

**S.W.I.S.**  
Settlement Workers  
in Schools



# Questions and Answers for Newcomers



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Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada

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# 1. When you arrive in Canada

**What is a Social Insurance Number (SIN)?** ([back to the top](#))

[Social Insurance Number \(SIN\)](#) is a 9-digit identity number for a Canadian citizen, individuals living in Canada as a permanent resident, or individuals with temporary stay as approved by the Government of Canada.

Each individual needs a SIN in order to access employment or receive government benefit. On March 31, 2014, Service Canada began issuing SINs in a paper format (Confirmation of SIN letter) and stopped producing plastic SIN cards. Remember to keep your Social Insurance Number **safe**. Service Canada is responsible for issuing SINs, and there is **no fee** to apply for a SIN. If you apply by mail or in-person, you may only submit **original** documents. If you apply online, you may submit **digital copies** that are **clear** and **legible**.

Visit the [Apply section](#) to find out what documents you need to apply, based on your personal situation. If you apply in-person, simply gather all the original [required documents](#) and go to a local [Service Canada Centre](#).

For more information about SIN, check [Contact Social Insurance Number](#) or simply call Service Canada toll free at 1-866-274-6627.

**Do I need a BC Identification (BCID) card and how do I get it?** ([back to the top](#))

If you don't drive, you can use a [BC Identification Card \(BCID\)](#) as a picture ID instead of a driver's license. Anyone 12 or older can apply for a BCID card. Before applying for a BCID card you must have a Permanent Resident (PR) Card. Upon receiving a Permanent Resident Card, you may go to an [ICBC driver's licensing office](#) to apply for a BCID. You can use [BC Services Card](#) as an alternative to a BCID.

**How to get a B.C. Driver's License?** ([back to the top](#))

As a new immigrant you must be 16 or older, have a Permanent Resident (PR) Card before you can take a knowledge test, a vision screening test and then a road test in order to get a [B.C. Driver's license](#).

Check [here](#) to learn more about how to get a B.C. Driver's License. You may combine your B.C. Driver's License Card with B.C. Services Card if you're enrolled in Medical Services Plan (MSP).

### **What is a B.C. Services Card and how can I get one? ([back to the top](#))**

The [B.C. Services Card](#) provides access to many different government services for B.C. residents. You can use your BC Services Card to access health services. You can use the BC Services Card app to log in to [government services](#). It's a government-issued ID. It protects your identity. There is no fee to get a BC Services Card. However, if you're combining your BC Services Card with your driver's license, [fees](#) that apply to the regular [driver's license renewal process](#) still apply. Check [here](#) to find out which kind of B.C. Services Card you should get, **and [how to get a B.C. Services Card](#)**.

### **How to obtain general information for Newcomers to British Columbia? ([back to the top](#))**

Moving to a new country can be hard. You might have a lot of questions. The B.C. [Newcomers' Guide](#) will help you settle into B.C. quickly and easily. It's available to download as a PDF in thirteen languages. You can also request a printed copy guide by using [the order form](#) for free within British Columbia.

Another good resource is [BC 211](#). Use this [Red Book/Online Directory](#) or simply call or text 211 to speak with a 211 Navigator for free and confidential information, that is available 24/7 and can access an interpreter in over 240 languages to help facilitate inquiries.

### **What is Service BC and how can I find a Service BC office in my area? ([back to the top](#))**

Service BC can guide you through Government of British Columbia programs and services. [Information may be collected](#) to help them assess and respond to your enquiry.

You may contact Service BC by [Text, Phone or Email](#), Monday through Friday, 7:30am to 5:00pm Pacific Time (except B.C. statutory holidays). Check online to find the nearest [Service BC office](#) that offers in-person service.

You may also [find government programs and services](#) by searching the Services A-Z index to find what you're looking for.

## **Who can apply for Canada Child Benefit (CCB)?** ([back to the top](#))

A parent or legal guardian of a child under the age of 18 may apply for [Canada Child Benefit](#) which is a tax-free monthly payment. The child must live with their parent or legal guardian, someone who is primarily responsible for the care and upbringing of the child.

For CCB purposes, when both parents live together with the child, the mother is usually considered the primary responsible parent and should apply. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) administers for British Columbia the CCB which might also include the [child disability benefit](#) and any related [provincial and territorial programs](#) (BC Family Bonus and BC early childhood Tax Benefit).

Requirements for CCB include immigration and residence status. CCB is calculated based on the family's net income and is generally paid on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. Click [here](#) for more information including [application forms](#) (Forms RC66 & RC66SCH are usually needed for initial application, and Form CTB9 is needed in some situations) or [contact](#) CRA directly.

**New Immigrant families with children** under the age of 18 can use the [Canada Child Benefit](#) application forms (RC66 & RC66SCH) to apply for all child benefit programs, including the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and the GST/HST Credit. **New immigrant individuals of 19** years of age or older and **families without children** under the age of 18 who have not filed Individual Income Tax Return **still** may complete the [RC151 GST/HST Credit application form](#) to apply for GST/HST Credit, *for the year that you became a resident of Canada.*

## **How much can I get for CCB and GST/HST Credit?** ([back to the top](#))

You may use the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) [Child and family benefits calculator](#) to check if you are entitled to the benefit and receive an estimated amount for each benefit.

## **How to have child and family benefits directly deposited into my bank account?**

You can enroll for direct deposit online if you are registered for the [My Account](#) service (after you filed your 1<sup>st</sup> income tax return) with Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) or [Direct deposit through participating financial institutions](#). You may also fill out the [Direct Deposit](#)



[Request - Individuals](#) form, sign and mail it to the address on the form.

[Direct deposit](#) is a convenient and secure way to receive your payments from the Government of Canada.

If you already signed up for direct deposit and provided bank account information to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for one or more payments, CRA will continue to use this information for those payments. However, if you become entitled to a new payment, please contact the CRA to authorize them to use your existing information or provide new direct deposit banking information.

### **What is GST/HST Credit and who can apply for it? ([back to the top](#))**

[GST/HST \(goods and services tax/harmonized sales tax\) Credit](#) is a tax-free quarterly payment from both Federal and Provincial governments. The credit is determined based on the family's net income and paid on July 5, October 5, January 5 and April 5. All residents of Canada, for income tax purposes, 19 years of age or older may be eligible. For those individuals in a marital relationship, only one spouse/partner may receive it for the whole family.

You are automatically considered for the GST/HST Credit when you file your taxes.

### **How do I clear customs for my shipment of goods as a new immigrant? ([back to the top](#))**

You may go to the following Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) walk-in service location to clear customs when the shipment arrives.

Canada Border Services Agency

[Vancouver Commercial Operations West \(809\)](#)

412-4th Floor, 1611 Main Street

Vancouver BC V6A 2W5

Documents to bring with you:

- Passports of all family members
- Landing papers of all family members
- Shipping documents from the shipping company
- List of all the goods to follow (as detailed as possible, including quantity, brand name, model, serial number, etc.).

[Memorandum D2-2-1](#) outlines and explains the conditions under which a settler may import goods into Canada for personal or household use without the payment of duties. Use [BSF186](#) form to list all goods to follow.

Please note while there's no expiry date on the list nor minimum/maximum items to be listed, you can only have the list stamped/authenticated **ONCE**.

[Border Information Service \(BIS\)](#): 1-800-461-9999 toll-free in Canada and the USA, provides computerized information 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Live agents are available: Monday to Friday from 7 am to 7 pm ET (closed on federal statutory holidays).



## 2. Immigration

**How can I correct mistakes in my immigration documents?** ([back to the top](#))

If there is a mistake in either your name or date of birth, please visit the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website and go to [Request to Amend Valid Temporary Resident Documents or Information Contained in the Confirmation of Permanent Residence](#) for more information. Also, discuss this with a settlement worker at ISS. They will help you complete the appropriate forms.

If the government made a mistake on your Permanent Resident Card, you can [Request to Reissue a Permanent Resident Card \(PR Card\) \(IMM 5531\)](#). Find out more details about the requirements and details on how to apply in the [Instruction Guide \(IMM 5530\)](#).

Please note the PR card has a space limitation of **28** characters (letters) for last names (family names) and 28 characters for given names (first and middle names). If your name is longer, the name on the PR card will automatically be shortened to the first 28 characters **each** for **both** the **given** and **last names**. This is NOT an error and the PR card cannot be modified to include more characters.

## **How can I apply for, renew or replace a Permanent Resident Card? ([back to the top](#))**

Please note that new permanent residents don't need to apply for a PR card. You are not eligible for a PR card if you were asked by the Government of Canada to leave the country. If you are a [Canadian citizen](#), you can't have (and don't need) a PR card (you need to return your PR Card at your [citizenship ceremony](#)).

You should **only** apply for a PR card if:

- you didn't receive your first PR card within 180 days of immigrating to Canada;
- your PR card is expired or will expire in less than nine months;
- your PR card has been lost, stolen, or destroyed; or
- you legally changed your name and need to update your PR card.

Follow the instruction to [Apply for, renew or replace a Permanent Resident Card](#).

## **How can I return to Canada as a Permanent Resident if I lost my PR Card/my PR card expired? ([back to the top](#))**

In this case you may use this form of [Application for a Permanent Resident Travel Document](#) for a one-time entry.

Do not use this application if you want to give up (renounce) your permanent resident status and want to come to Canada as a visitor only. In that case, you can apply to [voluntarily give up \(renounce\) your permanent resident status](#).

## **I have lost my Record of landing or Confirmation of Permanent Residence paper. What should I do? ([back to the top](#))**

You can no longer get a copy of a Confirmation of Permanent Residence (COPR) or a copy of a Record of Landing documents. Instead, what you have to do is to apply for a [Verification of Status \(VOS\)](#) that gives the same information contained in your COPR such as the date and place of entry to Canada. If you require specific information that was originally captured on the immigration document (immigration category, document validity dates, etc.), you must specify this in your application for a Verification of Status document. Please note that the Verification of Status document **cannot** be used for travel and is **not** an identity document. It's a plain paper document that provides information about your immigration history.

## **How to check the processing time for my Permanent Resident Card (PR Card)? ([back to the top](#))**

You can [check your application status online](#) about your PR Card processing time, or find answers to some frequently asked questions in [IRCC Help Centre](#). You may also get general information on their [website](#).

## **How do I change my address on my Permanent Resident Card? ([back to the top](#))**

If an address is changed before you receive your Permanent Resident Card (PR Card), in most cases you may use the [Change my address](#) online service to notify Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) of your new address.

If you can't change your address online, you can change it using the [IRCC Web form](#). Follow the instructions and include all the details.

To contact IRCC, you may use the online [IRCC Client Support Centre Services](#). Please note that when you call IRCC at 1 888 242-2100 (Monday- Friday, 8am – 4pm your local time, except for statutory holidays), you must choose one of the first few recorded options before you can press “0” to speak with an agent.

## **How can I reunite with my family members who are outside of Canada? ([back to the top](#))**

If qualified, there are options that help reunite family members after arriving in Canada:

- If qualifying under the “one-year window opportunity” follow [this link](#).
- To sponsor a spouse, common-law or conjugal partner and dependent children, please visit the following [link](#) for more information.



### 3. Healthcare

#### **How to apply for the Medical Service Plan (MSP) of BC? ([back to the top](#))**

Under the *Medicare Protection Act*, enrolment with the [Medical Services Plan \(MSP\)](#) is mandatory for all BC eligible residents and their dependents. MSP of BC is available for those who have lived in BC for three months (waiting period is the remainder of the month of arrival + 2 months). However, you should apply for MSP as soon as you arrive in BC. Application can be submitted through [online](#) or [by mail](#) with copies of supporting documents if your MSP is under a self-administered plan. If your MSP coverage will be under a group plan through your employer, union or pension plan, please contact your group administrator for more information on applying. MSP of BC offers a basic medical coverage. The [MSP premiums](#) were eliminated as of January 1, 2020. After enrolment each family member receives a unique lifetime identifier for health care called Personal Health Number (PHN), which is printed at the back of your [BC Services Card](#) (formerly BC CareCard). Check for [Services Covered by MSP](#), [Services Not Covered by MSP](#), and more.

#### **How do I change and/or remove family members or change/correct information for my MSP account? ([back to the top](#))**

You may report changes, such as updating your BC address, adding or removing a family member, updating/correcting personal information, updating status in Canada, to your self-administered MSP account using the online [Request MSP Account Change](#) tool, or Fill, Print and Mail the paper [MSP Account Change Form](#) attached with required documents.

Follow the instruction [here](#) if you're enrolled under a group plan administered by your employer, union or pension plan. More information about Managing Your MSP account is available [here](#).

#### **What is the contact phone number for Health Insurance BC? ([back to the top](#))**

Call 604.683.7151 or toll-free at: 1 800 663-7100 about health-related questions. Additional information is available online from the [Health Insurance BC](#).

## How do I find a family doctor/physician? ([back to the top](#))

Often, every BC resident has a family doctor (family physician). A child's school needs information such as the child's [MSP Personal Health Number \(PHN\)](#), formerly known as CareCard number and now printed at the back of BC Services Card, and the name and phone number of your family doctor, to keep on file.

To find a family doctor:

- Use [Find a Doctor BC](#) to find family doctors who are accepting new patients in BC, or [Sign-up](#) to be notified when a doctor in your area starts accepting new patients. (Note: There is a small monthly subscription fee that FIND A DOCTOR BC charges which you can cancel at any time)
- Go to a [Walk-in Clinic](#) and ask if there's a doctor there who accepts new patients; Ask those clinics that also provide Family Practice service, not ONLY for Walk-in services. Such information might change overtime.
- Be referred by a friend
- Check the [Yellow Pages](#), under "family doctor" or "family physician" for your city or this online [BC Doctor Directory](#) for doctors in the Tricities.
- Check online at [College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia](#) to search for a family physician/doctor in your or neighbouring community, and phone the doctor's office to find out if s/he is accepting new patients.
- Use the [Health Connect Registry](#) online tool to register to get a doctor or nurse practitioner. You may also call **8-1-1** to register for the Health Connect Registry in languages **other than** English. Translation services are available in over 130 languages.

Note: If you're already on a waitlist at your local clinic, you **do not** need to register. Primary care provider waitlists at all clinics and community health services in B.C. are transitioning to the Health Connect Registry (as of July 2023). You will be contacted directly about your registration.

You will maintain your original waitlist registration date.

### **Is a routine eye examination covered by MSP? ([back to the top](#))**

Children aged 0-18 and seniors aged 65+, may use their MSP Personal Health Number (PHN) to receive free [annual eye examinations](#). Routine eye examinations for individuals between 19-64 years old are NOT covered by MSP. However, all [medically required eye examinations](#) provided by an ophthalmologist or optometrist are still covered for all MSP beneficiaries.

### **How can I find an optometrist/eye doctor? ([back to the top](#))**

Check [here](#) to find an optometrist or eye doctor. Please be aware that some optometrists may charge extra fees whereas others don't charge any extra fees for your child's routine eye examinations. It is advised to call the optometrist's office and ask about any additional charges before making an appointment.

### **What is Fair PharmaCare and how do I register? ([back to the top](#))**

New residents of British Columbia can register for [Fair PharmaCare](#), a plan that provides financial help with eligible prescription drugs and medical supplies, at the same time or once you are enrolled in Medical Services Plan (MSP). If you register at the same time, your Fair PharmaCare account will be active as soon as your MSP enrolment is complete. Register for Fair PharmaCare [online](#) or by [Paper](#) or by [phone](#).

Fair PharmaCare coverage is based on your family **net** income for the relevant tax year, which is **2 years before** the current year (e.g., coverage for 2023 is based on 2021 family net income).

To get coverage, you consent for PharmaCare to check your family income with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) when you register, and every year after.

If you did not file an income tax return in Canada for that tax year, you can submit a [Fair PharmaCare Proof of Income Affidavit \(PDF\)](#). You must sign the affidavit in front of a notary public or a Commissioner for Taking Affidavits at a Service BC office. Service BC charges a small fee to witness the signing of an affidavit; a notary public will likely charge more.

Be sure that your affidavit:

- Is submitted for the correct tax year
- Declares income for you **and** your spouse, if applicable
- Is notarized or witnessed by a Commissioner for Taking Affidavits at a Service BC office
- Is **mailed in**, not faxed. The original affidavit copy is required.

Check out more about the [Fair PharmaCare Calculator](#), [Updating or Changing Your Coverage Information](#) (Fair PharmaCare assistance might change when family circumstances change) and [Fair PharmaCare Frequently Asked Questions](#). Information on Fair PharmaCare are also available [online in multiple languages](#).

### **What is the BC Healthy Kids Program? ([back to the top](#))**

The [BC Healthy Kids Program](#) helps families, who are eligible for MSP Supplementary Benefits program, with the cost of basic dental care (\$2000 of basic dental services every two years), prescription eyeglasses (lenses and basic frames once in a 12 month period), and eligible hearing aids for their dependent children under the age 19 (including the month they turn 19). To use services under the [BC Healthy Kids Program](#) you will need to show your child's BC CareCard or BC Services Card to the dental, optical or audiology office. Your dentist, optical provider or audiologist/hearing instrument provider will confirm coverage with the program contractor before each appointment.

### **How can I apply for the BC Healthy Kids Program? ([back to the top](#))**

When your [MSP Supplementary Benefits application](#) has been approved, the BC Healthy Kids Program usually begins at the start of the next month. No separate application is necessary. Check for more information about [BC Healthy Kids Program](#) or call 1.866.866.0800 to check your child's status.

### **How can I find a dentist who provides services under the BC Healthy Kids Program? ([back to the top](#))**

Please note that it is the parent's responsibility to check whether a dentist, optical or audiology supplier provides services to children through the BC Healthy Kids Program. To find a dentist who accepts patients under this program click [here](#), and make sure you



check the option of “Government Dental Plans: Healthy Kids Plan”. You may also find [reduced cost dental clinics](#), [dental emergencies](#), and more.

### **How can I apply for MSP Supplementary Benefits? ([back to the top](#))**

To qualify for [MSP Supplementary Benefits](#) you must be a BC resident holding the status of a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident (landed immigrant) for at least the past 12 consecutive months before application and not be exempt from liability to pay income tax by reason of any other act. Eligibility is also based on your family net income (an adjusted net income of \$42,000 a year or less), your age, family size, disability and any income from the Universal Child Care Benefit and Registered Disability Savings Plan. You may apply for Supplementary Benefit [online](#).

MSP supplementary benefits provide partial payment for certain medical services obtained in British Columbia (such as acupuncture, chiropractic, massage therapy, naturopathy, physical therapy, and non-surgical podiatry) and may provide access to other income-based programs. Families with Children under the age of 19 receiving supplementary benefits can access [Healthy Kids Program](#) for basic dental treatment, optical care and hearing assistance.

### **Where do I go for medical care if I do not have a family doctor? ([back to the top](#))**

Bring your BC Services Card and go to any **walk-in clinic** in the community. Service hours of walk-in clinics may vary and change at any time.

Please call or check online before going.

### **What are Urgent and Primary Care Centres (UPCCs) and where can I find one? ([back to the top](#))**

[Urgent and Primary Care Centres \(UPCCs\)](#) provide access to same-day, urgent, non-emergency health care. UPCCs are often open evening, weekends and statutory holidays (actual hours vary by clinic). UPCCs provide an alternative to visiting an emergency department for non-emergency issues. For example, patients who require medical attention within 12 to 24 hours for something like a sprain, minor cut or burn can visit an

Urgent and Primary Care Centre.

### **Can I go to a hospital? ([back to the top](#))**

In case of emergency, a patient can always go to any Emergency Room in British Columbia. A BC Services Card is required. If the situation is not an emergency, please acquire a family doctor's referral to see any doctor/specialist in a hospital setting.

### **Who is Fraser Health ([back to the top](#))**

[Fraser Health](#) delivers a wide range of health care services to over two million. Check their website [here](#) for more information on the services they provide.

### **Do I need a doctor referral for mammogram in BC? ([back to the top](#))**

Mammograms are x-rays of the breasts completed in privacy by a specially trained female technologist. Screening mammograms are available for BC women 40 years or older. A doctor's referral is not required. Check [here](#) to watch videos about mammogram screening in [English](#), [Cantonese](#), [Mandarin](#), & [Punjabi](#), plus Fact Sheet in multiple languages and more. To book a mammogram phone 1-800-663-9203 or use the [clinic locator](#) to find a location or mobile service visit near you. Appointments can be made at locations across BC. Appointments can also be booked [online](#) using the booking code in your [reminder letter](#).

### **Where can I find information about cancer screening services in BC? ([back to the top](#))**

[BC Cancer](#) is a comprehensive cancer control program for BC, which covers the full spectrum of cancer care from prevention, screening, diagnosis and treatment, to research and education, to supportive and palliative care.

Check [here](#) about screening services on [breast](#), [cervix](#), [colon](#), [lung](#) and other information including [mouth \(oral\)](#), [prostate](#), [skin](#) cancer screenings, [contacts](#) and more.

### **What is the “8-1-1” Phone Line? ([back to the top](#))**

“8-1-1” is a free-of-charge provincial health information and advice phone line available in British Columbia for non-emergency situations. The 8-1-1 phone line is operated by [HealthLink BC](#), which is part of the Ministry of Health. By calling 8-1-1, you can speak to a health services navigator, who can help you find health information and services; or connect

you directly with a registered nurse, a registered dietitian, a qualified exercise professional, or a pharmacist. Any one of these healthcare professionals will help you get the information you need to manage your health concerns, or those of your family.

**8-1-1** also provides translation services on request in more than 130 languages. After dialing **8-1-1**, you will be connected with an English- speaking health services navigator. To get service in another language, state the language you are looking for, and an interpreter will join the call.

**In case of emergency whom should I contact? ([back to the top](#))**

If there is an emergency that requires police, fire or ambulance, call “**911**”.

**Other emergency contact numbers include:**

- [heretohelp](#): BC Mental Health Support Line (do not add 604, 778 or 250 before the number) 310.6789; Suicide Hot Line 1.800.784.2433 (1-800- SUICIDE)
- [Kids Help Phone](#) 1.800.668.6868 or Text 686868
- [Crisis Centre of BC](#) Vancouver Coastal Regional Distress Line 604.872.3311
- [Helpline for Children](#) Toll free 310.1234 (report child abuse)
- [Help Line through S.U.C.C.E.S.S.](#) (volunteers): 1(888)-721-0596  
Mandarin: Extension 1, 7 days a week, 10 am to 10 pm  
Cantonese: Extension 2, 7 days a week, 10 am to 10 pm  
Korean: Extension 3, Mon – Fri: 10 am – 8 pm, Sat – Sun: 10 am – 5 pm  
Farsi/Dari: Extension 4, Mon – Fri: 10 am – 8 pm, Sat – Sun: 10 am – 5 pm  
Ukrainian: Extension 5, Mon – Fri: 10 am – 8 pm, Sat – Sun: 10 am – 5 pm

\*All volunteers who answer calls receive intensive training in order to provide confidential and quality services.

**Which agencies provide parenting and/or counseling services? ([back to the top](#))**

For more information about parenting and/or counseling services refer to these agencies:

- [Parent Support Services Society of BC](#)
- [MOSAIC Family Services](#). Look for specific contact by searching [here](#).
- [Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture \(VAST\)](#) For refugees and newcomers

who have endured torture, trauma and political violence, Vancouver and Surrey offices, Main phone line 778.372.6593, Provincial Refugee Mental Health Line 1 (604) 588-3071 (Press 2)

- [S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Family service](#) and [S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Counseling service](#) for Counselling Service. Individuals or families can be self-referred or referred by other agencies or ministries. Please call the intake worker at:  
Cantonese/Mandarin Service: 604-408-7266  
Korean Service: 604-468-6005 extension 2  
Farsi Service: 604-468-6100 extension 1



## 4. Education

### Preschool children aged 0-5

**What are Strong Start and Early Learning Programs?** ([back to the top](#))

SD43 offers **free** early learning opportunities for families and their preschoolers at our StrongStart Centres. The centres provide parents and caregivers an opportunity to share in their child's early learning experiences and learn and grow together through PLAY. Families have the most important role in promoting their child's well-being and learning and are asked to remain with their child to engage in this supportive and joyful, no cost, program. StrongStart Educators are qualified Early Childhood Educators. They work in relationship with children and families to create safe and welcoming environments. Educators also provide carefully selected materials and activities to provide opportunities for children to invent, investigate, build theories, play, and learn skills necessary for lifelong learning. For more information check the [SD43 StrongStart](#) website.

### Kindergarten – Grade 12

**How do I enroll my child in school?** ([back to the top](#))

To find out information about School District 43 public schools, visit the [SD43 website](#) and speak to your [Settlement Worker](#).

### **What is a Community School in SD43? ([back to the top](#))**

A [Community School](#) is a regular public school, and expands its mandate of educational system to address the needs of all age groups, with programs for preschoolers, after school care, and adult education and recreation through multi-ministry funding and non-profit partnerships. Today there are four elementary community schools within SD43: Central Community School, James Park Community School, Miller Park Community School and Seaview Community School.

### **When do I register my child for kindergarten? ([back to the top](#))**

Students entering kindergarten in September should register within their catchment area. Registration starts in February. For more information check the [SD43](#) website.

### **How do I register my child in the French Immersion Program? ([back to the top](#))**

Any child residing in SD43 may apply to enter the French Immersion program. Registration takes place in January. Please contact the French Immersion School that serves the area where the child resides. Students can enter the French Immersion program in kindergarten (Early Immersion) or Grade 6 (Late French Immersion). For more information about the district French Immersion Program, check [here](#).

### **What does “Special Needs” or “Support Needs” mean? ([back to the top](#))**

It can be overwhelming coping with a child or teen who has a disability or developmental delay. As primary caregivers, parents or guardians who have children or teens with support needs sometimes require extra support to maximize the quality of life for their child and family. Check the [website](#) about children and youth with support needs (CYSN) and how to find support for specific needs and more.

### **What help can I find for my child with support needs? ([back to the top](#))**

A variety of services for children and youth with support needs (CYSN) and their families are available across the province. Check [here](#) to find support for specific needs.

Other resources include: -

- Contact the ministry at [MCF.Info@gov.bc.ca](mailto:MCF.Info@gov.bc.ca)

- Contact a local [Child & Family Service office](#) to find out what services are available and talk about eligibility requirements

### **What is Autism Spectrum Disorder? ([back to the top](#))**

Check the [Ministry of Children and Family Development](#) (MCFD) website for the definition of the term - [Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\)](#). For questions regarding your child's autism funding, contact Autism Funding Support Team 1 877 777-3530. For questions about available community resources and building a support team, contact [Autism Information Services BC](#) for an Autism Support Specialist at 1 844 878-4700. The [website](#) contains helpful information on [what is autism](#), how to [get a diagnostic assessment](#), [access funding](#), [build a support team](#), the [Parent's Handbook](#) in [multi-languages](#).

Use [The Registry of Autism Service Providers \(RASP\)](#) to search for a service provider and much more.

### **Can you provide parenting tips for newcomer parents? ([back to the top](#))**

- Set a good example for children so they may integrate into Canadian society comfortably.
- Parents should prepare themselves with information about the new country (e.g. watch local TV shows, visit new places beyond one's neighborhood, learn about the school system, etc.)
- Participate in school activities (e.g. volunteer for the school; attend parent nights and meetings of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC), etc.)
- Attend Adult ESL/ELL classes to improve your English language skill.
- Join parenting workshops or talks organized by the school or community organizations.
- Join activities that allow children to interact with other children of their age in a safe environment.
- Expand one's social network beyond relatives/friends from the same country of origin or those speaking the same language.
- Regardless of one's schedule, spend regular quality time with your children (e.g. have dinner together, Sunday outings, shopping).
- Learn to encourage children through praise and acceptance.

- Encourage children to express their feelings. They also experience challenges adjusting to the new environment.
- Respect children and allow independence appropriate to their age.
- Be open-minded and accept that teenagers want to try new things and that they may make mistakes.
- Be willing to say sorry when mistakes are made – parents can be wrong sometimes.
- Help children to build a sense of belonging, in their new environment/school. Avoid regular criticism of the local systems when comparing to those of your country of origin.
- Recognize that children require a balanced and healthy lifestyle. By refraining a child from sports or recreational activities in order to achieve academic excellence is not an example of a balanced or healthy lifestyle.

Also refer to the [MCFD Positive Parenting videos](#) in the following languages: [Mandarin](#), [Cantonese](#), [Korean](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

For more information visit the website [Keeping Kids Safe from Abuse in BC](#).

## **Post-Secondary and Adult Education**

### **What is Education Planner? ([back to the top](#))**

[Education Planner](#) is an online search tool for finding information on undergraduate program availability, application dates, tuition costs, admission requirements, program lengths, and much more at post- secondary institutions in British Columbia.

### **How can I find information about colleges and universities in Canada? ([back to the top](#))**

Click [here](#) to see different types of Post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. Go [here](#) to check a designated learning institution that is approved by a provincial or territorial government in Canada.

### **How can I afford the financial cost for post-secondary education? ([back to the top](#))**

The Government of Canada works with most provincial or territorial governments to offer student grants and loans. Apply with 1 application through your province or territory of residence. You don't need to pay back grants, but you do need to pay back loans after

finishing school. You may be eligible for more than one type of grant - when you apply with your province, they will assess your eligibility for all grants. More information can be found:

- [StudentAid BC](#)
- [Student grants and loans](#)
- [Scholarships](#)

### **Coquitlam Continuing Education ([back to the top](#))**

- **English Classes for Adults**

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is a FREE English Language program for permanent residents of Canada and refugees seventeen years of age or older (Canadian citizens and visitors are ineligible).

Visit the [LINC](#) website for more information and details of how to apply.

- **Literacy Foundations**

Literacy Foundations classes are TUITION-FREE for all students who:

- are 17 years of age or older\*
- are residents in B.C.
- are Canadian Citizens, Permanent Residents, Refugees (including Government Assisted Refugees (GAR), or have a valid WorkStudy Permit.

\*Students attending secondary schools can also take Literacy Foundations courses.

International Students may take Literacy Foundations classes for a fee - Please call 604.936.4261 to register.

Check the Literacy Foundations [website](#) for more details.

### **What other programs does Coquitlam Continuing Education provide? ([back to the top](#))**

- Business and Careers & Job Skills Training
- High School Credit
- Self-Improvement & Fun
- Summer Learning

For more information, check the [Coquitlam Continuing Education](#) website.



## **Are there any other free or low-cost English language classes in Coquitlam and neighbouring cities? ([back to the top](#))**

There are some free or minimal charge English classes provided by different agencies or organizations in Coquitlam or neighbouring cities. Please note that information may change at any time, so it is best to directly contact the agency/organization and inquire about up-to-date information.

- [MOSAIC](#) English conversation groups in various locations; Check their [Event Calendar](#) or call 604.254.9626 to inquire.
- [MOSAIC-The Ready English Accessible for Caregivers at Home \(REACH\) Program](#) Free Online English Classes for newcomer Mothers who can't attend in-person or live LINC English classes due to caring for their kids.
- [ISSofBC](#), English conversation circles in various locations, 604.684.2561, or [info@issbc.org](mailto:info@issbc.org)
- [Pacific Immigrant Resources Society \(PIRS\)](#) various levels of ESL/ELL class for immigrant women at different locations, 604.298.5888 or [Leave a message online](#)
- [YMCA of Greater Vancouver](#), English Conversation Clubs (For Permanent Residents, Convention Refugees and in Canada under CUAET measures Only), 778.990.4856 or email [connections@bc.ymca.ca](mailto:connections@bc.ymca.ca)



## **5. Employment**

### **I'm a new immigrant. Where can I find help with job searching? ([back to the top](#))**

The first step in accessing B.C.'s employment services and support is to contact a [WorkBC Centre](#) near you. This free program will make it easier to find work and provide stability for families through a wide range of integrated employment services and support.

### **I'm a skilled Immigrant. How can I find a job in my own field? ([back to the top](#))**

The [Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants Program](#) helps professionals use their skills, training, and foreign qualifications for work in B.C. It can help you get jobs that match your experience and background.

### **What other Employment Programs can I find in BC lower mainland? ([back to the top](#))**

If you're currently unemployed and not an Employment Insurance (EI) client, and need some assistance finding a job, there are some other government sponsored/free employment programs in the lower mainland. The goal of these programs is to help unemployed British Columbians gain the skills, confidence, and experience they need to obtain employment.

- [ISSofBC Career Services](#) (Multiple locations)
- [MOSAIC Employment Services](#) (Multiple locations)
- [S.U.C.C.E.S.S Employment Services](#) (Multiple locations)

For more information about employment services in BC, check the [WorkBC](#) website.

### **Where can I find websites that list job opportunities? ([back to the top](#))**

Finding a job in Canada might be different from finding a job in your home country. Challenges you might face include: your credentials may not be recognized, your English language skills may not be sufficient, and you may need Canadian work experience.

[WelcomeBC](#) provides some information and resources to help you understand what you can do to find a job in British Columbia. On the page you may find:

- [What you need to work in B.C.](#)
- [Where to look for a job](#)
- [Professional certification](#)
- [How to get help finding a job](#)

Learn more about resumés, cover letters, and job interviews on the [WorkBC](#) website. There is also information on [Canada's Job Bank](#) website.

### **How to find childcare in the Tricities? ([back to the top](#))**

- To look for [\\$10 a Day ChildCareBC Centres](#).
- Check here [Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative \(CCFRI\)](#) to find participating providers.
- To search for ministry-funded licensed child care (including licensed Group and licensed Family) in your community by city, address and license type, use the [Child Care Map](#).

- For a full list of child care resources including Registered License-Not- Required (RLNRs) and other child care options, contact [YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral \(CCRR\) centres](#) at 604-294-1109 or email: [ygv.ccr@bc.ymca.ca](mailto:ygv.ccr@bc.ymca.ca) or fill out the [find child care provider form](#) online. Information on the child's age and postal code must be provided.

### How to get financial help for childcare services if parents are at school/work? ([back to the top](#))

The [Affordable Child Care Benefit](#) is a monthly payment to help eligible families with the cost of child care. Factors like income, family size, and type of care determine how much support families can get. Families need to renew their application every year.

To be eligible for this benefit, parent or guardian must be:

- A resident of B.C., and
- A Canadian citizen, a permanent resident of Canada, a convention refugee, or a person in need of protection
- Working, self-employed or attending school
- Looking for work or participating in an employment-related program (only one parent/guardian can be looking for work)
- Living with a medical condition that interferes with your ability to care for your child
- Your child is attending a licensed preschool
- Referred by a Social Worker from the Ministry of Children and Family Development or a Delegated Aboriginal Agency

Most [types of child care](#) are eligible. Childcare by a family member who lives with you, licensed occasional care and recreational care are **not eligible** for funding.

Check [here](#) to learn about more details and to apply for Affordable Child Care Benefit through [My Family Services portal](#). Please note that both parents/guardians must register for a [Basic BCeID](#) (a user ID and password for participating provincial government services) before you can use My Family Services.

You may contact Childcare Service Centre at **1 888 338-6622** from 8:30am to 4:30pm, Monday – Friday. Translation services are available in more than 140 languages.



## 6. Housing

### **What is BC Housing? ([back to the top](#))**

The best resource for finding more affordable accommodation is through [BC Housing Listings](#). Please check if you meet the criteria before you apply. For more information, please go to the [BC Housing](#) website.

### **What resources does BC Housing have to offer? ([back to the top](#))**

Families are assisted either through financial assistance programs (See “Section 2: After 12 months in Canada - Rental Assistance Program”), [Subsidized Housing](#) (long-term housing for low-income people who permanently reside in BC including Canadian citizen, Permanent Residents, Refugee sponsored by the Government of Canada, Individual who has applied for refugee status and CUAET arrivals), [Affordable Rental Housing](#) and more. To learn more about these opportunities please check [here](#).

[TRAC - Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre](#) is a Vancouver-based non-profit organization that offers legal information services via a province wide information hotline for tenants, publications on tenants’ rights, and provides workshops to advocates and the public.

TRAC’s [Housing Law Clinic](#) lawyer can provide free legal advice and/or representation to a limited number of eligible clients. Contact TRAC’s Paralegal, Ana De Pablos, at 604-255-3099 ext. 230 about the Housing Law Clinic program eligibility. For legal questions about your tenancy call TRAC’s Tenant Infoline at 604-255-0546 / 1-800-665-1185 or send a message on their Facebook page.

### **What is the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) and how can I apply for it? ([back to the top](#))**

Eligible low-income working families may be able to receive cash assistance from BC Housing through Rental Assistance Program (RAP) to help with their monthly rent payments

If they:

- have lived in BC for the past 12 consecutive months (not linked with PR status)
- have filed an annual income tax return
- are a low-income, working family
- have at least one or more dependent children
- have a total before-tax annual household income of **\$40,000** or less (Line 15000).
- have less than \$100,000.00 in assets
- pay more than **30 per cent** of household income towards rent for their home, or pay pad rental for a manufactured home (trailer) that they own and occupy
- have been employed at some point over the last year or has currently been employed for three consecutive months
- were not privately sponsored when immigrating to Canada
- do not own property (house, cottage, land, etc.)
- are not living in subsidized housing or co-operative housing and are a shareholder
- must permanently reside in BC when applying, and each member of the whole family must be one of the following:
  - Canadian citizens not under private sponsorship
  - Individuals lawfully admitted into Canada for permanent residence and not under private sponsorship
  - Refugees sponsored by the Government of Canada
  - Individuals who have applied for refugee status

More information about eligibility and application are available [here](#).



## 7. Activity Programs for Children

There are many programs available at community centres and neighbourhood houses for children of different age groups.

Click below for more detailed information regarding locations and contacts of recreation facilities, arts and culture facilities, events and the variety of programs and activities offered in the Tricities.

- [Coquitlam](#)
- [Port Coquitlam](#)
- [Port Moody](#)

### **What is the KidSport™ Tri-Cities Grant? ([back to the top](#))**

KidSport Tri-Cities provide grants to help cover the costs of registration fees (up to \$500 per child, per calendar year) so that all kids aged 18 and under in the Tricities can play a season of sport. The child must reside in the Tricities. For more info and how to apply please check [here](#).

### **Can you provide information about Social Groups for my child? ([back to the top](#))**

- [Air Cadet League of Canada \(BC\)](#)
- [Army Cadet League of Canada \(BC\)](#)
- [Girl Guides of BC](#)
- [Navy League Cadets/Sea Cadets Corps](#)
- [St. John Ambulance \(BC/Yukon\)](#)
- [Scout Canada](#) (Click [Join](#) & scroll down the page to find a group)



## 8. General Programs & Community Resources

**Where can I find a Public Library?** ([back to the top](#))

- [Coquitlam](#)
- [Port Coquitlam](#)
- [Port Moody](#)

Your public library card is the key to the resources and services of the public library. You can use your library card to borrow library materials, reserve a computer, download digital media, search dozens of electronic databases, and more.

**How can I find a Food Bank and free donated clothing?** ([back to the top](#))

Contact your Settlement Worker for information on free and low-cost food programs and free donated clothing and household items in the Tricities.

**How can I get involved in the community?** ([back to the top](#))

Offer to participate in various programs within the community. For more information about volunteering programs visit the following websites:



## 9. Change of Address

**How can I notify different provincial government programs and/or offices about my new address?** ([back to the top](#))

If you are moving within British Columbia, you can use the [Address Change BC](#) online tool to update your personal and/or business records with provincial and local government organizations in seven easy steps.

You can change your address for your Medical Services Plan/MSP account (Only the MSP account holder can change the address associated with their account) and your BC driver's license.

To change the address on your BC Services Card and/or your BC Driver's License card, check the [online](#) information by clicking "Find out more" on Step 2 page for details regarding if you should call [ICBC](#) or [Health Insurance BC](#) depending on your situation. To cancel your MSP coverage when you are moving permanently outside of BC, use online form [Permanent Move outside BC](#) (HLTH#7063).

**Do I need to notify Canada Revenue Agency about my address change? ([back to the top](#))**

In order to continue receiving federal government benefit payments, such as [the GST/HST Credit](#) and [Canada child benefit](#) payments, you must notify Canada Revenue Agency any change of address as soon as possible (even when using [direct deposit](#) services to receive these benefits).

**How can I notify Canada Revenue Agency about my new address? ([back to the top](#))**

Notify the Canada Revenue Agency by using ONE of the following ways:

1. **Internet:** If you are using Canada Revenue Agency's online service, change the address through the "[My Account](#)" option or [MyCRA APP](#) through your mobile phone.
2. **Mail or fax (204.984.5164):** Individual and benefits processing Tax Centre for B.C. is now [Winnipeg Tax Centre](#). Send a completed [Form RC325, Address change request](#), or a signed letter which must include:
  - your Social Insurance Number
  - your new address
  - moving date

To change someone else's address, including your spouse's or common-law partner's:

- Include their social insurance number
- Have them **sign** the letter authorizing the change to their new address

Phone:

Call [CRA Telephone numbers](#) at 1.800.959.8281 (income tax enquiries) or 1.800.387.1193 (benefit enquiries) and a CRA representative will change the address over the phone after they verify your identification.



## Who else should I notify about my address change? ([back to the top](#))

If an individual has a child who is attending a school in SD43, notify the school office of the new address (and new phone number if applicable) as soon as possible. Contact a Settlement Worker (SWIS) – [link to contacts](#) - if it is difficult to communicate with the school due to language barriers.

Other parties you usually need to notify about your new address include:

- Utility billers, such as [FortisBC](#) (natural gas or electricity), [TELUS](#) or [Rogers \(Shaw\)](#) (telephone, internet, cable), [BC Hydro](#) (electricity) and any long distance telephone service provider;
- Banks;
- Credit card financial companies;
- Any individuals/organizations from whom you wish to regularly receive mail.



## 10. General Information for Newcomers

### Where can I get free or low-cost legal information, advice, or representation from a lawyer? ([back to the top](#))

[Legal Aid BC](#) (604.408.2172 in lower mainland or toll-free 1.866.577.2525 elsewhere in BC) is a provincial Crown Corporation providing legal aid including [legal information](#), [advice](#), and [representation](#) (a lawyer to take your case) services in:

- a. [Child protection/MCFD](#)
- b. [Family Law](#)
- c. [Criminal](#) and
- d. [Refugee and Immigration](#) issues.

Check on the [website](#) to see if you qualify for their free services. Recorded messages are in Cantonese, English, French, Mandarin, Punjabi and Spanish when you phone the Legal Aid BC Call Centre.

An [interpreter](#) in more than 100 languages can be arranged if needed when calling in. Legal Aid BC also produces [free publications](#) online.

#### Other Legal Services and Resources ([back to the top](#))

- [MOSAIC Legal Advocacy Program](#) (Email [lap@mosaicbc.org](mailto:lap@mosaicbc.org) or call 236.479.7153) provides legal info, advice, referrals, legal support, and representation to low-income immigrants and refugees. They help newcomers navigate the Canadian legal system, ensuring that they know their legal rights and responsibilities. In-person services are available. No drop-ins. Emailing them is preferred as they are often working remotely.
- [Rise Women’s Legal Centre](#) (General inquiries 604.451.7447, Client intake line 236.317.9000) is a pro bono community legal clinic and teaching facility serving women and gender diverse people all over BC. They provide unbundled legal services (primarily in family law) for clients otherwise unable to access legal help. Clients include people who are economically disadvantaged, members of marginalized groups, and people seeking protection from family violence. They also provide legal support to advocates, transition house workers, settlement, and community workers across the province.
- [VictimLINK BC](#) is a toll-free, confidential, multilingual telephone service available across BC and Yukon 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be accessed by calling or texting 1.800.563.0808 or sending an email to: -
- [VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca](mailto:VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca). It provides information and referral services to all victims of crime, and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence. VictimLINK BC provides service in up to 150 languages, including many North American aboriginal languages.

#### **How do I use public transportation in the BC Lower Mainland (Vancouver, Burnaby, Richmond, Coquitlam, North Vancouver, West Vancouver, etc)? ([back to the top](#))**

Public transportation (buses, SkyTrain and SeaBuses) in the BC Lower Mainland is operated by Translink. It provides services in different zones, using various types of transportation like bus, SeaBus or SkyTrain. For information about commuting by using public transportation, click [here](#), and then go to “Plan My Trip”, or call Transit Information line at 604.953.3333.

Click [here](#) for general contact information, including Transit Information & Customer Feedback, Transit Police, HandyDART/HandyCard, Compass Customer Service, SkyTrain Assistance Counter, West Coast Express (WCE) Customer Service, Lost and Found and Corporate Information, etc.

There are three fare zones across Metro Vancouver. The number of SeaBus and/or SkyTrain boundaries you cross during your trip determines your fare.

- All bus and HandyDART trips regardless of zones crossed, time of day, or day of the week are a 1-Zone fare.
- SkyTrain and SeaBus require a 1-, 2-, or 3-Zone fare, depending on the time of day and number of zone boundaries you cross during your trip.
- A single fare is valid for 90 minutes on bus, SkyTrain, SeaBus, and HandyDART.
- All journeys across the system starting after 6:30 p.m. on weekdays and all travel on weekends (Saturday, Sunday, and holidays) are a 1-Zone fare.

Check here to learn about [Fares](#).



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