

Reception House Waterloo Region



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Reception House programs

Reception House Waterloo Region provides a temporary home for Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) who are resettled in Canada by Citizenship and Immigration.

Canada is one of the few countries in the world that offers resettlement places to thousands of refugees annually and places priority on:

- women at risk;
- survivors of violence and torture;
- refugees with high medical needs.

Reception House serves approximately 300 GARs every year from a number of different countries, including: Afghanistan, Burundi, Burma, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan.

Reception House runs three programs to help people settle in their new community:

Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) -

Settlement Counsellors help people find permanent accommodation; complete forms for essential documents; provide orientation sessions about life in Canada.

Lifeskills Program - Lifeskill workers help people adjust to living in an urban environment; educate people about health and safety in their own homes; orient people to public transport and essential city services.

Newcomer Integration Program - Caseworkers are assigned to provide case management-style support to all GARs; make referrals and organize interpretation to essential services; may accompany people to appointments - including health; engage in outreach, advocacy and awareness-raising in the community about refugee needs.

Refugee Health

The majority of GARs have spent many years displaced from their homes due to conflict, or persecution, living in hiding or in refugee camps where sanitation, clean water, food and health care are in scarce supply.

For GARs, therefore, primary health care service, soon after arrival, is an essential part of the settlement process. As well, because most people do not speak any English, language supports are a necessary part of providing comprehensive health care.

However, there are many challenges confronting new arrivals in terms of being able to access and receive appropriate health care supports, for instance:

- lack of family doctors accepting patients and application processes that screen out high needs patients;
- lack of awareness about the diverse range of cultural norms and religious practices;
- lack of interpretation supports at all levels of the health care system;
- a health care system that is difficult to navigate and, at times, overtly hostile to the newcomer;
- lack of public transportation to all health care facilities;
- prohibitive cost for treatment not covered by OHIP, such as dental care and physiotherapy.

The Refugee Health clinic is part of the solution to overcoming some of these barriers by providing a health intake and assessment, screening for infectious diseases and initial primary health care - treatment for acute concerns and referrals to specialists, as well as, language supports and follow-up.

This collaborative effort between Reception House and the Centre for Family Medicine seeks to ensure that GARs health care needs are prioritized as soon as possible after their arrival in Canada.

To learn more visit:

UN Refugee Agency www.unhcr.org
Reception House www.kwrcentre.ca

Differences between refugees & migrants

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No one is a refugee by choice. Refugees flee their homes as a response to a crisis – war or armed conflict - or some form of persecution• Refugees have little choice about where they go, how they will travel and, usually, have no time to take any possessions, not even documentation when they leave their homes• Refugees very often have to leave loved ones/family members behind and are emotionally unprepared to leave• Refugees often spend many years in [insecure] refugee camps awaiting repatriation or transfer to a safe third country – never knowing when/where that may be• Refugees, due to living conditions in the camps, often arrive in ill health, and need help accessing health services due to low levels of English language skills• Refugees with low levels of education, or no formal education (a high number) can increase isolation and difficulties adjusting to their new home, and finding suitable, steady employment• Many refugees are suffering from trauma and can have on-going, often debilitating, mental and emotional problems along with culture shock• Refugees cannot return to their homeland for many years, if ever | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Migrants choose to leave their homeland and apply to resettle in a country of their choice• Migrants use the most suitable mode of travel and take the possessions that they wish to and carry with them all necessary documentation (passports, birth certificates, educational certificates, etc)• Migrants usually emigrate with their family members and have time to prepare emotionally for departure; say their farewells• Migrants are usually well prepared and motivated to settle in their new homes and research schools, employment, etc, before departure• Migrants are generally in good health on arrival due to rigorous health checks during the application process but may develop health problems if settlement process is harder than anticipated• Migrants have language, education, employment skills that are more easily transferable and help speed the settlement process• Migrants may find the settlement process harder than anticipated and suffer from culture shock• Migrants know they can return to their homeland for visits or even permanently if they cannot settle |
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