

# 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.