



December 17, 2015

Dear Health System Partners:

As you know, Saskatchewan is preparing to welcome refugees from Syria. Our government and the Ministry of Health are committed to ensuring that all refugees who settle in our province receive access to the healthcare services that they need. The Ministry is working closely with federal partners, other provincial Ministries, health regions, and a variety of community partners to ensure that we support refugees as they adjust to life in our province.

Government-assisted refugees coming to Saskatchewan will initially settle in Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Prince Albert or Regina. Privately-sponsored refugees may settle in these centres or other areas of the province. Health regions are closely involved in planning and preparations. The Ministry of Health is coordinating information and will share these resources with health system partners as they become available.

A variety of national and local resources are available online for those involved in refugee resettlement. To supplement these resources, the Ministry has gathered some information that may be of particular interest to health providers in Saskatchewan. We expect to provide updates as information and processes become more clear; relevant documents and links will be posted in due course at [www.saskatchewan.ca](http://www.saskatchewan.ca).

In the meantime, health care providers are encouraged to review this information and to register online for the Provider Portal under the Interim Federal Health Program to ensure they are prepared to provide support to refugees as needed. The following is a link to IFHP Blue Cross Medavie Provider Portal: <https://provider.medavie.bluecross.ca/>. Please note that the federal program covers supplementary services for a period of one year for refugees coming to Saskatchewan. Provincial coverage for basic services will be provided to all refugees through a Saskatchewan health card. If you have questions after reviewing this package of materials, please refer to question 21 in the Q&A document for specific contact information.

Thank you for your dedication to providing timely, high-quality services to all residents of the province, and for your interest in contributing to refugee resettlement efforts. You will be a key part of helping our new residents successfully transition to life in Saskatchewan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Tracey L. Smith'.

Tracey L. Smith  
Assistant Deputy Minister

# Syrian Refugee Resettlement

## General Information for Saskatchewan Health Providers

### December 2015

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Saskatchewan is preparing to welcome refugees from Syria. We know that many refugees will arrive with both immediate and long-term healthcare needs.

Refugees arriving in Saskatoon or Regina will receive initial health assessments through Community Clinics while refugees in Moose Jaw or Prince Albert will receive care through physicians' offices. Work is being done to identify both male and female healthcare providers who speak Arabic or who have experience working with refugee populations. Refugee Settlement Centres will help connect the new residents with these physicians.

### Medical Screening

All refugees coming to Canada will receive medical exams overseas prior to arrival. Refugees will initially land in either Montreal or Toronto where they will be screened for symptoms and signs of infectious disease. If any passenger is identified as ill, he or she will receive prompt and immediate medical attention and care. Further screening for communicable diseases (such as Tuberculosis) will also occur.

Beyond these immediate health screenings and after arriving in Saskatchewan, there will be a focus on immunization. This includes seasonal influenza vaccines, as well as the vaccines recommended for infants and children in Saskatchewan, as outlined at: [www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize).

The Ministry of Health has reviewed its vaccination supplies to ensure it has enough vaccines to meet both Saskatchewan's predicted needs and those of the Syrian refugees. Public Health Nurses and staff from health regions are preparing to assist refugees in ensuring their immunizations are current. The Ministry of Health is working with colleagues from across Canada to obtain information on vaccines and other public health services that have already been translated to ensure refugees have access to appropriate information about the services available to them.

### Resident Status and Saskatchewan Health Cards

Refugees will be given Canadian permanent resident status prior to their departure from the Middle East and will receive the same health coverage as all residents of Canada. Government-assisted Syrian refugees and privately-sponsored Syrian refugees will receive the same coverage.

Like any permanent resident, Syrian refugees settling in Saskatchewan will be eligible for basic health coverage immediately upon their arrival. Within days of arriving in Saskatchewan, a Syrian refugee will receive a Saskatchewan Health Card with a nine-digit Health Services Number. This health card will be valid and active while the Syrian refugee lives in Saskatchewan.

### Health Coverage

#### Provincial Coverage: Basic

The province is the first payer for basic coverage once refugees have their Saskatchewan Health Card. Refugees must present their Saskatchewan Health Card for:

- Physician visits
- Hospital visits
- Emergency Room visits
- Eye exams for children
- Other insured services typically covered through a Saskatchewan Health Card.

## Federal Coverage for First Year: Supplemental and Prescription Drug Coverage

In addition to provincial Basic Health Coverage, all Syrian refugees will receive Type 1 Supplemental Coverage and prescription drug coverage through the [Interim Federal Health Program \(IFHP\)](#) for up to one year. The IFHP provides limited and temporary coverage for the refugee's first year of residency in Canada.

IFHP is the first payer for supplemental health coverage. Some care services require pre-approval protocols be followed prior to providing service. It is important that healthcare providers familiarize themselves with the requirements under this program and contact IFHP (Medavie Blue Cross) directly to ensure coverage is approved prior to providing the services and submitting a claim for payment.

Supplemental Coverage includes healthcare benefits such as:

- Limited dental and vision care
- Services by allied healthcare practitioners, including clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, speech language therapists and physiotherapists
- Assistive devices, and medical supplies and equipment (e.g. prosthetic equipment, mobility aids, hearing aids)

[Refer to the benefit grids listed on the provider portal, IFHP Benefit Grid, Supplemental Coverage.](#)

Prescription Drug Coverage through IFHP includes prescription medications and other products listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary. The IFHP mirrors what is on the Saskatchewan Formulary. This means that if the province does not cover a medication, the IFHP will not cover it either. Because of this, there may be some cases where the refugee or a sponsor will have to pay for a drug. The Special Authorization Unit at IFHP will also consider exception drug coverage. The contact is 1-888-614-1880 (option 4).

[Refer to the benefit grids listed on the provider portal, Drug Formulary.](#)

## Billing Process

### Basic Services

Basic medical and hospital care is covered once the Syrian refugee receives his/her valid Saskatchewan Health Card. The billing process remains the same for basic services.

### Supplemental and Prescription Coverage

Refugees requiring supplemental or prescription drug services must go through a medical service provider registered with the IFHP. The registered medical service provider is responsible for seeking reimbursement from Medavie Blue Cross and requesting pre-approval for some services.

Medavie Blue Cross administers the IFHP on behalf of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Physicians, pharmacists and other healthcare providers must register with Medavie Blue Cross to submit online bills for payment. [Any healthcare provider may register online with Blue Cross Medavie.](#)

Syrian refugees will receive a certificate from IFHP that they must present to Saskatchewan healthcare providers. This certificate ensures that the supplemental service or prescription drug is covered by IFHP. Billing is submitted online directly to Medavie Blue Cross. Healthcare providers should ask refugee patients for their certificate before treatment.

Note: Blue Cross will only reimburse providers; they do not reimburse for any payment made by a patient or private sponsor, therefore it is important to ensure that direct billing occurs.

[Information is available on IRCC's website for both beneficiaries and providers.](#)

[Medavie Blue Cross maintains a list of registered providers on their website](#) so that private sponsors, clients and others stakeholders can readily identify providers in their community.

## Dental Services

Initial services are limited to emergency relief of pain or infection only. Where the treating dentist feels that further treatment is necessary and essential, a prior approval must be submitted to Medavie Blue Cross before treatment can begin.

## Vision Services

Coverage for eye care will be similar to Supplemental Health Coverage. Details of the benefits covered are found on the [Medavie Blue Cross secure provider web portal](#).

## Translation Services

Healthcare providers who do not have a language in common with refugees will be able to access translation services through community organizations such as Regina Open Door Society, Saskatoon Open Door Society, Prince Albert YWCA, Moose Jaw Multicultural Council and The Gathering Place. Health regions and community groups have been working to identify health care providers who are able to speak Arabic.

Health regions also have translation services in place for people who go to emergency rooms and are not comfortable speaking English. HealthLine 811 – the province’s 24-hour health line for non-urgent advice – has access to translation service in more than 100 languages, including Arabic. HealthLine 811 also provides mental health and addictions support, information and connection to services.

The IFHP will cover interpretation costs for mental health services only.

## Resources

A list of online resources for healthcare providers is attached. As more information becomes available, it will be shared with healthcare providers by the Ministry of Health or health regions.

# Refugee Information Resources for Saskatchewan Health Care Providers



<p><b>Medical Screening and Immunization of Refugees</b></p>	<p><b>PHAC/Health Canada</b> <b>CMAJ Guidelines</b> <b>Information from Canadian Paediatric Society</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/overview/security.asp">http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/overview/security.asp</a> <a href="http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/collection/canadian_guidelines_for_immigrant_health">http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/collection/canadian_guidelines_for_immigrant_health</a> <a href="http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/about/sitemap">http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/about/sitemap</a></p>
<p><b>Provincial Health Coverage/Billing</b></p>	<p><b>Health Coverage</b> <b>How to apply for a Saskatchewan Health Card</b> <b>Saskatchewan Formulary:</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/prescription-drug-plans-and-health-coverage">http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/prescription-drug-plans-and-health-coverage</a> <a href="http://www.ehealthsask.ca/HealthRegistries/Pages/apply-for-health-card.aspx">http://www.ehealthsask.ca/HealthRegistries/Pages/apply-for-health-card.aspx</a> <a href="http://formulary.drugplan.health.gov.sk.ca/">http://formulary.drugplan.health.gov.sk.ca/</a></p>
<p><b>Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) Coverage</b></p>	<p><b>Information about the IFHP</b> <b>Information about Blue Cross Medavie</b> (insurance provider for IFHP) <b>How to register as a Blue Cross Medavie provider</b> <b>IFHP providers registered in SK</b> (December 2015)</p>	<p><a href="https://www.medavie.bluecross.ca/cs/ContentServer?c=ContentPage_P&amp;pagename=IFHP_CIC_Public%2FContentPage_P%2FIFHP_CICOneColumnFull&amp;cid=1181930626008">https://www.medavie.bluecross.ca/cs/ContentServer?c=ContentPage_P&amp;pagename=IFHP_CIC_Public%2FContentPage_P%2FIFHP_CICOneColumnFull&amp;cid=1181930626008</a> <a href="https://provider.medavie.bluecross.ca/">https://provider.medavie.bluecross.ca/</a> <a href="http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-healthcare/practitioners.asp">http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-healthcare/practitioners.asp</a> <a href="https://www.medavie.bluecross.ca/cs/ContentServer?c=ContentPage_P&amp;pagename=IFHP_CIC_Public%2FContentPage_P%2FIFHP_CICOneColumnFull&amp;cid=1181930640841">https://www.medavie.bluecross.ca/cs/ContentServer?c=ContentPage_P&amp;pagename=IFHP_CIC_Public%2FContentPage_P%2FIFHP_CICOneColumnFull&amp;cid=1181930640841</a></p>
<p><b>Resources for physicians, nurses/NPs, healthcare professionals</b></p>	<p><b>CMAJ Guidelines</b> <b>Canadian Paediatric Society</b> <b>Caring for Kids New to Canada</b> <b>College of Family Physicians of Canada</b> <b>Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/collection/canadian_guidelines_for_immigrant_health">http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/collection/canadian_guidelines_for_immigrant_health</a> <a href="http://www.cps.ca/">http://www.cps.ca/</a> <a href="http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/">http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/</a> <a href="http://www.cfpc.ca/Refugee_Health_Care/">http://www.cfpc.ca/Refugee_Health_Care/</a> <a href="https://www.skpharmacists.ca/pharmacists">https://www.skpharmacists.ca/pharmacists</a></p>

# Refugee Information Resources for Saskatchewan Health Care Providers

	<b>Webinar: Advocacy for Immigrant and Refugee Children</b>	<a href="http://www.chnet-works.ca/index.php?option=com_rsevents&amp;view=events&amp;layout=show&amp;cid=382%3A460-knocking-on-doors-and-breaking-down-walls-advocacy-for-immigrant-and-refugee-children&amp;Itemid=6&amp;lang=en">http://www.chnet-works.ca/index.php?option=com_rsevents&amp;view=events&amp;layout=show&amp;cid=382%3A460-knocking-on-doors-and-breaking-down-walls-advocacy-for-immigrant-and-refugee-children&amp;Itemid=6&amp;lang=en</a>
<b>Services for Saskatchewan residents (general)</b>	<b>Saskatchewan 211</b>	<a href="http://www.sk.211.ca/">http://www.sk.211.ca/</a>
	<b>Government of Canada - #WelcomeRefugees</b>	<a href="http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/index.asp?utm_source=canada-eng&amp;utm_medium=carousel&amp;utm_campaign=refugees2015&amp;_ga=1.98350495.1210255841.1449764511">http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/index.asp?utm_source=canada-eng&amp;utm_medium=carousel&amp;utm_campaign=refugees2015&amp;_ga=1.98350495.1210255841.1449764511</a>
	<b>Saskatchewan Medical Association</b>	<a href="http://www.sma.sk.ca/">http://www.sma.sk.ca/</a>
	<b>Regina Open Door Society</b>	<a href="http://rods.sk.ca/">http://rods.sk.ca/</a>
	<b>Saskatoon Open Door Society</b>	<a href="http://www.sods.sk.ca/">http://www.sods.sk.ca/</a>
	<b>Healthline 811</b>	<a href="https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/accessing-health-care-services/healthline">https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/accessing-health-care-services/healthline</a>
<b>Services for Refugees/New Residents</b>	<b>Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies</b>	<a href="http://saskcares.com/">http://saskcares.com/</a>
<b>RHA/Ministry information</b>	<b>Saskatchewan Ministry of Health</b>	<a href="http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health">http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health</a>
	<b>RHA Contact List</b>	<a href="http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/understanding-the-health-care-system/saskatchewan-health-regions/health-region-contact-information-and-websites">http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/understanding-the-health-care-system/saskatchewan-health-regions/health-region-contact-information-and-websites</a>

# Questions and Answers

## Syrian Refugee Resettlement

### December 2015

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**1. How many refugees are coming to Saskatchewan? How many are children? Seniors?**

Beyond those who have already arrived through private sponsorship arrangements, we anticipate receiving approximately 800 more government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees province-wide in early 2016. Demographic information about those who are coming is limited at this time.

**2. Where will they live?**

Refugee Settlement Centres are located in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw and Prince Albert, so the majority of refugees will be in those communities. Some may eventually resettle in smaller communities, and privately-sponsored refugees may be destined for other centres as well.

**3. What kinds of services will be provided at Refugee Settlement Centres?**

The priorities to be addressed include shelter, basic household needs and assistance in receiving health care. More information is available through local community agencies (Regina/Saskatoon Open Door Societies, Global Gathering and Multicultural Councils) or <http://saskcares.com/> (Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies).

\*Information on refugee resettlement in Saskatchewan will be posted at [www.Saskatchewan.ca](http://www.Saskatchewan.ca) shortly.

**4. Will refugees have health insurance coverage after arriving in Canada?**

Yes. Refugees will be considered permanent residents of Canada when they arrive. Those coming to Saskatchewan will be eligible for health coverage immediately. They will apply for a Saskatchewan health card, which will cover basic services such as physician visits, hospital care and emergency services.

The Government of Canada's Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) will cover supplementary services for a period of one year for both government assisted and privately sponsored refugees. These services include prescription drugs (medications listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary), dental care, vision care, psychologist services, assistive devices, and medical supplies and equipment.

More information on the IFHP is at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-healthcare.asp>.

**5. How long will Syrian refugees be covered under the Interim Federal Health Program?**

Supplementary Health and Prescription Drug Coverage through the IFHP will be provided up to one year, starting immediately upon arrival at point of entry.

**6. What are the most common health concerns for refugees coming from that part of the world?**

Prior to the conflict in Syria, its citizens were relatively healthy overall, with good sanitation, clean water, and an estimated 90 per cent vaccination coverage. Since 2011 Syria's health system has become overstretched, leaving many residents displaced, living in difficult conditions and vulnerable to infectious disease outbreak.

The refugees coming to Canada may have been living in less than ideal conditions; common illnesses can be expected (eg. acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, head lice and skin infestations). However, these refugees will not pose a health risk to Canadians. Countries that have accepted large populations of refugees report very few cases of infectious diseases of concern (such as Tuberculosis).

**7. Will refugees be given preferential treatment for health care?**

Refugees will be considered permanent residents upon arrival to Canada, so they will receive health services and treatment in the same way as any other Saskatchewan resident.

Our health regions and health providers are committed to providing timely, high quality health care to all residents of the province.

**8. What kind of medical evaluation is done before a refugee comes to Canada?**

The immigration and medical examination includes:

- History and complete physical exam for all applicants;
- Urinalyses for those five years and older;
- Chest X-Ray for those 11 years and older;
- Syphilis testing (VDRL) for those 15 years and older;
- HIV test for those 15 years and older, or if previously indicated.

Additional tests or reports may also be required, depending on an individual's health status. The refugee medical exam is valid for one year from the date of assessment.

**9. Do refugees receive immunizations upon their arrival to Canada?**

Yes. When they arrive in Saskatchewan, they will receive immunizations and vaccinations by Regional Public Health Nurses according to the Saskatchewan Immunization Schedule.



**10. What happens if a refugee is found to have a communicable disease?**

To ensure the health and safety of Canadians and the refugees themselves, appropriate treatment will be completed before coming to Canada. Refugees who arrive with a health condition that requires medical surveillance due to a communicable disease will be followed up by regional public health staff in partnership with care providers.

**11. How will you support the mental health of refugees?**

Refugees will have access to the same mental health services as all Saskatchewan residents. We will monitor the need for mental health supports for individual refugees over time, as they settle in and get accustomed to their surroundings.

HealthLine 811 provides mental health crisis support, information and connection to services. It also offers translation services in more than 100 languages, including Arabic.

**12. Will the federal government cover health care costs, or does the responsibility lie with the province?**

The province will provide basic health care coverage; the Interim Federal Health Program will provide supplementary coverage for a period of one year. (See question 4)

Detailed information on the IFHP is at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-healthcare.asp>IFHP . Provincial information is available at: <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/prescription-drug-plans-and-health-coverage>

**13. What is covered specifically by the provincial and federal governments?**

Basic provincial coverage includes physician visits, hospital care and emergency services.

Federal (IFHP) coverage includes prescription drugs (medications listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary), dental care, vision care, home care, long term care, psychologist services, assistive devices, and medical supplies and equipment. For more information, visit: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-healthcare.asp>.

**14. Can health providers do anything to prepare for the influx of new residents/patients?**

We encourage health providers to register ahead of time with the Interim Federal Health Program, so that they are prepared to provide services to refugees who need supplementary health services covered under the program. This can be done online at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-healthcare/practitioners.asp>. More information is at <https://provider.medavie.bluecross.ca/>.

There are short term and longer term opportunities for health providers to get involved in supporting incoming refugees; those who have a Middle Eastern background and speak Arabic are encouraged to contact their local community organizations to get involved.

**15. Are health regions involved with Refugee Settlement Centres?**

Health region representatives have been involved in local planning discussions in each of the four Saskatchewan cities where Refugee Settlement Centres are located. This is helping to ensure that information is reaching the right people, and that assistance to refugees will be coordinated and timely.

**16. Will healthcare professionals be re-located to work at Refugee Settlement Centres?**

It is unlikely. However, there are F/P/T agreements that provide a mechanism to move health care providers to address surge capacity issues.

**17. Will health regions other than the four that have Refugee Settlement Centres (Regina, Saskatoon, PA and Five Hills) be involved in assisting refugees?**

While most Syrian refugees will stay in those four cities, some privately-sponsored refugees may be destined for smaller communities in other health regions. We are keeping all health regions informed of plans and preparations, sharing resources and offering assistance as necessary.

**18. How will healthcare professionals be able to communicate with refugee patients?**

When health care providers do not have a language in common with refugees, they will be able to access translation services through community organizations (eg. Open Door Society). Health regions do have translation services in place for people who go to emergency rooms and are not comfortable speaking English.

I would also note that HealthLine 811 – our 24-hour health advice line – has access to translation service in more than 100 languages, including Arabic.

**19. Will there be enough male and female healthcare providers to meet the needs of refugees, given cultural sensitivities in the refugee population?**

Health regions are working with community based organizations to identify both male and female physicians and health care providers who are comfortable dealing with refugee populations and who have a Middle Eastern background and speak Arabic. We encourage those types of providers in particular to step forward and get involved in supporting these refugees through their local community organizations.

**20. How will refugees with disabilities be supported?**

All refugees will have an assessment of their resettlement needs. The assessment information allows Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and Service Provider Organization to better prepare and facilitate the settlement of refugees once they are in Canada, and to ensure that appropriate supports are in place.

The assessment focuses on five areas:

- Functional assessment (hearing, vision, speech, cognition, mobility, etc.)
- Special travel requirements (wheelchair, medical escort, etc.)
- Post-arrival service requirements (consultation with a healthcare professional upon arrival, or within a number of weeks, long-term services, etc.)
- Housing and daily activities or assistance requirements (wheelchair access, periodic/permanent home care, etc.)
- Other resettlement needs.

In cases where additional support is required, refugees can receive support from the federal government and a private sponsor for up to 24 months under the federal Joint Assistance Program, depending on the situation. In a few cases, the private sponsors may provide support for up to 36 months. Privacy of the refugee's medical history is protected and not shared without their consent. The assessment form does include diagnostic information.

## **21. Who can I contact for more information?**

If you still have questions not answered by the information available at the links provided, contact the Ministry of Health through your usual channels. Options are below:

Drug Plan & Extended Benefits Branch:

    Prescription Drugs – 1-800-667-7581 or local 306-787-3317

    Extended Benefits – 1-800-266-0695 or local 306-787-3124

Medical Services Branch – 1-800-667-7523

Health Registries (eHealth Saskatchewan) – 1-800-667-7551

Ministry of Health General Inquiry Line – 1-800-667-7766

Partnerships and Workforce Planning Branch - 306-519-8570