

REFUGEE CLAIMANT RESOURCES: HANDBOOK APRIL 2024

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NOTE - This document will be updated semi-frequently to provide the most accurate information possible. If you have any feedback or recommendations you would like to share as you utilize this handbook, please reach out to Aizel Castejon (acastejon@aaisa.ca).

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) acknowledges the land known as Moh’kinstsis (Calgary) which is Blackfoot for the joining of two rivers – the Elbow and Bow. AAISA recognizes we are situated upon the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut’ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations, the Métis Districts (5 and 6), and the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta. AAISA serves members across the province of Alberta which are comprised of Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 territories, the traditional lands of First Nations

and Métis peoples. We acknowledge all 21 Metis Districts, and the lands which comprise Alberta and with which indigenous peoples have lived and stewarded since time immemorial. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting. As members of the settlement and integration sector, it is of the utmost importance we can acknowledge these lands in recognition of Canada's colonial history, and the deep impact settlement has had and continues to have, on Indigenous peoples here and across the world. We hope this acknowledgment can inform all facets of our work, in the spirit of friendship and joint stewardships with indigenous communities, particularly under the calls to action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

WHAT IS A REFUGEE CLAIMANT?

A refugee claimant is a person who is seeking Canada's protection at our borders, or within the country, by making a claim as a refugee (Canadian Council for Refugees, n.d.).

RESOURCES FOR FILING A CLAIM

Canada offers refugee protection to some people in Canada who fear persecution or who would be in danger if they had to leave. These dangers may include:

- Torture
- Risk to their life
- Risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment

These resources include information about the refugee claimant process, eligibility requirements, and making a claim.

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/claim-protection-inside-canada.html>
- <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/applying-refugee-protection/Pages/index.aspx>
- <https://myrefugeeclaim.ca/en/>

EXTERNAL RESOURCES FOR FILING A CLAIM

LUNA is an AI application designed to have conversations with claimants seeking refuge in Canada. It gathers necessary information from them, fills out applications and documents automatically, and verifies their understanding of the immigration system.

- <http://www.lunaai.org/>

LANGUAGE

- **New Canadian Friendship Centre:** Provides activities for newcomers to Canada to socialize and learn. Services are targeted to include refugee claimants with no referral required.
 - <https://ab.211.ca/record/1101685/?searchLocation=Calgary&searchTerms=Friendship&latitude=51.0447331&longitude=-114.0718831&ss=Distance>

- Location: Calgary, AB

HEALTHCARE

- **MOSAIC Refugee Health Clinic**: Specialized primary care clinic offering a range of healthcare services to support the unique resettlement needs of patients. The clinic serves refugees within their first year in Canada. This resource is by appointment only and new patients will be prioritized by the level of health need.
 - <https://mosaicpcn.ca/programs/refugee-health/>
 - Location: Calgary, AB
- **Canadian Pediatric Society**: Provides resources for professionals who support immigrant and refugee children and their families.
 - <https://ab.211.ca/record/1129010/?searchLocation=Calgary&searchTerms=Refugee+Claimants&latitude=51.0447331&longitude=-114.0718831&ss=Distance>
 - Location: Resources available to the entire Alberta area
- **Health Link**: Provides 24/7 support to talk to a Registered Nurse about your health concerns and to help find the service that's right for you.
 - Call 811.

MENTAL HEALTH

- **Mental Health Helpline**: Translation services are available. This resource is accessible 24/7.
 - Call 1-877-303-2642.
- **Counselling Alberta**: Provides counselling services irrespective of immigration status to all Alberta residents.
 - <https://www.counsellingalberta.com/>
 - Location: Resources available to the entire Alberta area
- **Distress Centre**: Provides 24-hour crisis support by phone, text, and chat.
 - <https://distresscentre.com/24-hour-crisis-support/>
 - Location: Calgary, AB and Southern Alberta

FOOD HAMPERS

- **Calgary Food Bank**: An organization fighting hunger and its root causes. The Calgary food bank is the first line of emergency food support for families and individuals facing crisis.
 - <https://www.calgaryfoodbank.com/about/>
 - Location: Calgary, AB
- **The Salvation Army**: Provides weekly emergency food hampers, accessible to all residents.
 - <https://ab.211.ca/record/1120064/?searchLocation=Calgary&searchTerms=Emergency+Food+Hampers&exct=1&latitude=51.0447331&longitude=-114.0718831&ss=Distance>
 - Location: Calgary, AB

- **Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church**: Food pantry accepts people living in specific areas of the city of Calgary irrespective of status, only requiring ID and proof of address.
 - <https://www.emmanuelcrc.org/>
 - Location: West of Crowchild Trail, North of Glenmore Trail, and South of Bow Trail (Calgary, AB)
- **Edmonton Food Bank**: Provides food and services to empower individuals struggling with food security and poverty, irrespective of immigration status. Requires ID.
 - <https://www.edmontonsfoodbank.com/about/>
 - Location: Edmonton, AB
- **Alberta Food Banks**: Food Banks exist all over the province and are vital resources meant for individuals facing desperate or emergency situations. Find the nearest food bank to you with the link provided. Please note that the Food Bank is not a supplementary government-provided service and should be used for emergencies.
 - <https://foodbanksalberta.ca/find-your-food-bank/>

TRANSPORTATION

- **Calgary Public Transit**: The ACE Card Program is offered to those over 18 with a disability that prevents them from using a fixed transportation route offered by the Calgary Public Transit. This program is accessible to anyone irrespective of their status, requiring proof of ID and address.
 - <https://www.calgarytransit.com/calgary-transit-access/apply-for-service/eligibility.html>
 - Location: Calgary, AB

EMERGENCY HOUSING

- **The Mustard Seed**: Offers a safe, supportive haven for individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness.
 - <https://theseed.ca/services>
 - Location: Calgary, AB
- **Trellis**: Specific to youth aged 12-17 years old facing homelessness and offers services to refugee claimants.
 - <https://www.growwithtrellis.ca/youth-programs/housing-shelters>
 - Location: Calgary, AB
- **Inn from the Cold**: Provides an emergency family shelter program which offers temporary emergency shelter to families when they're unable to stay in their existing homes and have nowhere else to turn.
 - <https://innfromthecold.org/>
 - Location: Calgary, AB
- **Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter**: Emergency shelter housing for women with children and single women experiencing family violence and abuse.
 - <https://www.calgarywomensshelter.com/index.php/shelter-programs/emergency-shelter>
 - Location: Calgary, AB

- **Calgary Drop-in Centre:** Emergency shelter for individuals 18 years and older offering a broad spectrum of care including health programs and housing options. No eligibility requirements and no referral required. Open 365 days a year.
 - <https://calgarydropin.ca/emergency-shelter/> or call (403) 266-3600.
 - Location: Calgary, AB
- **Mountain Rose Centre:** A second-stage shelter and housing program that women refugee claimants can access.
 - <https://acws.ca/shelters/mountain-rose-centre/>
 - Location: Rocky Mountain House, AB
- **Odyssey House:** Emergency shelter that provides a safe, secure, and supportive accommodation for women and their children who are victims of domestic violence, are in crisis, or in need of a housing alternative irrespective of their immigration status.
 - <https://acws.ca/shelters/odyssey-house/>
 - Location: Grand Prairie, AB

YOUTH

- **Trellis:** Provides social, recreational, creative, employment, and educational opportunities for newcomer youth.
 - <https://ab.211.ca/record/1115518/?searchLocation=Calgary&searchTerms=Trellis+&latitude=51.0447331&longitude=-114.0718831&ss=Distance>
 - Available in Amharic, Arabic, French, and English
 - Location: Calgary, AB
- **Multicultural Health Brokers Co-Op:** Offers individual one-on-one holistic support groups for youth aged 12-25 years old from Eritrean, Ethiopian, Oromo, Syrian, and Somali families.
 - <https://ab.211.ca/record/1133648/?searchLocation=Calgary&searchTerms=Refugee+Claimants&latitude=51.0447331&longitude=-114.0718831&ss=Distance>
 - Available in Amharic, Arabic, Oromo, Somali, and Tigrignia
 - Location: Edmonton, AB

SENIORS

- **Sage Seniors Association:** Provides outreach and support to immigrant and refugee seniors, including senior refugee claimants.
 - <https://ab.211.ca/record/1074153/?searchLocation=Calgary&searchTerms=Refugee+Claimants&latitude=51.0447331&longitude=-114.0718831&ss=Distance>
 - Communities include Kurdish, Korean, Spanish speaking, former Yugoslavian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Iraqi, Somali, African, and other Eastern European countries
 - Location: Edmonton, AB

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

For resources and information about status, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) has multiple guides for public access. Reading through these resources may help clarify the consequences of making a claim for refugee status within Canada and help to navigate the process it entails. We encourage you to use IRB guides at <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/Pages/index.aspx> to learn more. Some important resources we encourage you to read include, but are not limited to:

- Basis of claim form: <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/forms/pages/RpdSpr0201.aspx>
- List of legal aid offices within Canada: <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/legal-policy/legal-concepts/Pages/legal-aid-office.aspx>
- A claimant's guide and toolkit which discusses important instructions, forms, and legal aid: <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/refugee-claims/pages/ClaDemKitTro.aspx>
- Return to country of persecution - reavailment: <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/legal-policy/legal-concepts/Pages/RefDef05.aspx#n55>

Access these supports within Alberta for legal assistance.

- **Community Legal Clinic:** Provides legal support for immigration matters to individuals with low income.
 - <https://ab.211.ca/record/1132064/?searchLocation=Calgary&searchTerms=Refugee+Claimants&latitude=51.0447331&longitude=-114.0718831&ss=Distance>
 - Location: Central Alberta, Fort McMurray, Medicine Hat, Lloydminster
- **Calgary Legal Guidance:** Provides services to vulnerable Albertans, offering free legal guidance to no-to-low-income people, including those experiencing family violence, homelessness, or health issues and cannot afford a lawyer or have access to paid services.
 - <https://clg.ab.ca/>
 - Location: Calgary, AB
- **Legal Aid Alberta:** Provides affordable legal services in a wide range of matters, including immigration.
 - <https://www.legalaid.ab.ca/>
 - Location: Alberta wide - Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Siksika Nation, and Wetaskiwin.

LIBRARY RESOURCES

- **Alberta Public Library:** Available to everyone in the community, regardless of status. Library systems work to provide residents with equitable access to information, education, and community resources.
 - <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/9f4a2390-0b09-4480-b081-a23384732463/resource/7de4401b-5fdd-4db9-b875-101ddf4de32b/download/ma-alberta-public-library-directory-2023-10.pdf>
 - <https://readalberta.ca/libraries-in-alberta/>

COMMUNITY CENTRES

- **Multicultural Family Resource Society:** Offers in person and online parent-child programs in different languages in a variety of ethnocultural communities.
 - <https://ab.211.ca/record/1100709/?searchLocation=Calgary&searchTerms=Refugee+Claimants&latitude=51.0447331&longitude=-114.0718831&ss=Distance>
 - Available in Amharic, Arabic, Cantonese, Chinese, English, Filipino, French, Mandarin, Oromo, Romanian, Russian, Somali, Sudanese, Tagalog, Tigrignia, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese

REFUGEE CLAIMANT INITIATIVES

- **EISA Supporting Newcomer Integration (SNI):** One of the few services available for refugee claimants and naturalized Canadian citizens in Alberta, supporting them to facilitate their social and economic integration through various resources.
 - <https://www.eisa-edmonton.org/services/newcomer-community-integration-project-ncip/>
 - Available in Arabic, French, Amharic, Tigrigna
 - Location: Edmonton, AB
- **Calgary Catholic Immigrant Society:** Program assisting refugee claimants during their claim process and provides support when addressing any issues which may arise while navigating the Refugee Determination Process.
 - <https://ccisab.ca/refugee-claimants-transitioning-into-the-community-rctc/>
 - Location: Calgary, AB

REFERENCES

Canadian Council for Refugees. (n.d.). Refugee claimants: comment on use of terms. Retrieved March 7, 2024, from <https://ccrweb.ca/en/refugee-claimants-comment-use-terms>.