



# Caring for Kids New to Canada

A guide for health professionals working with  
immigrant and refugee children and youth

## Guide

# Helping newcomers overcome barriers to health care

This guide summarizes how health professionals can help reduce some of the barriers that prevent immigrant and refugee families from accessing or receiving quality health care in Canada. Find more information at [www.kidsnewtocanada.ca](http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca).

### Self-educate and train practice staff about:

- How to provide culturally competent care.
- Health issues that are more common in newcomers.
- Availability of local community resources and how to help patients connect with them.
- Health care coverage eligibility for immigrants and refugees, including the Interim Federal Health Program for refugees and provincial coverage, if available. Policies at local hospitals or clinics concerning eligibility and emergency care can vary: find out what they are. Circulate clear guidelines for staff on care entitlements of different groups.

### Help newcomer families access health care services.

- Educate newcomer patients on their eligibility for health care coverage based on immigration/refugee status. Let them know about free local public health services (e.g., immunizations).
- Help educate patients about navigating the Canadian health system.
- Connect patients with a regular primary care provider (or a community health centre for those who are uninsured) and support services (e.g., social work, transportation, interpreters, financial aid, settlement services, legal agencies).

### Streamline health care coverage paperwork.

- Ask about your patient's immigration or refugee status and know which health care services or benefits they are (or are not) entitled to.
- Register with Mediavie Blue Cross, which administers the Interim Federal Health program. Check a newcomer patient's coverage at each visit.
- Improve the rate and completion of payment, e.g., by identifying one person in your practice to learn and run the process.

### Help build newcomers' trust in the health care system.

- Be clear to newcomer patients that patient information is confidential.
- Provide flexible appointment times to accommodate mental health needs or irregular work schedules.
- Provide printed reminders and use tracking systems to improve patient attendance and monitor access to care.
- Encourage positive and stable relations with all clinic staff.
- Offer preventative services; emphasize the benefits of continuity of care, prevention and screening.

### Promote effective communication with patients and families.

- Understand the importance of interpreters, how best to work with them, how to arrange for services in advance, and appropriate alternatives. Avoid using children in families as interpreters. Advocate for interpretive services in your community.
- Be aware that eliciting information about sensitive issues from young newcomers may require several consultations.
- Learn about the family's dynamics and socio-cultural perceptions of illness.
- Provide health promotional materials in multiple languages, many of which are available online.
- Provide a letter for newcomer families that explains a child's diagnoses or needs, if applicable. This can help when looking for support services or urgent care.

### Pool information and resources.

- Use an interprofessional team approach, including referrals to appropriate community organizations.
- Pool local interest in newcomer patients and information about providing care.

[www.kidsnewtocanada.ca](http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca)



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