

IMMIGRATION STATUS AND SOCIAL SERVICES

A person's eligibility for social services often depends on their immigration status. Here are the main types of immigration status in Canada, followed by a table setting out some of the major social programs to which persons may be eligible, according to their status.



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INFORMATION EMPOWERS

Main Types of Immigrant Status

Permanent resident (previously known as landed immigrant)

A permanent resident has permission from the government to live permanently in Canada. They often have a card that proves their status (although this is not mandatory). A permanent resident can apply to become a Canadian citizen after a certain period of time.

Permanent residents can lose their status if they stay outside Canada for too long. They can also lose their status if they are found guilty of certain crimes.

■ **Sponsorship** : A Canadian citizen or a permanent resident can sponsor a family member (for example a spouse, a dependant child or a parent) to come to Canada as a permanent resident. The sponsor must provide for the family member's basic needs for several years after their arrival in Canada. A permanent resident whose sponsorship agreement is still in effect can only receive social assistance (welfare) if their **sponsor is refusing to support them or if life with the sponsor has become intolerable** (for example due to conjugal violence). In this situation, the sponsor must usually pay the government back for social assistance payments made during the sponsorship period.

Temporary resident

A temporary resident is a person who has permission to stay in Canada for a limited time. They have a visa to study, visit or work in Canada.

When the authorized period of stay is over, a temporary resident who remains in Canada, without receiving permission to do so, (for example by obtaining permanent residence or an extension of their visa), loses their status.

Accepted Refugee (or Protected Person)

Refugee status is granted to a person who has shown that they are at risk of persecution in their country and need Canada's protection.

An accepted refugee can ask for a Quebec Selection Certificate and for permanent residence in Canada. These will give them access to additional social services.

Main Types of Immigrant Status

Refugee claimant (or asylum seeker)

A refugee claimant is someone who has asked for refugee protection and is waiting for the decision.

A person who received a **negative decision** on their refugee claim is often referred to a **refused refugee claimant**. As long as they do not receive a deportation date, a refused refugee claimant will have access to the same social programs as a (non-refused) refugee claimant.

Person Without Status

A person is without status if they are not authorized to stay in Canada. Most persons without status either remained in Canada after their visas expired or are refused refugee claimants who received a deportation date but decided to remain in Canada anyway. A person without status risks arrest and removal from Canada.



Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada

The information in this document is up to date as of April 2025.
It is not meant as legal advice.

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Acces to Social Services

In Quebec, **everyone** had the right to the following services, regardless of their immigration status:

- Legal aid
- Public school for their children under 18
- Compensation for victims of crime (IVAC)

Here are some of the major social programs to which persons may be eligible, depending on their status.

Status	Quebec medicare (RAMQ)	Social Assistance (welfare)	Federal and Quebec Child Benefits	Social Housing	Subsidized daycare
Permanent resident	✓	✓ *(but see above for sponsored persons)	✓	✓	✓
Temporary resident	*some temporary workers and students	*discretionary aid available in some urgent situations	*usually after 18 months for temporary workers and for students		*most temporary workers and some students
Accepted refugee	✓	✓	✓		✓
Refugee claimant	* (healthcare provided by the Interim Federal Health Program - IFHP)	✓			*if they have a work permit
Person without status	minor children are eligible	*discretionary aid available in some urgent situations			

Note: A person must also meet all the other eligibility requirements of each program in order to receive the benefits (for example limits on income and assets for Social Assistance). For more information on the eligibility criteria for each programme, contact Service Québec:

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/government/services-quebec/>

Capitale-Nationale region: 418 644-4545

Montréal region: 514 644-4545

Elsewhere in Québec: 1 877 644-4545 (toll free)

For the hearing impaired (TTY): 1 800 361-9596 (toll free)