

Blended Visa Office-Referred Program
Refugee Resettlement in

Canada



VOR

Information Bulletin

You are interested in resettling to Canada and your application has received an initial review by Canadian officials. Now you are probably wondering what will happen next. This bulletin provides information about the next steps in the process and gives you more information about Canada.



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

Canada

What you need to know about the resettlement process

Your selection as an eligible refugee (including your interview, where applicable) is an important step in the resettlement process, but it is not the last step.

If you are chosen for resettlement under the Blended Visa Office-Referred (VOR) Program, it could take six months or more before you travel to Canada.

Here is what will happen next.

Application process

- Before your application can be accepted, you and your family members must undergo a medical examination. You must also undergo a security check to make sure that you have not committed serious crimes in the past and that you are not a security risk to Canada. A Canadian official will then decide if you may come to Canada.
- It could take several months after your selection before you are asked to have a medical examination.
- Canadian visa officers will review your application to decide if you pass the medical, security and criminality examinations.
- If you do not pass your medical, security and criminality examinations, you may not be chosen for resettlement to Canada.
- Canada will inform the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or another organization hired by the Canadian government when you have been accepted to be resettled to Canada and cleared for travel.
- The IOM or another organization will help you prepare to travel to Canada.
- In some countries, you will be invited to attend a Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) pre-departure orientation session. The COA project is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and implemented throughout the world by IOM. These sessions are free of charge. In these sessions, you will learn about Canada and the post-arrival resettlement services.

Leaving for Canada

- The IOM or another organization will tell you the date that you will travel to Canada. They will also book a flight for you, take you to the airport, help you check-in and provide other assistance at the airport, if required.
- If you do not have a passport or another valid travel document, the Government of Canada will give you a document so you can travel to Canada.
- The cost of your travel to Canada and medical examination will be covered by a loan that the Canadian government will give you.
- This is a loan, which means that you will have to pay back the total amount to the government. Within 30 days of your arrival in Canada, you must start repaying the money for both your travel and medical examination. Repayment can be made in instalments and you will have between one and six years to pay back the full amount, depending on the amount of the loan.

- You will also have the chance to look for a job and work in Canada to support yourself and your family.
- Once you have passed all the examinations and your documents are ready, the IOM or another organization will then take you to the airport, help you check-in and help you with immigration officials at the airport.

Arriving in Canada as a refugee selected under the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program

Being a refugee resettled under the Blended VOR Program means that the Government of Canada will provide you with up to six months of financial support once you arrive in Canada. The government will also cover the cost of most medical services that you may need after your arrival.

You will also be matched with a group of people in Canada who have agreed to help you adjust to life in Canada. This is your private sponsor. Your sponsor will be there to support you emotionally and socially for your entire first year in Canada.

And once the six months of financial support from the Government of Canada ends, your sponsor will provide you with financial assistance for up to six months.

- When you arrive in Canada, your sponsor will meet you at the airport and help you get settled.
- Your sponsor will provide you with a place to stay such as an apartment, house or hotel. Depending on what your sponsor has arranged for you, this may be a temporary place for you to stay for your first weeks in Canada, or it may be where you can stay as long as you wish.
- You will be given food and clothing.
- They will also answer your questions about life in Canada and help you to:
 - locate interpreters;
 - select a family doctor and dentist;
 - apply for provincial health-care coverage;
 - enrol children in school and adults in language training;
 - meet people with personal interests that are similar to yours;
 - use banking services, transportation, etc.; and
 - search for employment.

While the Government of Canada and your sponsor will provide you with initial support to help you start your life in Canada, it is important for you to have realistic expectations. You must be prepared to work hard to make the most of your life in Canada. Your future in Canada depends largely on your efforts.



Resettling with your family

During the selection process, Canadian officials would have reminded you that you and your spouse, as well as your dependent children can apply on the same form and come to Canada together. If there is any change in your marital status (such as you get married or divorced), or have a baby at any time before you travel to Canada, you must tell the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) and Canadian immigration officials, so that your new family members can be included in your application.



It is very important to tell the UNHCR and Canadian officials that you want to resettle as a family. You should also list all your family members (including all your children, brothers and sisters, parents, spouse) whether they are living with you or somewhere else.



It is important that you include all family members even if they do not want to resettle to Canada right now.

Anyone who is not listed on your application may not be able to come to Canada in the future.

If you have relatives or close friends who have already gone to Canada, and if you wish to live near them, you should let the UNHCR and Canadian officials know. As much as possible, Canada tries to resettle refugees in a community where they will have the support of people they know. However, refugees resettled under the Blended VOR Program are expected to reside in the community where they will have the support of their sponsoring group.

Your immigration status

When you arrive in Canada, you will be given a document that says you can live here permanently—as a permanent resident. This means it is legal for you to stay in Canada for the rest of your life. You will be able to work or go to school.

After you have lived in Canada for at least three years (1,095 days) in the past four years and once you meet all the requirements, you may apply to become a Canadian citizen.



Where you will live in Canada

Canada is the second largest country in the world with many cities and towns but also lots of uninhabited areas. Most cities are in the southern parts of Canada. Many of the areas where people live are far from each other and take a long time to get to, even if you fly. For example, the distance between Toronto and Vancouver is over 4,300 km or over four hours by airplane.

You will be resettled to the city or town where your sponsor lives.

While you will be free to move to another place in Canada, we encourage you to stay in the same place for at least one year. This will allow you to benefit from your sponsors' support and the services planned for you.

If you voluntarily choose to move to another part of Canada, your sponsor may not be able to give you support and you may not be entitled to further government assistance during the duration of the sponsorship.

Private sponsors are committed to supporting you on the understanding that you will live in their community and work with them so that you can become independent. Although you have the right to move anywhere in Canada, private sponsors are only required to provide you with support for your first year while you are in their community. If you decide to leave, you may not get the support that they have agreed to provide to you.



Help in Canada

There are many community groups and associations for men, women and children that you can join. You can become involved in sporting activities such as soccer or swimming, and there are many activities that you can do as a family. Some are free, while there is a cost for others.

If there are meetings for newcomers in your area, try to attend. This will help you make friends in the community and help you become familiar with services in your area.

Finding members of your own community may also help you to adjust, but do not be afraid to ask for help from others.



Canadian society

In Canada, men and women are equal. They have the same rights and are treated with the same level of respect. Men and women of all social classes, cultures, races and religions interact with one another and are treated equally.



You are free to speak your opinion in Canada while respecting the right of others to do the same.

You may be used to having your entire family around to help and support you. Once in Canada, you might feel alone, but you are not alone. If you have concerns, reach out to someone. Talk to your sponsor or contact someone in your community. There are people here who can help you adjust to life in Canada.



Sponsoring your family

Once you have settled in Canada, you may be able to sponsor other family members to come to Canada. However, you should know that this process could take a long time, and you might not see those members of your family for many years. A family member is a parent, grandparent, spouse and dependent children. Make sure these family members are listed on your application to come to Canada. Brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and adult children cannot be sponsored later.



Be sure your family knows exactly where you live in Canada. Make sure they know your mailing address including the city and province where you are.

Finding a job

Although you and your family will receive financial help during your first year in Canada, it is a good idea to find a job and be able to take care of yourself and your family as soon as you can. The better you speak either English or French, the easier it will be to find a job.

You should also note that if you have a university degree, college diploma or trade certificate, it may not be accepted in Canada. It will be up to the provincial government or regulatory body where you live to determine whether or not your degree/certificate or other credentials are recognized.



You may also want to send money to your family back home. You are free to do so, but many refugees find it difficult to support themselves and still have money left to send to family back home. Remember, it will take time to adjust to your new life in Canada.

Expenses

When you arrive in Canada, you will have financial support from the Government of Canada for the first six months and from your private sponsor for the following six months.

However, once the support from your private sponsor ends, you will be responsible for paying your own expenses including food, rent, electricity, water, clothing and taxes. It is important to learn how to budget your money.



School

You will not have to pay for your children to attend elementary or high school. All children between six and sixteen must go to school. It is the law. Most students attend high school until they receive a graduation diploma (around age 18). After they finish high school, some may go on to university or college, if they can afford it. College and university cost money.



Dental care

Although the government provides health care such as visits to the doctor and will pay for emergency dental care during your first year in Canada, it does not cover the cost of ordinary dental care. If you go to see a dentist, in most cases, you will be responsible for the cost.



Food and water

Water in Canada is safe to drink. Every home has its own hot and cold running water. You can get water any time of the day or night. All you have to do is turn the tap on and then off when you are finished.

People from many different cultures live in Canada. You can find most of the foods you usually eat such as rice, bread, vegetables, spices, lentils and chicken in a grocery store near you. Canada also has many other stores that carry specialty products such as goat meat, which is not usually sold in grocery stores. Halal food is also available.



Religion

Many religions are found in Canada. You will be allowed to practise yours freely. Canadian law requires that you respect people who practise different religions. You will not be asked or forced to change your religion. Freedom of religion is one of Canada's basic rights.



Weather

There are four different seasons in most of Canada: spring, summer, autumn (fall) and winter. Canada is a very large country and the weather in each season can be different from one part of the country to another. Spring (March, April and May) is a rainy season in most parts of Canada, and the weather can be cool. In the summer (June, July and August), the weather is very warm in most parts of the country. During the day, temperatures are often above 20°C and can sometimes rise above 30°C. In the autumn (September, October and November), the weather cools and it can also be very rainy. During the winter months (December, January and February), the temperature in most of the country usually stays below 0°C and can fall below -30°C, day and night. Winters can be very cold and you will have to dress appropriately.



Final words of advice

Starting a new life in Canada is exciting and some people may find it hard. It takes time to adjust, so be patient. Many newcomers like you have adjusted and have become fully integrated into Canadian society.

Speaking English or French will be important in helping you access services, find a job and generally adjust to life in Canada. If you have a chance to learn either language before you come to Canada, you should try to increase your language skills. After arrival, you should also make use of opportunities to improve your speaking, reading and writing skills.

Ask people around you questions. If you have concerns, tell your sponsors.

Remember there are people and services available to help you.

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