

First 24 Hours



After walking across the border, refugee claimants themselves contact or are picked up by either police or directly by CBSA (Canada Border Services Agency) or they make their claim at an IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) office.



Upon arrival at YVR, the individual expresses their need for protection to a CBSA officer. They are interviewed and an intake form is completed as well as security checks. They may be asked to come back the next day if more time is needed. If necessary, an interpreter will be called (either in person or over the phone).



CBSA or IRCC officers screen the identity of the refugee claimant and complete security checks which can take up to 8 hours for each person.



Emergency care is provided if needed. Depending on need and availability, food and blankets are also provided.

Next Two Weeks



CBSA has 72 hours to decide if they are eligible to make a refugee claim. If eligible, their case is referred to the IRB (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada) and they have 15 days to submit the Basis of Claim (BOC) form to IRB.



For those who cannot prove their identity or have criminal convictions for serious crimes, they are detained until they can prove that they are not a risk, or they will be deported.



During this time, claimants can go to SOS (Settlement Orientation Services) for assistance with their paperwork, referral to legal aid, support with the claim process and housing search. Housing referrals are made to several shelters and transitional housing centres including: Journey Home Community, Inasmuch Community Society and Kinbrace Community Society.



Once a refugee claimant has submitted the BOC and opened their refugee claim, they receive the Refugee Protection Claimant document. With that document they are able to do the Immigration Medical Exam (IME), receive the medical certificate and become eligible for provincial social assistance, a work permit, as well as a temporary social insurance number.



Refugee claimants are eligible for IFHP (Interim Federal Health Program) that provides them with basic and supplemental health services including the coverage of one Immigration Medical Exam (IME). Claimants can access specialized primary health care e.g. The Welcome Centre Medical Clinic.

Next 2 Months and Beyond



IRB hears most claims within 12 months (sometimes longer due to backlog). Refugee claimants access help preparing for their hearings through refugeeclaim.ca (READY Tours and the Hearing Preparation Guide), the VAST "Getting Through It" weekly group and the SOS Health & Settlement Orientation weekly groups. If the claim is accepted, the person receives the Protected Person Status and can apply for Permanent Residence (PR).



Support services received after IRB acceptance include IRCC funded settlement, employment and language (LINC) programs and services, including: orientation and information, language assessment, employment program accessibility, trauma therapy, and connections to facilitate integration into their communities. Vancity also provides loans for the PR application process, if needed.

IRB Rejected Claims



Refugee claims that have been rejected by the IRB will have a chance to appeal to the Immigration Appeal Division (IAD). BC is one of the provinces that continues to provide supports during the appeal process.



If the appeal is rejected, individuals have 30 days to leave voluntarily before the federal government issues a removal order.