

## **ISANS ROLE HELPING TO SETTLE Government Assisted Refugees in Halifax**

### **What is the history of refugees in Nova Scotia?**

From 2008 to 2015, Nova Scotia welcomed 1,639 Government Assisted Refugees (GARs), averaging almost 200 per year. This represents 8.8 percent of all immigrants coming to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Over the last 35 years settlement organizations have been on the forefront of refugee protection and support. From 1980 - 2015, ISANS helped to settle approximately 6700 refugees from 40 different countries, including Afghanistan, former Yugoslavia, Bhutan, Colombia, former Soviet Union republics, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Somalia and Vietnam. From December 2015 - March 2016, ISANS has helped to settle 706 Government Assisted Refugees from Syria.

### **What supports and services do refugees receive?**

Resettled refugees are permanent residents; they have access to all government services and programs, and they have the right to work. During their first year in Canada, GARs are provided with immediate and essential supports for their most basic needs through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP).

Canada provides income support under the RAP to eligible refugees that includes a one-time household start-up allowance, and monthly income support payment. The level of financial support is based on the provincial social assistance rates. Financial support can last up to one year after a refugee arrives, or until they can support themselves, whichever occurs first.

Government Assisted Refugees usually access the Immigration Loans Program (ILP) which helps them cover the cost of their trip to Canada and related expenses. GARs are required to begin to pay back this loan upon arrival to Canada and they are charged interest after three years.

The government contracts settlement agencies like ISANS to provide orientation and settlement support. ISANS delivers the Resettlement Assistance Program together with a broad range of settlement services to enhance the resettlement of these new residents of Nova Scotia. Settlement staff work together using a case-management approach to serve newly arrived Government Assisted Refugees. All ISANS staff support clients to gradually build confidence and independence. In addition, ISANS continues to advocate for the needs of Government Assisted Refugees with regard to accessing appropriate, comprehensive and culturally sensitive services and programs in the community to support their integration.

## Initial Reception



### **During the first 2 weeks, ISANS staff meet with new clients daily.**

ISANS staff welcome government assisted refugees at the airport and help them move into temporary accommodation. During this time, staff assess needs and assist clients with immediate issues such as:

- finding and moving into first apartment and providing support with apartment application process, Tenancy Act and apartment living
- banking and budgeting
- household and grocery shopping
- access to health care
- referral to some internal and external services and programs (English language assessment, Interim Federal Health Program)

ISANS staff continue to meet with clients frequently and regularly after they move into apartments.

## Settlement



### **During the clients' first year in Canada, ISANS Settlement Counsellors support them in setting priorities and develop both short and longer term personalized settlement plans.**

ISANS staff provide the following ongoing support:

- **orientation** on topics related to life in Canada such as government programs, community resources, rights and responsibilities, the education system and family matters
- **problem solving** for settlement challenges that arise and **advocacy** on systemic issues that become barriers to successful settlement
- **links to essential services** such as health care and government programs, Social Insurance Number, Resettlement Assistance Program, Nova Scotia Health Program and Canadian Child Tax Benefit Program
- **link to other ISANS services** such as:
  - Community Connections for recreation and social programs
  - Family Support program
  - Employment services
  - English language programs
- **links to community services and programs** such as:
  - Public school system
  - Recreation and social programs
  - Other settlement organizations
  - Language Assessment Services
  - Regional Housing Authority
  - Community Services (Income Assistance)
  - Immigrant, Refugee & Citizenship Canada (IRCC ) programs

## Life Skills Support



**ISANS Life Skills Workers** are trained staff, including youth workers, from over 20 ethnic communities who deliver support in the client's first or second language, once clients are in their apartments. ISANS Life Skills services aim to gradually build confidence and independence, while lessening the stress of settlement through a connection with someone from the same country or area of the world.

During the first year in Canada, ISANS Life Skills Workers offer orientation and support for families who are settling into new homes and community. ISANS staff provide:

- help to families to navigate new systems and daily life
- orientation and practical support in areas of daily life such as: personal and child safety, apartment and city living, life in Canada, shopping, getting to know the neighbourhood, public transportation, health and hospital orientation and accessing community resources
- enhanced individualized orientation to clients with high settlement and health needs

## Immigrant Health



**ISANS Immigrant Health staff** meet each family shortly after arrival to assess healthcare needs and provide support to those who may have challenges accessing services and resources. ISANS staff provide:

- orientation to the Canadian health care system, Interim Federal Health Program and Nova Scotia Health Card coverage, patient rights and other services and supports available
- links to the Transitional Health Clinic for Refugees for primary health care screening and services
- referrals to dentist, ophthalmologist and other specialized health services in the community
- problem solving and advocacy for access to specialized services and coverage

## Additional Support



### **Government Assisted Refugees with complex health or settlement needs**

may receive additional support through ISANS Settlement, Immigrant Health, Family Support and Crisis Intervention programs. ISANS staff provide:

- case management and targeted supports
- specialized and individualized orientation to clients with high settlement and health needs
- referral and linkage to appropriate supports and resources
- case conferences with government institutions, community organizations and relevant service providers
- access to support services such as settlement and crisis counselling, accompaniment, interpretation, transportation, home visits and other special resources

## Income Support

### Monthly Income Support - Allowances for Government Assisted Refugees

Basic Needs: Adult: \$238

Shelter (includes telephone & electricity):

- Single: \$300
- Couple: \$570
- Family of 3 or more: \$620
- Housing Supplement (at IRCC Integration Officer's discretion):
  - Single: \$75
  - Couple or more: \$100

Transportation Allowance: \$78

### One-time Start-up Allowance for Basic Household Needs and Furniture Samples:

- Single: \$1330
- Couple: \$1960
- Couple+3: \$3515
- Couple+5: \$7218

## Tips

If Government Assisted Refugees request support regarding:

- housing
- monthly Resettlement Assistance allowance or other financial issues
- challenges with applications for Canadian Child Tax Benefit, Social Insurance Number, Nova Scotia Health Card, Public Housing, Income Assistance, etc.
- immigration matters such as family reunification
- education or employment related issues
- family issues
- access to recreation and social programs
- or are facing other challenges related to their settlement process

please refer them to their **ISANS Settlement Counsellor**.

If Government Assisted Refugees request support or information regarding:

- health care, health coverage or are facing other challenges regarding their health situation,

please refer them to **ISANS Immigrant Health Coordinator**.