

Dental Care for Refugees in Greater Victoria

Vancouver Island Refugee Response Team

Why provide dental services to Syrian refugees in Greater Victoria?

Syrian refugees have fled conflict in one of the greatest displacements of civilians since the Second World War. Canada has welcomed them as part of our humanitarian response to this crisis. By taking on one family, or one individual, your office can contribute to this effort. Currently very few dental offices are providing care but with more providers the load can be shared.

What should we expect when the patients come in?

The state of the newcomer's teeth varies, depending on where they lived in Syria before the conflict started and where they have lived in the 6 years since. Someone who was living in a besieged neighborhood in Aleppo, or in a tent in a refugee camp, may have extensive dental problems. Another person who left early in the conflict and was able to work in a neighboring country may have been able to access regular dental care, although this is less common. They may need extensive cleaning before the state of their teeth can be assessed. They may have had work done that does not meet Canadian standards.

- The BCDA was contacted by Immigrant Services Society of BC in November 2016 to provide assistance for refugee dental care. For 6 months, The BCDA visually screened about 950 government sponsored refugees that came to Vancouver with the support of dentists and other staff who volunteered their time. The screenings helped provide a better picture of the oral health status of the refugees; about 25% needed urgent care (i.e. in pain, swelling) and about 50% needed dental care at some point, mainly for extractions and restorations.

How will we communicate with them? Are there interpreters?

There are interpreters and Arabic speaking settlement staff available, particularly for the first appointments. You may call the Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria P: (250) 386-4395, and/ or the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre, 250-361-9433 for assistance.

- You can also readily access the Provincial Language Services Line 1(888) 603-5087 <http://www.phsa.ca/health-professionals/professional-resources/interpreting-services>
- Later, when you are more comfortable with each other and they know what to expect, and as their English improves, an interpreter may not be necessary.

Will we be paid?

Refugees in their **first year** have coverage:

- Under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)
- Additional coverage through a community group, such as a church, or a group of individuals who are supporting the family for the first year.

In their **second year** refugees may have coverage through

- Employment
- Dental benefits through provincial income support (Ministry link below).
- Enhanced dental coverage through provincial disability benefits

Advocates and settlement worker are able to assist dental offices with the process of requesting dental benefits.

Interim Federal Health Program IFHP dental coverage provides coverage for oral exams, x-rays, complicated and uncomplicated extractions, amalgam and composite restoration, trauma, pain control and caries, and emergency care. Certain services such as root canals, prophylaxis, orthodontic treatment, etc., are not covered. A list of what is covered is available at the link on the next page.

Provincial Income Assistance: Basic dental services, such as restorations, extractions, and preventative services are provided to recipients of income assistance and disability assistance who are eligible for general health supplements. Basic dental services are also provided to children of families in receipt of BC Employment and Assistance. Emergency dental services for the relief of pain are provided to all recipients of income assistance, and disability assistance.

This means that some of the services you provide will likely be *pro bono*. After the first year, the family may be established enough to begin contributing to their own dental care costs. Some may have employment that provides dental coverage. Some, designated by the United Nations High Commission as most vulnerable and in need of resettlement, will remain at a subsistence income level.

What next?

If you are thinking of taking on a refugee family, thank you!



If you would like to speak to a Dental Office already treating refugees and billing through IFHP,
contact: Dr Steven Fowler or Shannon Porcher, reception, fowler01@shaw.ca or (250) 746-8700

If you would like further information about the Interim Federal Health Program:

BC dentists can also [access this info on the BCDA members site](#) using their password.

Steps to Confirm Eligibility, Coverage and Reimbursement

1. Dentists must [register as a Medavie Blue Cross provider](#) to submit claims for treatment under the IFHP.
2. As coverage is dependent on the immigration status of the patient, it may cease or change at any time. Confirm coverage by IFHP before providing treatment to ensure claims can be reimbursed through Medavie or CDAnet:

Medavie Blue Cross

1. Call 1 888 614 1880 or login to [Medavie Blue Cross](#) to confirm coverage with patient's identification number.

CDAnet

1. Log in to CDAnet and go to Claims Submission.

- ❓ Enter patient information as if you were submitting a claim.
 - ❓ CDAnet will show if the patient has active IFHP coverage and what services are covered or require preauthorization.
 - 3. Some procedures are covered while others require pre-authorization from Medavie or they will not be reimbursed. Authorize procedures by contacting Medavie, who will provide the results of the authorization request in writing.
Pre-authorizations are required for certain restorations, extractions, dentures and any additional treatment. There is no explicit coverage for services such as endodontic procedures, orthodontics, stainless steel crowns and hygiene.
- Payment Information**
- ❓ IFHP is a payer of last resort; i.e., provides benefits to those who do not have access to public or private health insurance.
 - ❓ IFHP does not coordinate benefits (co-pay) with other insurance plans/programs.
 - ❓ All claims must be submitted within six months from the date treatment is rendered.

Provider Handbook: An explanation of the program, including how to register, who is covered, and how to submit claims. <http://providerifhpen.medavie.bluecross.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/09/IFHP-Information-Handbook-for-Health-care-Professionals-April-1-2016.pdf>

Grid of coverage: <http://providerifhpen.medavie.bluecross.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/09/Dental-Benefit-Grid.pdf>

Quick Reference Guide for Electronic Dental Claims:
<https://www.medavie.bluecross.ca/cs/BlobServer?blobcol=urldata&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobheadervalue2=abinary%3B+charset%3DUTF-8&blobheadername2=MDT-Type&blobkey=id&blobwhere=1187212564336&blobheader=application%2Fpdf>

Provider Portal: <https://provider.medavie.bluecross.ca/> All documents and forms needed, including the Provider Handbook, are accessible through the above portal.

If you would like further information about Provincial Government Dental Benefits

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/dental-and-orthodontic-services>

- **If you would like to speak to someone about the refugee resettlement**, in general or about other ways you could help, you may contact the Vancouver Island Refugee Response Team.
 - Alvaro Moreno, Director of Settlement, alvaro@vircs.bc.ca, (250) 361-9433, ext. 207
 - Alix Hotsenpiller, Coordinator, alix@vircs.bc.ca, (250) 361-9433, ext. 211
 - Andrea Westfall, Co-Coordinator, andrea@vircs.bc.ca, (250) 361-9433, ext. 209
 - Visit the Vancouver Island Refugee Response Team website <http://virrt.bc.ca>

- **If you are ready to take a refugee family as clients,** contact Settlement services at:
 - Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society, (250) 361-9433.
 - Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, 250.388.4728.
 - Public Health, Island Health, Victoria Refugee Hub, Charlotte Brown, R.N. 250-388-2200

For information about this document, contact alix@vircs.bc.ca.