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## **STRIVING TOWARD BEST PRACTICE Healthcare: Navigating the System February 2026**

Physical health and mental well-being can impact all aspects of a newcomer's life. Sometimes sponsors feel overwhelmed by how to begin the process of ensuring those they sponsor get the healthcare they need in addition to staying up-to-date on all the requirements and changes in the system, including the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP). Whether it is finding a family doctor, dentist, mental health specialist, or learning about preventative care, this practice guideline outlines key points from experts for sharing with your sponsor group, as well as resources for follow-up.

### **Building a Healthcare Team**

- Note the replacement of single-care physician model with new "health teams" model
- Seek out other medical practitioners such as nurse practitioners, pharmacist
- Check regional, local, city hospitals about family physician listings
- Try CPSO online physician lists
- Check out walk-in clinics who have family practices
- Contact Healthcare Connect, 811
- Check official wait times and resist being directed to privately-paid services
- Keep on top of appointments and record keeping
- Respect patient rights and confidentiality
- Ask to be added for contact if patients cannot be reached by doctor's office
- Be polite but firm regarding healthcare needs and accessing medical services

### **Promoting Preventative Health**

- Preventative health is defined by physical, mental, and social well-being
- Preventative health saves lives, money, and offers peace of mind
- Involves immunizations, screening, regular check-ups, and health care supports
- Offers control over health to stop, delay, or mitigate disease consequences
- Three levels of preventative health include:
  - Primary – such as, immunizations, education, exercise, smoking, diet, etc.
  - Secondary – such as, screening for cancer, diabetes, etc.
  - Treatment – such as, infectious disease, respiratory issues, endocrine issues, etc.
- Preventative health should span the lifespan, from pregnancy/birth to aging

## Supporting Mental Health Needs

- Starting life in a new country brings stresses that impact mental health
- Stresses may result from violence, poverty, housing, family re-unification, language, and social isolation, in addition to systemic issues such as racism, homophobia, oppression and discrimination
- Need to address in a culturally and trauma-informed approach
- Assure confidentiality, avoid intrusive questions, dispel myths, be clear about your role as a sponsor

## Changes to Interim Federal Health Program

- Starting May 1, 2026, co-payments will be required for some services
- \$4 for each prescription filled; 30% of cost for supplemental health products, as well as dental, vision, counselling services, and assistive devices

## Resources:

- Private Refugee Sponsor Network (Ontario) – [www.refugeesponsornet.ca](http://www.refugeesponsornet.ca)
- Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) – 1-877-292-2288, 416-363-1066, <https://ccvt.org>
- Canadian Mental Health Association – <https://cmha.ca/who-we-are/contact-us>
- Health Connect – phone 811 to connect to care 24/7; health information – 211
- The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) – 1-800-463-2338, <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info>
- CPSO find a doctor – <https://register.cpsso.on.ca>
- Wait times for services – [www.er-watch.ca](http://www.er-watch.ca); <https://howlongwilliwait.com/>; <https://www.ontariohealth.ca/system/reporting/wait-times>
- Immunizations – [www.ontario.ca/vaccines](http://www.ontario.ca/vaccines)
- Interim Federal Health Program –
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-within-canada/health-care/interim-federal-health-program.html>
- Interim Federal Health Program providers' search – <https://ifhp.medaviebc.ca/en/providers-search>
- Orientation to healthcare in Ontario for newcomers – <https://www.ontario.ca/page/getting-settled-ontario>; <https://www.ontario.ca/page/your-health>
- Sexual Health Infoline Ontario (SHILO) – 1-800-668-2437
- Canadian Pediatric Society – immunizations, <https://cps.ca/en/clinics/immunization-and-vaccines>
- Ontario Health Teams – <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-health-teams>
- Northwest Toronto Ontario Health Team, <https://nwtomt.ca/health-care-help-for-newcomers.ca>
- The Suicide Prevention hotline: 988

**Reference:** PRSN workshop – *Healthcare: Navigating the System*, February 2026, [www.refugeesponsornet.ca/on-demand-resources/](http://www.refugeesponsornet.ca/on-demand-resources/)