

# REFUGEES IN CANADA:

*A snapshot of the different categories and what they mean*



Refugees arrive to Canada under one of four (4) different categories as defined below:

## Government-Assisted Refugee (GARs)

Under the GAR Program, refugees are referred to Canada for resettlement by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Individuals cannot apply directly. Individuals must register for refugee status with the UNHCR or state authorities to be considered by a referral organization.

A GAR's initial resettlement in Canada is entirely supported by the Government of Canada or the province of Quebec. This support is delivered by non-governmental agencies called service provider organizations funded by IRCC under a program called the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). GARs receive support for up to one year from the date they arrive in Canada, or until they are able to support themselves, whichever happens first.



## Privately-Sponsored Refugee (PSR)

If an individual is a PSR, it means that a group of people in Canada have volunteered to help the individual adjust to life here once resettlement has taken place. The sponsorship group will assist the individual with finding a place to live, financial support, social and emotional support and food and clothing. The sponsorship group also agrees to support the PSR for one year after they arrive or until they can support themselves, whichever comes first. Privately sponsored individuals can access settlement information and orientation at settlement provider agencies at any time. To find a list of organizations in your area, [click here](#).<sup>1</sup>



## Resources

- » **Information Bulletin:** This [bulletin](#)<sup>2</sup> prepared by the government of Canada provides information to GARs on pre-arrival and post arrival processes and supports.
- » **Infosheet: RAP Program Key Forms and Activities**<sup>3</sup>—This info-sheet provides a list of key forms and activities undertaken within the first three weeks in the RAP program.
- » **Infosheet: ISSofBC RAP Program Timeline**<sup>4</sup>—This info-sheet shows the timeline and key activities undertaken by ISSofBC's Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) that supports newcomer Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) within the first two weeks of arrival.



## Resources

- » **Information Bulletin:** This [bulletin](#)<sup>5</sup> prepared by the government of Canada provides information about sponsorships and costs.
- » **Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP):** [RSTP](#)<sup>6</sup> provides training and support to Canadian refugee sponsorship groups, Sponsorship Agreement Holders and sponsored refugees.
- » **Private Sponsorship of Refugees Toolkit:** Developed by the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), is a practical [web-based resource](#)<sup>7</sup> to provide information about private refugee sponsorship to groups across Canada.

1. [ircc.ca/english/newcomers/services/index.asp](http://ircc.ca/english/newcomers/services/index.asp)  
2. [canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/government-assisted-refugee-program.html](http://canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/government-assisted-refugee-program.html)  
3. [refugeehub.issbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/RAP-Activities-and-Forms-final.pdf](http://refugeehub.issbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/RAP-Activities-and-Forms-final.pdf)  
4. [bcrefugeehub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ISSofBC-RAP-Program-Info-graphic-October-2021.pdf](http://bcrefugeehub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ISSofBC-RAP-Program-Info-graphic-October-2021.pdf)  
5. [canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/refugees-information.html](http://canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/refugees-information.html)  
6. [rstp.ca/en](http://rstp.ca/en)  
7. [ccrweb.ca/en/psr-toolkit/home](http://ccrweb.ca/en/psr-toolkit/home)



## Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program

The BVOR Program matches refugees identified for resettlement by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) with private sponsors in Canada. Key features of the program are as follows:

- » The UNHCR identifies the refugees.
- » The Government of Canada provides up to six months of income support.
- » Private sponsors are responsible for another six months of financial support. The sponsorship group also gives up to a year of social and emotional support.
- » The Interim Federal Health (IFH) Program and provincial health care cover refugees for the length of the sponsorship (one year).



### Resources

- » **Video:** How the BVOR Program Works<sup>7</sup>
- » **Info-page:** Who Can Apply to Sponsor a Refugee<sup>8</sup>
- » **Info-page:** What is a BVOR?<sup>9</sup>
- » **Info-page:** How is the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program different from the regular Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program?<sup>10</sup>



## Definitions

**Refugee:** a person who is forced to flee from persecution and who is located outside of their home country.

**Convention Refugee:** a person who meets the refugee definition in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. This definition is used in Canadian law and is widely accepted internationally. To meet the definition, a person must be outside their country of origin and have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

**Permanent Resident:** Permanent Resident (PR): A person given permanent resident status by immigrating to Canada, but is not a Canadian citizen. Refugees who are resettled become PRs through the Government-Assisted Refugee Program or the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. A person making a refugee claim in Canada does not become a PR at that time. To become one, the Immigration and Refugee Board must first approve their claim. Then, they must apply for and get permanent resident status.

## Refugee Claimant

A person *in need of protection* is a person in Canada who cannot return to their home country safely. This is because if they return, they would be subject to:

- » danger or torture
- » risk to their life, or
- » risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment



Canada offers refugee protection to individuals in Canada who fear persecution or who would be in danger if they had to leave. These individuals are generally referred to as Refugee Claimants as they must make a claim for refugee protection to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) to legally stay in Canada.

Refugee Claimants are also often referred to as Asylum Seekers. 'Claimant' is the term used in Canadian law.

### Resources

- » **Info-page:** Claim refugee status from inside Canada—About the process<sup>11</sup>
- » **Infosheet:** Refugee Claim Process<sup>12</sup>
- » **Toolkit:** Refugee Claimants in BC—FAQs<sup>13</sup>
- » **Toolkit:** The Refugee Claim Process<sup>14</sup>



**Immigration and Refugee Protection Act:** An Act<sup>15</sup> respecting immigration to Canada and granting of refugee protection to persons who are displaced, persecuted or in danger.

**Protected Person:** according to Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, a person who has been determined to be either (a) a Convention Refugee or (b) a person in need of protection (including, for example, a person who is in danger of being tortured if deported from Canada).

**Inland Claim:** An Inland claim is a refugee claim made at an Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) office.

**Port of Entry (POE):** A POE claim is a claim made at Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) upon arrival at a land border crossing, airport or seaport.

7. youtube.com/watch?v=dJ3togUj3PM
8. canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/blended-visa-office-program/eligibility.html
9. https://www.rstpc.ca/en/bvor/info
10. https://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=770&top=11
11. canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/claim-protection-inside-canada.html
12. bcrefugeehub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Refugee-Claim-Process.pdf
13. bcrefugeehub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/BC-Refugee-Hub-FAQ\_Jan2019.pdf
14. issbc.org/resource-types/refugee-claim-process
15. laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-2.5/page-1.html

