar.
- ✓ Decorating your home with objects and pictures from your country of origin.
- ✓ Listening to and watching media in your home language. Internet and cable provide access to many radio and television programs from around the world.
- ✓ Introducing your children to other people from your language and culture.

- ✓ Playing games and activities with your child that you used to enjoy as a young child.
- ✓ Reading books with your child about your culture and traditions. They may be legends, historic events, holiday celebrations, etc.
- ✓ Showing your pride in your culture. This will help your child develop self-esteem.

Adjusting to a New Culture

Although it is important for children to identify with their culture of origin, it is also important for them to learn about the Canadian culture.

Ways to Adjust to the Canadian Culture

- ✓ Providing opportunities for your child to learn English or French. Don't worry if they have difficulties with the new language at first.
- ✓ Finding out about local customs and holidays. Most people will be glad to give you information and perhaps invite you to join them.
- ✓ Learning how to cook some Canadian foods. Many of the parent programs listed on page 2 offer nutrition information.
- ✓ If you are from a different culture than your partner, use this as a way to show there are many cultures. Use traditions from both parents and from the Canadian culture.
- ✓ Emphasizing the similarities of cultures, not the differences. Everyone has celebrations, traditions, foods, clothing for special events, etc.
- ✓ Talking positively about your new community and life in Canada. Your children will feel proud to be Canadians and this will help with their integration.
- ✓ Helping your child develop sport skills that are common in Canada, such as swimming and skating. Programs are available in most towns and cities. Organizations such as Boys and Girls clubs, YMCA/YWCA and town services offer these programs. Financial help is sometimes available.
- ✓ Going to parent-child programs and taking part in the parenting workshops. This will give you practical information and help you understand local customs and laws.



Discipline

Every culture has a different approach to parenting. In Canada, physical, verbal or emotional punishment is not accepted. Examples of this kind of punishment are hitting, slapping, yelling, insulting, isolating, etc. There are other ways that you can help your child learn appropriate behaviour.

Positive discipline is a way of teaching your child important lessons without hurting your child. Help your children learn how to solve problems and use words!



An example of positive discipline

Your child does not want to get dressed in the morning...

Think about how your child may feel:

- Maybe he is very comfortable in pyjamas and loves these pyjamas!
- Maybe he is too young to understand that it is not OK to go to daycare dressed in pyjamas!
- Maybe he is busy learning how to do something and feels this is more important than getting dressed!

What you can do:

- ✓ Let him know that you understand that he would rather stay in his pyjamas.
- ✓ Take the time to explain that pyjamas are only for sleeping and that everyone needs to change clothes to go out.
- ✓ Remind him of all the fun things he will do at daycare once he is dressed and you can leave the house.
- ✓ Let him choose the clothes to wear.
- ✓ To prevent this from happening again, consider choosing the clothes with him the night before. You can also read books where children are doing morning routines, such as getting dressed.

Children need rules. Take the time to teach the correct behaviour. It will help them develop a sense of discipline. They will also feel more secure.

The difference between positive discipline and punishment

Positive Discipline	Punishment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is a way of teaching ✓ Is non-violent ✓ Is respectful ✓ Focuses on long-term solutions ✓ Is based on healthy child development ✓ Uses limits and consequences ✓ Is based on love ✓ Provides structure ✓ Provides information ✓ Involves a conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Does not provide a teaching opportunity ✗ Focuses on the short term ✗ Is driven by frustration and fear ✗ Avoids communication ✗ Often involves threats ✗ May hurt the child physically and emotionally ✗ May cause bigger problems later

Natural Consequences

At times, there are natural consequences to inappropriate behaviour and children can learn from those. For example, if a child refuses to put on mitts in the winter, she will get cold. You can let her go without mitts and tell her “Your mitts will be here if you need them.” This will help her learn by herself what is appropriate behaviour.

When it is possible and safe, let your child learn from natural consequences.

Resources on Discipline

Be the Best Parent You Can Be: Positive Discipline Works!

Has ideas on how to manage your child’s behaviour in a positive and healthy way. This pamphlet is available in many languages from the Child Welfare League of Canada. www.cwlc.ca



Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting

This book offers ideas on how to apply positive discipline from 0 to 18 years. Information on setting long-term goals, providing warmth and support, understanding child development and problem-solving. www.frp.ca



Early Childhood Development

Learn more about what to expect at different child development stages. www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/index.aspx

The Father's Role

In Canada, both parents are encouraged to have an active role in parenting. It is important for fathers to be involved in daily activities with their children.

If the father is involved, the child will:

- ✓ Feel happier and secure.
- ✓ Be more able to cope with stress, disappointment and frustration.
- ✓ Have better grades in school.

As a father, here are some simple ways you can support your child's development:

- Learn to comfort your baby. Don't hesitate to pick up your crying baby. Try to figure out why your baby is upset. Unless your baby needs breastfeeding, try to calm your baby by yourself.
- Care for your baby. Change the diapers. Dress your baby. Feed your baby. Bathe your baby. Massage your baby. Settle your baby at night, etc. These are good ways to build your relationship.
- Spend time with your children. Hug them, play with them, talk to them, read to them, take them on walks, sing to them, show them interesting things, etc.
- As your child gets older, play imagination games. Explore your neighborhood. Listen to your child's ideas. Practice throwing and kicking a ball, etc.
- Find out about child development, so you can help your child learn.
- You may be more comfortable with some tasks than with others. Discuss roles with your partner.
- The more time you spend with your child, the easier it will get!

Resources for Fathers

24-Hour Cribside Assistance – The New Baby Manual for Dads

This booklet offers practical advice to new dads.

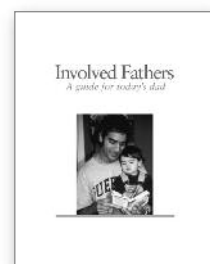
www.dadcentral.ca/im_a_dad



Involved Fathers – A guide for today's dads

Suggestions for fathers to help them be involved with their child.

www.dadcentral.ca/im_a_dad



Children with Special Needs

Some children develop differently. It is important not get frustrated and impatient with your child. Learn how different situations may affect your child's development: www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/specialneeds/index.aspx.

Encouraging your Child's Independence

Parents in Canada often encourage children to become independent. For example, in Canada, young children are expected to dress themselves and feed themselves at a very young age. This helps prepare children for daycare and school. It gives children a sense of accomplishment and confidence. The capacity to make some decisions is important for children's mental health.

Below is a list of tasks that you can encourage your child to do by themselves. They should be able to do these by the time they start school. Teach your child slowly and clearly so that they can learn to do these things themselves. When teaching them, keep in mind what children can do at different ages.

- Go to the bathroom with little or no help.
- Wash her hands to prevent the spread of infections.
- Tell others her full name.
- Cross the street safely with an adult.
- Eat by themselves. Open and close lunch and snack containers.
- Be able to take turns.
- Communicate basic needs.
- Tell others about her activities, outings or events.
- Put on and take off outdoor clothing and footwear.

Legal Expectations

As a parent, it is your responsibility to ensure the following:

- Your child is enrolled in school and attends regularly.
- Your child has regular visits with a doctor.
- Your child does not suffer any emotional or physical abuse.
- Your child has what is needed for school, play and a healthy life.

In Canadian law, children are individuals who have the same rights as adults. As a parent, your role is to defend your children's rights.

Find out what is needed to keep your child safe and healthy. The information starting on page 23 of this booklet will help you learn more.

Helping your Child Learn

Playing is Learning

You can help your child in many ways. Play is one of the most important ways that children learn. For example, when children are lifting, dropping, looking, pouring, bouncing, hiding, building, knocking down, climbing, running and pretending, they are learning. Making time to play with your child is just as important as making sure they get to school and eat healthy foods.

As we get older, many of us forget how to play. Sometimes as adults, we feel silly playing, getting on the floor and making up stories. But once you see how your child enjoys playing with you, you will see the value.

Playing with your children helps them practice their new skills. It also helps you bond with them. There are many ways to play with your child. Playing is something you can do at home and it is free.



What you can do – Imagination Play

How?	Why?
<p>Use things your child is interested in, such as animals, trucks, butterflies, etc.</p> <p>Imagination play can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting out a story you have read together. • Having a tea party with dolls or stuffed toys. • Pretending to be a something or someone, such as a horse, a car, a bug or a superhero. 	<p>When children play pretend games, they practice real life situations. Those children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have better language skills. • Have better social skills. • Have more imagination. • Are more likely to be kind to others. • Are less aggressive. • Show more self-control. • Show higher levels of thinking. • Manage their emotions.

Go play with your child! There is nothing in the world your child would rather do than play with you! For a list of parent-child programs to help you get started, see page 2. The following resources will also provide you with many ideas.

What you can do – Active Play

How?	Why?
<p>Young children should play actively for at least three hours every day. This does not have to be all at once.</p> <p>Active play can happen during the day as part of play, games, going places (such as walking), or a family activity such as swimming, biking or skating.</p> <p>Here are some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put on some music and dance or move around. • Create an obstacle course with pillows, chairs, boxes, etc. Have them crawl under, climb over, or move around the obstacles. • Go for a walk. • Roll, throw, catch, and kick balls of different sizes. • Go skating or swimming. • Visit the park or playground. 	<p>Active play is fun and it is a healthy habit to develop. It is required for healthy growth and development. Through active play, children learn skills such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye-hand coordination. • Large muscle skills (such as running). • Small muscle skills (such as picking up a small ball). <p>Active play also builds confidence and helps a child to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with others. • Develop their imagination and self-esteem. • Stay healthy. • Become familiar with the community and the way to school.

Child Development Resources for Parents

Learning to Play and Playing to Learn: What Families can Do

This booklet will help you understand how play can help your child develop. It has checklists on growth, development, health, nutrition, routines and self-help.

www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/pdf/school_readiness_ENG_aug2012_fnl.pdf



Baby Wants...

A booklet to remind you to do simple everyday activities with your child: play, read, sing, etc. Available in 10 languages.

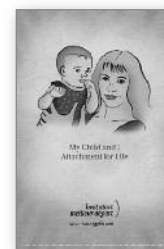
www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/babywant/Babywant_ENGLISH_2010.pdf



My Child and I – Attachment for Life

This booklet explains attachment and suggests simple activities you can do with your child to build attachment. Available in 10 languages.

www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/parent_attachment/parent_attachment_eng_Oct2012.pdf



Why Play?

This series of brochures offers information on play and child development. They are available in many languages.

www.welcomehere.ca



100 Parenting Resources

Fact sheets from the Canadian Child Care Federation on many topics related to child development. Some are available in many languages.

www.cccf-fcsge.ca/parents

Making a Difference

Information on early childhood development and health.

Available in many languages. www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/oeyc/library/index.aspx

Routines

Young children are at their best with routines. It helps them to know what to expect. Develop routines for your child starting from birth. Routines give your child stability. They help your child feel secure. When children are calm and relaxed, they are able to focus on learning.

Sample routine for a 3-year old	
7:00	Wake up. Hug and cuddle. Dress for the day.
7:30	Breakfast with family. Brush teeth.
8:30	Help parent with household work (breakfast clean-up, laundry, making beds).*
9:30	Leave for parent-child centre (Ontario Early Years Centre or Family Literacy Centre, etc.).
10:00	Play with parent.
11:30	Return home. Stop at grocery store.*
12:00	Help with lunch preparation and have lunch.*
12:30	Nap time / quiet time.
2:00	Outdoor play time with parent (in yard or park). Walk to school to get older sibling.
3:30	Snack time.
3:45	Indoor play time with older sibling.
5:30	Watch favorite television show.
6:00	Dinner with family.
6:30	Playtime with parents and siblings.
7:00	Bedtime routine (bath time, put on pyjamas, brush teeth, read story, choose clothes for next day).
8:00	Cuddle time. Bed time.

* See page 17

Family mealtime is an important part of a healthy family routine. When you talk about things together, you are teaching your young child social skills and literacy. It is a chance for your children to bond with the whole family. It is a good time to share your culture and your values.

Young children should not spend much time in front of screens. This includes watching TV and playing with computer or video games. Instead of watching television, children could be playing with others and developing their brains.

- ✓ **No screen time is best for children under the age of 2.** Children under the age of 2 are too young to understand what they are seeing on the screen (TV or computer). Products such as educational videos can actually work against your baby's brain development. They should be avoided.
- ✓ **For 2-4 year olds, a maximum of one hour a day of screen time is best.** Too much time in front of the TV or computer can be bad for brain and language development.

Resources on Routines

Family Routines

This tip sheet provides information on the benefits of routines and how to set and change a routine. Available in multiple languages.
www.welcomehere.ca



The Whole Child. It's the Little Things – Daily Routines

This PBS document provides suggestions to help with separation, meal time and sleep time through routines.
www.pbs.org/wholechild/parents/little.html



Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from life's challenges. All children have challenges. Some newcomer children may have lived through serious situations such as war, deaths in the family, poverty and hunger before coming to Canada.

Parents can help build their child's resilience to help them deal with difficult situations. Many of the things that help young children develop also help build their resilience. These things include:

- Having a secure bond with a caring adult.
- Having relationships with positive role models.
- Learning new skills.
- Taking part in meaningful activities.



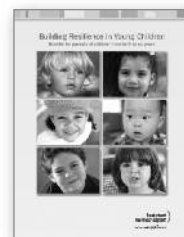
How you act in difficult situations will have an impact on how your child reacts. It helps to stay positive and try to act on what you can. At times, you may need to get help from other people and organizations. Making use of outside supports shows your child more ways to overcome challenges.

Resources on Resilience

Building Resilience in Young Children

This booklet has many tips for parents on building resilience.

www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/pdf/BSRC_Resilience_English_fnl.pdf



Reaching IN... Reaching OUT

Information, activities and videos to help you and your child build resilience – the ability to bounce back and thrive.

www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-parents.htm



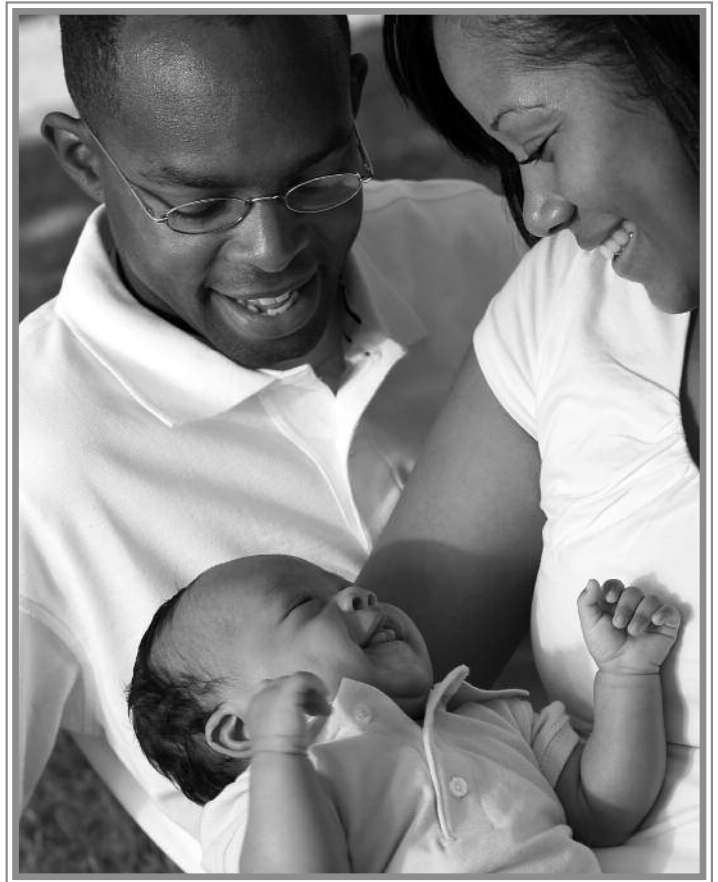
Helping your Child Talk

Language Development

Language helps your child understand others and be understood by others. It is a very important part of child development.

Tips to develop your child's language:

- Start talking, singing and reading to your baby even before they are born!
- Talk slowly and clearly.
- Make sure your child can see your face while you are speaking. You may need to bend down or kneel.
- Babies start communicating through body language. Watch to see what their faces and bodies are saying.
- Point to things and people and say their name.
- Talk about what is happening.
- Give your baby time to respond through sounds and continue the conversation with them.
- Use the language you are most comfortable with, in a natural way.
- As your child grows, talk together often. Use new words to point out objects, people and interesting things.
- Encourage your child's reactions and questions with engaging answers.



What is “Home Language”?

Home language is the language first taught to a child. It is the one that is most often used at home during childhood. It is best to talk to your child in the language you are most comfortable with.

What you can do – Language in Daily Routines

When?	How?
When doing household work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say what you are doing. For example, “I am sweeping the floor with a broom.” • Talk about colours and items when doing laundry (blue shirt, black socks, etc.). • Say to whom the items belong (daddy’s plate, Juan’s bedroom, etc.). • Say where you are going. For example, “I will put this in my bedroom.”
When shopping for groceries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read your grocery list out loud. • Name items as you see them (oranges, cereal, etc.). • Talk about healthy foods. • Play “I spy” with your child (“I spy something blue”, and have your child guess what it is).
When preparing and eating a meal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about what you will make for dinner. • Show and name the ingredients. • Have your child help set the table and name the items. • When you eat, talk about your day and their day.
When doing a bedtime routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing a special song during bath time. • Count the time aloud when your child is brushing her teeth. • Pick out the clothes for the next day and name the items and the colors. • Pick a favorite bedtime book and read aloud to your child in your home language.

Reading with your child

- Spend time reading with your child, in the language you are most comfortable with.
- Start when they are very young, well before they can read. This will help them understand letters and words and will help prepare them for school.
- If you don’t have access to books in your home language, use a book in English and change the words yourself to your own language.
- Use books without words (wordless books) and make up a story in your own language. You can find these at a local library.
- Rather than just reading the story, add to the story. Ask your child questions about the book (Did you like that story? What do you think will happen next?). Encourage your child to think about words and objects.
- Visit your library and see if you can find some books in your own language. Sometimes, libraries can get books from other libraries.
- Libraries often offer programs for young children such as story time and other social activities.
- Read on your own too. Be a good role model. If your child sees you reading, she will be more likely to read.

You can find local libraries by searching www.211ontario.ca or calling 211.

More Than One Language In Your Child's Life?

To learn a language, your child needs to hear and speak a language often. Children can learn more than one language very early. Here are some tips to help you raise your child in a multilingual environment.

If the parents have different home languages:

- Each parent should speak their own home language to the child. You are a better model for your child when you use the language you know best.
- Attend events and do activities with people who speak each language. This helps your child practice. It tells your child that both languages are useful and valued.
- Share books, videos/DVDs and music in both languages with your child.

If one language is used at home and another outside the home:

- Always use the home language with your child. When one language is learned well, learning another language becomes easier.
- Use the local services available in your language (doctors, dentists, libraries, community centres, etc.). This may involve planning ahead, or travelling a little further, but will be worth it for your child.
- Arrange visits with family members who speak your home language. Trips abroad or visits from extended family can give a boost to the language that is used less.

There are many advantages to knowing more than one language. It can help your child to communicate with more people, and develops new brain connections.

Resources on Language Development

Preschool Speech and Language Program

If you have any concerns about your child's language development, see a professional. Services are available through the Ontario Government. Documents are available in many languages. www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/speechlanguage/index.aspx

First Language Use and Bilingualism

This fact sheet from the First Words Preschool Speech and Language Program has information on using the home language and adding a second language. www.firstwords.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/FAQ-1st-Language-Bilingualism.pdf



Activities to Encourage Speech and Language Development

This website has a number of tips for parents, organized by age groups. www.asha.org/public/speech/development/parent-stim-activities.htm

Child Care

Leaving your child with someone else can be hard, especially at first. Child care can be expensive in Canada. This website offers information on average costs:

www.godaycare.com/child-care-cost. If you live in a large city, the cost of child care may be higher. There are 2 kinds of child care:

- *Licensed* child care in Ontario is regulated by the government. It may be in a centre (daycare) or in a home. You may be eligible for a subsidy (lower fee). See Resources on the next page.
- Informal (*unlicensed*) child care arrangements can also be made through a friend, neighbour or relative. A license is not required if there are no more than five children under the age of ten, in addition to the caregiver's own children.

Public Health Units often have a list of local licensed daycares. They may also have information on subsidies. See page 3.

When choosing child care, consider the following:

- Is the staff trained in early childhood education? Do they seem friendly and patient? Are they watching the children well?
- Is the indoor space safe, clean, interesting and welcoming? Is it large enough?
- Is there is a large, safe, outdoor space for play?
- Do the children seem happy and interested?
- Does the staff use positive discipline?
- Is there enough staff for the number of children?
- Does the daycare have routines that include outside and indoor play?
- What is the language spoken? If it is different than your child's language, does the staff have ways to help communication?

If you are thinking of using an unlicensed child care provider, also consider the following:

- Is the caregiver able to manage children of different ages?
- Does the caregiver have first aid and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) training?
- Can the caregiver see the children while she prepares food?
- Is the television used? If so, how much time per day?
- How long do the children play outdoors each day?
- Are there safety items such as smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, escape exits, stair protection, etc.
- Is smoking allowed in the home? If the child care provider smokes, find out how the children are supervised when the caregiver smokes outside.
- Ask for names and phone numbers of other parents who have their child in care. Phone them to find out if they are satisfied with the child care provided.

Whether your child is in licensed or unlicensed care, make sure you have a plan in place if your child gets sick.

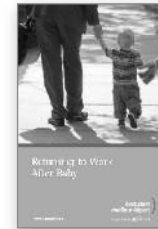
If possible, help your child make the transition to child care by visiting places where there are other children and leaving your child at the daycare for a short time.

Resources on Child Care

Returning to Work after Baby

Suggestions on: choosing child care, managing your time, making healthy choices, budget planning, etc.

www.beststart.org/resources/wrkplc_health/pdf/Return_to_Work_ENG_Final.pdf



Quality Early Learning and Child Care

Child care tips.

www.cccf-fcsge.ca/wp-content/uploads/ParentingEng.pdf



Finding Child Care in Ontario

Information about choosing child care services, including access to subsidies.

www.ontario.ca/childcare

School

In Ontario, children can attend school for free. Children need to attend school from grade 1 until they are 18 years old.

- The school year starts in early September and ends at the end of June.
- Children can start school in the year when they become 4 years old (Kindergarten). For example, if your child's birthday is October 1st, he will start school in September, just before turning 4.
- In many areas of Ontario, Kindergarten is a full-day program.
- Kindergarten is optional. It is free for all children in Ontario. It is a good way to help your child to learn English before starting grade 1.

In Ontario, there are four main school systems funded by the government:

- English public.
- English Catholic.
- French public.
- French Catholic.

You must register your child before they can enter school.

- To find your nearest school, visit www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/sift.
- Most schools offer registration in February or March. Your child will start school the following September. Contact your local school many months ahead to find out about registration.
- In most cases, parents can visit the school with their child and meet the principal or teacher during registration.
- Some schools have summer programs to help children get ready for Kindergarten. This may be useful if your child does not speak English well. It may also help your child understand school routines and Canadian ways of doing things. Find out if your school offers a summer program.
- If you arrive in a community during the school year, you can register your child at any time.

If you wish, you can register your child for a French-immersion program. In these programs, children get a large portion of their day in French. This can help children learn another language. Most English school boards offer French-immersion but it may not be offered at a school near your home.

If you are thinking of registering your child for a French-immersion program:

- Find out if your child is interested in languages. Talk to your child's teacher or educator about your child's individual needs. Some children do better than others in a French-immersion program. French-immersion may not be appropriate for a child with a speech delay.
- Ensure that your child is fluent in the home language and that you can maintain that language.
- Make sure that your child can practice often the languages they are learning. This may be at home, at school and in the community.

Here is some additional information about schools in Canada. This may be different from what you are used to:

- In Canada, students often work in groups in the classroom. The students may be moving around the classroom and having discussions.



- Students often take part in outings and special activities. You may be asked to pay a small amount.
- Boys and girls are together for most activities.
- Sports and physical activity are part of the school day. Your child will need shoes and clothing that can be used in a gym.
- Some schools require a school uniform and others don't. Find out what is worn at your school. Subsidies may be available to help with the cost of a uniform.
- You child will also need clothing for outdoor play, in all seasons.
- If your child is ill and cannot go to school, you must call the school to let them know.
- If you think your child is having a hard time at school, ask to meet the teacher. Find out if there is anything you can do to help.
- Parents sometimes get involved in school activities, especially with younger children. You may be able to help with an outing or volunteer at the school.
- Make sure you attend the parent-teacher meetings. Find out if there are parent-teacher committees you can join. These are great ways to support your child's education.

Resources on School

Studying in Ontario

Information for newcomer parents on child care and school.
www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/study/OI_HOW_STUDY_CHILDREN



Newcomers' Guide to Elementary School in Ontario

Information on school procedures, student behaviour, parent-teacher interviews, parent involvement, etc. Available in French and English.
www.settlement.org



Tips for Parents

Tip sheets for parents on school. They are available in many languages. www.peopleforeducation.ca/how-does-education-work/multi-lingual-information-for-parents



French-language Education

To find out if your child is eligible to attend school in French, visit www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/amenagement/admission.html

Keeping your Child Healthy and Safe

Health Care

Here is some general information about the Ontario health care system:

- Apply for a health card for yourself and your children when you arrive in Canada. In Ontario, information on OHIP cards (Ontario Health Insurance Plan) is available at www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/ohip/ and through ServiceOntario at 1-800-267-8097.
- During their first 3 months in Ontario, newcomers are not generally covered under OHIP. They need to have private insurance.
- Even if you have a valid OHIP card, finding a family doctor may be difficult. For help, visit Health Care Connect at www.ontario.ca/healthcareconnect.
- If a parent has short-term OHIP coverage (for example, through a work permit), their children are generally covered for the same length of time.
- Before OHIP coverage begins, it may be possible to receive some health care services at community health centres. See www.aohc.org.
- Refugees can get emergency and essential health services through the Interim Federal Health Program. See www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/interim_health.shtml 1-888-242-2100.
- The website www.settlement.org has information on health coverage for newcomers.
- Contact your Public Health Unit. The staff will be able to provide information on local services.

Visit a health care provider (family physician, pediatrician, nurse practitioner) when your child is sick or if you are concerned about his development. Getting help early is important.

If your child has a health problem but you do not have a family doctor, you can visit a walk-in clinic. If the situation is urgent, you can also visit the emergency department at your local hospital. You will need to bring your OHIP card or proof of private insurance. Even if you don't have coverage, some emergency services will be available.

You may be given a prescription for medication. Take this to a pharmacy. You will need to pay yourself or have a private insurance plan to pay for medications.

Take your child to a health care provider to get important immunizations (vaccines). These visits are also helpful to make sure your child is developing well. Your child will need to be immunized before going to a daycare or school.

Some children have allergies and intolerances to certain foods or other products. You can find out more about this and what to do on the Caring for Kids website (next page).

Resources on Health Care

Telehealth Ontario

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's health, you can call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This service is free.

The service is provided in English and French, with translation help for 120 languages.

A call to Telehealth Ontario does not replace 911 – that's always the first number to call in emergency situations.

Your Health Care Options

Learn about the health care options available in Ontario.

You can search for services in your community.

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/hco

Immunizations

Learn about immunizations.

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/immunization

Canadian Paediatric Society - Caring for Kids

Information on health topics such as: breastfeeding, nutrition, allergies, illness, infections, child behaviour, safety, etc.

www.caringforkids.cps.ca



The Hospital for Sick Children – AboutKidsHealth

Information on keeping children healthy and on caring for a sick child. www.aboutkidshealth.ca

aboutkidshealth
Trusted answers from The Hospital for Sick Children

18-month Enhanced Well Baby Visit

Information on what to expect at the 18-month visit with a health care provider. This visit is important to discuss child development issues.

www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/health/your_enhanced_18-month.aspx



Healthy Smiles Ontario

A program for children of low-income families who do not have access to dental coverage.

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/dental



Nutrition

Healthy foods are important for your child. You may not be familiar with some of the foods available in Canada. You may not be able to find some of the foods you are used to. You may also find some foods more expensive in Canada. Here are some suggestions:

- There are many parent-child programs where you can learn to cook local foods. See page 2.
- If you cannot afford to buy the food you need, you can go to a Food Bank for free food. They are available in many communities of Ontario (see next page).
- Women who receive social assistance and are breastfeeding may be able to receive more money through Ontario Works. See www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/documents/en/mcsc/social/directives/ow/0605.pdf or call Service Ontario at 1-800-267-8097.

Nutrition for babies 0-6 months

- Mothers are encouraged to breastfeed their babies without giving any other fluids or foods for the first six months.
- Vitamin D supplements are recommended for all babies. Talk to your health care provider about vitamin D.

Nutrition for babies 6 months and older

- Continue breastfeeding up to two years and more. The longer you breastfeed, the more benefits for you and your baby.
- After six months, offer iron-rich foods first, such as meat, meat alternatives (such as lentils, beans, chickpeas and tofu) and iron-fortified cereals.
- Provide healthy food following Canada's Food Guide. Offer foods from all four food groups: fruits & vegetables, grains, milk and alternatives, and meats and alternatives.
- Offer homemade foods. Some processed foods (such as canned soups, macaroni and cheese preparations, sauces, etc.) are high in fat, sugar or salt. Read the labels and try to avoid or limit foods that are not healthy.
- Ensure your child eats regular meals each day and offer healthy snacks between meals. Breakfast is a very important meal.
- Once your child goes to school, prepare a healthy lunch and snacks to bring to school. When children eat well, they find it easier to learn. For school lunch ideas, visit Eat Right Ontario. See next page.
- Be a good role model when you eat. Your child will follow your lead.

Resources on Nutrition

Eat Right Ontario

Information on nutrition, including tips and recipes. You can also call a dietitian for free at 1-877-510-5102. www.ontario.ca/eatright



Breastfeeding Matters: An important guide to breastfeeding for women and their families

This guide answers questions about breastfeeding. www.beststart.org/resources/breastfeeding



Feeding Your Baby: From six months to 1 year

Suggestions on the introduction of solid foods. www.beststart.org/resources/nutrition



Canada's Food Guide

Information on how much food is needed and about healthy food. Available in 10 languages, in addition to French and English www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/order-commander/guide_trans-trad-eng.php



Ontario Association of Food Banks

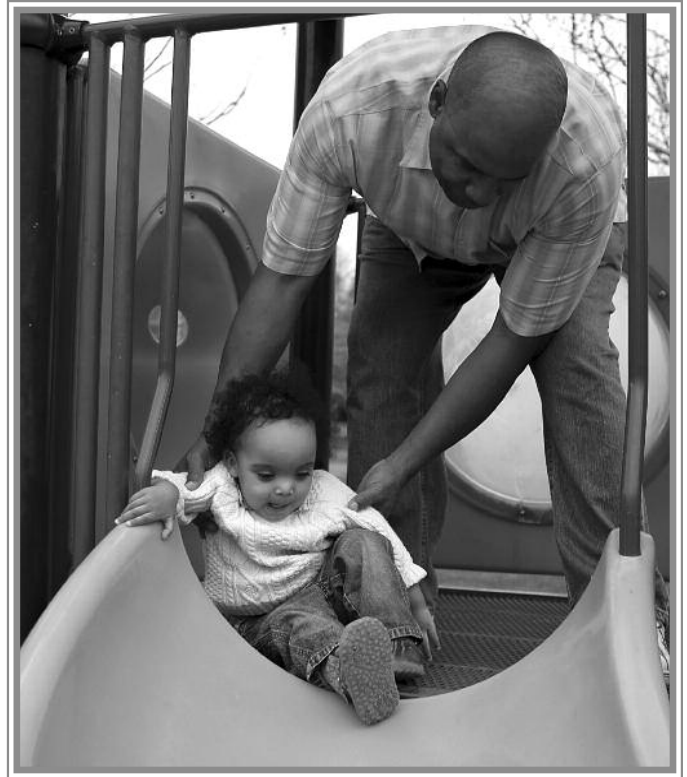
List of Food Banks in Ontario. Put the name of your community under "Find a Food Bank" on the website. You can also call 1-866-220-4022. www.oafb.ca



Physical Activity

Physical activity is a very important part of building a healthy body.

- Young children need at least three hours of physical activity each day. Some of it should be energetic play that makes their hearts pump faster. The more active they are, the better!
- Help your child learn and practice skills such as running, kicking, throwing, catching, skipping and jumping. Having these skills early in life will help your child play sports later on.
- It is important for children to play outside in all seasons.
- Children should not be in car seats for more than an hour at a time. On long car trips, provide breaks so your child can move and stretch.
- Babies should have some play time on their tummies every day.
- Be a good role model. Be active. Children learn from their parents.



Resources on Physical Activity

Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Years

These guidelines indicate how much physical activity is needed for children 0 to 4. www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP-InfoSheets-early-years-ENG.pdf

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

FOR THE EARLY YEARS - 0 - 4 YEARS

Have a Ball Together – Activity Cards

Low-cost and free physical activity ideas for parents of young children.

www.beststart.org/resources/physical_activity/pdf/Englishx8.pdf

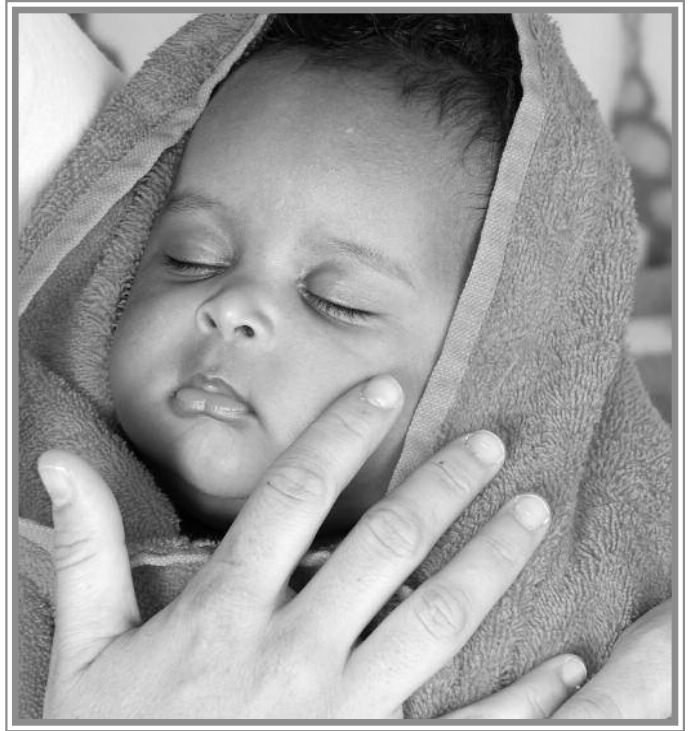


Sleep

Your family's sleep patterns may be different here than in your home country. Meal times and nap times may need to be adjusted to fit the time of daycare or school. Make sure your child gets enough sleep. It will help your child get through the day. Sleep helps with learning and health.

Your baby needs a safe place to sleep:

- For the first 6 months, the safest way for your baby to sleep is on his back, in a crib, in your room.
- The crib must meet Canadian safety standards and should not have pillows, bumper pads, stuffed toys or blankets. These could cover your baby's face and prevent him from breathing.
- Cribs made before September 1986 do not meet current safety rules and should NOT be used.



Although each child is different, here are some guidelines for the amount of sleep needed each day (including naps):

- Infants 0 to 6 months – 16 hours per day
- Babies 6 months to 1 year – 14 hours per day
- Toddlers 1 to 3 years – 10 to 13 hours per day
- Preschoolers 3 to 5 years – 10 to 12 hours per day

Here are some suggestions:

- Make a bedtime routine so that your child knows what to expect.
- Avoid television, computer or video games before bedtime. These should not be in your child's room. Reading with your child is more relaxing and will help your child fall asleep.
- Ensure your child gets enough physical activity each day, but not just before bedtime.
- Children who have been exposed to traumatic events may be afraid to go to sleep. Deal with any fears your child may have. Give them a chance to show their fears and reassure them.
- If your child has nightmares, night terrors or is sleepwalking, talk to your health care provider.

Resources on Sleep

Safe sleep for your child

Information on crib safety.

www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/item/home-safety-bed-time



Safe Sleep

Information on a safe sleep environment for your baby. A video is also available.

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/stages-etapes/childhood-enfance_0-2/sids/index-eng.php



Healthy Sleep for your Baby and Child

Tips regarding children's sleep.

www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/healthy_sleep_for_your_baby_and_child



Safety

For healthy development, young children need to explore. As parents, it's up to us to provide a safe, childproof space both indoors and outdoors.

Supervision

- At all times, watch your child. Stay close enough to prevent accidents.
- When supervising children, avoid distractions such as cell phones and television. Many injuries happen when parents are distracted.
- When outdoors, be very cautious when you are near swimming pools, lakes and rivers. Stay within arms' reach of your child. Have your child wear a lifejacket.



Equipment and toys

- You may want to buy used baby and child equipment. Make sure it meets all the current safety standards. Health Canada has a website that explains how to choose equipment www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/info_secondhand-produits-eng.php.
- In many parts of Ontario, there are groups that lend child equipment or sell it at a low cost. Your Public Health Unit may be able to help you find these groups. Your Ontario Early Years Centre may also have access to this equipment (see page 2).
- A car seat is very useful for your baby, even if you do not own a car. You will need it when you use a cab or get a ride from someone. Your car seat should have a Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) sticker and cannot be older than 10 years. If you find it difficult to put the car seat safely into your vehicle, contact your local Public Health Unit.

Resources on Child Safety

Home Safety

Information on home safety for children.

www.parachutecanada.org



Is Your Child Safe?

Safe products for babies and children.

Call the Product Safety Office at 1-866-662-0666 or go to:

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/alt_formats/pdf/pubs/cons/child-enfant/child-Safe-enfant-securite-eng.pdf



Creating Healthy Home Environments for Kids: Top 5 Tips

A video with simple tips for reducing common sources of toxic exposures in the home. www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca



Safe & Secure

Helps you choose and install a car seat. Videos are included.

www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/carseat/choose.shtml

Winter

For many newcomers, Canadian winter is a new experience.

- The average temperature starts to drop in September and reaches below 0 Celsius sometime in October or November. In some parts of Ontario, the temperature can drop to below -30 degrees Celsius in the winter.
- It is important that you have warm clothing for yourself and your family. New winter clothes can be expensive. You can often buy used winter clothing.
- Winter brings shorter days. It is dark in the evening. If you can, arrange to play outside during the day.
- For good health, it is important to be active year-round. There are many winter sports and activities that children love. These activities are great for families. Try building a snowman, sledding, sliding, skating, snowshoeing and building snow forts.

Winter Preparation Checklist

- ✓ Winter boots for everyone in the family. Make sure they are waterproof.
- ✓ Gloves, scarves and hats for everyone. Label these for the children.
- ✓ Warm winter coats for everyone.
- ✓ Snow pants for children.
- ✓ Dress in layers. Avoid single, heavy layers whenever possible, especially if you are active.

Resources on Winter

Dressing for Winter

A handout and a short video on dressing for winter.
Search for the word “winter” on
www.settlement.org.



The Chilling Facts about Wind Chill

Explanations on wind chill and tips on weather safety.
<https://canadasafetycouncil.org/node/349>



Taking Care of Yourself as Parents

Adjusting to Life in Canada

All immigrant families face stress as they start their new life in Canada. You may experience some frustrations as you get used to life in Canada.

You may feel a need for additional support. Stress can have an impact on your ability to be a good parent. If you need help, talk to a health care provider or a close friend you trust.

Resources on Family Well-Being

Life with a new baby is not always what you expect

Information on postpartum mood disorders.

Available in 10 languages.

www.beststart.org/resources/ppmd/ppmd_bro_eng_lr.pdf



Ontario Mental Health Helpline

Free health services information. You can e-mail, chat online, get a directory of local services. Call 1-866-531-2600 or visit:

www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca

Role of extended family

If you are a newcomer to Canada, you may have little or no extended family here, or you may be living with your extended family.

As you build your own family life in Canada, you may need to address the needs of your extended family. Your extended family may be very helpful, or you may need to help them.

If you have little or no extended family here, you may find the supports for parents listed on page 2 very helpful.

If you are living with your extended family, here are some questions to think about. If you are in a relationship (husband, wife), discuss these with your partner.

- ✓ Are there some family or cultural traditions you would like to continue? Are there some you do not want to keep?
- ✓ When it comes to raising your child, who should make final decisions? If needed, clarify your choice with your extended family. If appropriate, try to find a compromise. Always keep in mind the best interests of your child.

- ✓ Tell the people who take care of your child the rules for your child. Agree on the foods they can eat, the amount of television they can watch, the amount of time they need to play outdoors, etc.
- ✓ Encourage the people who take care of your child to visit parent-child programs. At these programs they may be able to learn about child safety issues, positive discipline, healthy nutrition, etc. Grandparents and other caregivers are always welcome at parent-child programs. In some areas, there are programs offered specially for grandparents who look after young children.
- ✓ If you have any concerns about the ability of family members to take care of your children, you must talk to them. By law, your children are your responsibility!



Finances

Raising a family in Canada can be expensive. Some newcomers find this challenging as the cost of living may have been lower in their home country.

- Public school is free in Canada. You will need to pay for some supplies and activities. If you have difficulty paying, call your Public Health Unit to see if they can help.
- There are many government grants available to families. All families with children 0 to 6 can receive the Universal Child Care Benefit. Make sure you are receiving what you are entitled to. For a list of federal programs, visit:
www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/audiences/families/benefits.shtml

- The Canadian Government has programs to help you save for your child's college or university education. www.canlearn.ca/eng/saving/index.shtml. You can also ask for information at your bank.
- In Ontario, financial and employment assistance is provided to eligible people through Ontario Works: www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/social/ow/index.aspx
- Some community organizations can help you with budgeting.

Resources on Finances

Daily Life

Information on the cost of living in Ontario, opening a bank account, credit, debt, taxes, etc. www.settlement.org



Financial Consumer Agency of Canada

A budget calculator to help you organize your finances. www.fcac-acfc.gc.ca/eng/resources/toolcalculator/budgeting/index-eng.asp



Consumer Information

Tips on budgeting and purchasing in Canada. www.consumerinformation.ca



Canadian Association of Credit Counselling Services

Will help you find a local not-for-profit agency that will help you manage your money. www.cacccs.ca



Education Savings

Explains how to save for post-secondary education. Provides information on federal government programs. www.frp.ca



Additional Services for Newcomers

211 Community Information Centres. In larger centres in Ontario, the phone number 2-1-1 will help you get information about community, social, health and other government services. There is no charge for this service. The website www.211ontario.ca has a list of communities in Ontario that offer this service. Or you can just dial 2-1-1 on your phone to see if you will be linked to the service.

911 Emergency Service. If there is a life-threatening emergency, you can dial 9-1-1 to call an ambulance, police or firefighters. The service is available in many languages.

Assaulted Women's Help Line. This toll free and TTY phone service is available 24 hours a day for all women in Ontario who are experiencing abuse. It is anonymous and confidential. They offer services in 154 languages. 1-866-863-0511. TTY 1-866-863-7868. www.awhl.org

Canadian Human Rights Commission. This organization ensures that the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Employment Equity Act are followed in areas of federal jurisdiction. 1-888-214-1090 or 613-995-1151. www.chrc-ccdpc.ca

Community Legal Education Ontario. This organization offers legal information to help people understand and exercise their legal rights. 416-408-4420. www.cleo.on.ca

Housing Help Association of Ontario. This organization can help you find a home that you can afford and that is right for you. <https://findhousinghelp.ca>

Mental Health Service Information Ontario. The Ontario government provides this mental health information and referral service (on depression, anxiety, or problems with coping). Interpreters are available in 140 languages. 1-866-531-2600. www.mhsio.on.ca. Many parts of Ontario also have a local distress centre. Visit www.dcontario.org/centres.html.

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants. This non-profit organization has a list of member groups that represent many ethnic and cultural groups. 416-322-4950. www.ocasi.org.

Ontario Human Rights Commission. This organization administers the Ontario Human Rights Code, which protects people in Ontario against discrimination. 1-800-387-9080. www.ohrc.on.ca

Service Canada. Service Canada is a central service for all Government of Canada services. 1-800-O-Canada (1-800-622-6232). www.servicecanada.gc.ca

Service Ontario. ServiceOntario is a central service for all Government of Ontario services. 1-800-267-8097. www.serviceontario.ca

Settlement agencies. The Government of Canada provides services to immigrants through Citizenship and Immigration Canada. www.cic.gc.ca. The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration also offers information services. www.ontarioimmigration.ca

Settlement.org. This website is part of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants. It offers information in more than 30 languages as well as links to resources across the province, such as Newcomer Information Centres. www.settlement.org



best start
meilleur départ

by/par health **nexus** santé

www.beststart.org

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