

# Immigrant/Newcomer Services in Waterloo Region

(Updated: August 14, 2020)

This document provides a high-level overview of services specifically for immigrants<sup>[1]</sup>/newcomers in Waterloo Region. It is intended for immigrant-serving agencies/individuals to support referrals and collaboration. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Some of the programs listed below may be impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. This listing is a living document and will be added to as new information becomes available. For more information about this list or to suggest updates contact [ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca](mailto:ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca).

Programs in black text are primarily funded by IRCC (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada) and those in green text are primarily funded by other sources. Bold text is programming that is new in 2020.

## Settlement support, general information and referral

- YMCA Immigrant Services<sup>1</sup> provides needs assessment, general information and referrals to individuals as well as group newcomer orientation and information sessions based on client needs. In addition to doing so at their office, various community sites, and Idea Exchange libraries in Cambridge, they provide Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) in elementary and secondary schools. This includes Newcomer Orientation Week in area high schools (including peer leader training) and supports for students and their families. YMCA is the main provider of settlement supports to newcomers in Cambridge and also provide programming in rural and surrounding communities beyond Waterloo Region. YMCA also provides immigration paperwork support. **NEW: SWIS will be using an app developed to connect with newcomer youth in a safe and secure way. YMCA is piloting extended support for PSR newcomers and their sponsor groups.**
- KWMC<sup>2</sup> also provides needs assessment, general information and referrals to individuals as well as group newcomer orientation and information sessions based on client needs (for PRs, GARs, PSRs, claimants). In addition to doing so at their office and various community sites they provide these supports in libraries in Kitchener and Waterloo. KWMC also provides immigration paperwork support.
- Reception House (RH) provides settlement support (incl. needs assessment, general information and referrals) through their Resettlement Assistance Program specifically for Government Assisted Refugees (GARs). When GARs first arrive in Canada, RH meets them at the airport, provides reception/orientation support, provides temporary accommodation for the first couple weeks and assistance in finding permanent accommodation. After the initial orientation, RH provides ongoing settlement support to GARs (both individual and group) based on client needs, for the first 12-24 months after arrival.
- MonAvenir refers clients to settlement agencies offering French services **NEW: MonAvenir will now be providing SWIS programming in the 5 French Catholic schools in Waterloo Region.**
- **NEW: Cambridge Newcomer Outreach Program by the City of Cambridge and neighbourhood organizations engages with newcomer seniors and youth at the neighbourhood level and provides needs assessment, information and referrals. The program provides newcomer youth drop-in sessions and senior-specialized programming.**
- **MCRS<sup>2</sup> provides support to refugee claimants with their asylum claim process along with additional settlement supports to refugee claimants.**
- **Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre provides Settlement supports in collaboration with KWMC for rostered clients.**

## Mental health

- **NEW: Carizon provides well-being orientation for newly arrived GAR refugees and short-term counselling (3-6 sessions based on client treatment needs/goals). Carizon also hosts community education sessions for newcomers and mental health promotion groups (8-10 sessions) for international students (age 9-13), youth who identify as female, youth who identify as male, newcomer parents of children of all ages, newcomers who identify as women, newcomer children), and summer**

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<sup>1</sup> YMCA provides their services for all immigration streams of permanent residents (PRs) [including Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) & Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs)], as well as many programs for temporary residents [including refugee claimants, international students, temporary work permit holders].

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youth groups for youth of all genders. Carizon provides trauma treatment groups and community education sessions. Carizon provides mental health drop-in and outreach programs for newcomers at local high schools, including those who identify as LGBTQIA+. They also provide Mental Health and Wellbeing groups and consultations for seniors to reduce and eliminate mental health issues that can result as a part of isolation. Groups for Seniors focused on wellbeing and a sense of belonging are offered throughout the year.

- **NEW: Carizon also provides mental health resource coordination/consultation with newcomer-serving organizations, as well as community education sessions for professionals and non-professionals (anti-racist and inclusion practices, as well as providing education on the refugee settlement experience and the impact on their mental health).**
- Reception House provides mental health group programming for GAR individuals.
- Sanctuary provides one-on-one and limited group counselling for rostered patients. These services can extend, in severe circumstances, to those newcomer refugees in the community who are unable to access services elsewhere.

#### Language learning

- YMCA provides language assessments and referrals to formal ESL and LINC programs in Waterloo Region, with customized service for small-centre, rural, and remote areas.
- LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) and ESL classes (ESL literacy level to CLB-8) are provided by Conestoga College, St Louis, and also by English at First (ESL literacy to CLB-4) in Waterloo Region.
- YMCA hosts English conversation circles (some in collaboration with KPL & WPL), incl. summer conversation circles, adult, youth and senior circles, and French conversation circles.
- WPL, KPL, Idea Exchange and the Working Centre also host English conversation circles.
- KWMC's Volunteer Conversational English Program matches newcomers with volunteers for one-on-one ESL tutoring.
- Reception House provides English language tutoring to GAR individuals that are socially isolated (esp women).

#### Interpretation and translation

- KWMC provides interpretation/translation services in Waterloo Region, with YMCA also providing interpretation/translation services in Cambridge.

#### Employment (incl entrepreneurship, mentoring, etc)

- YMCA's Mentorship Program provides mentor matches between foreign trained professionals and settled immigrants or long-time Canadians. YMCA also provides Employment Ontario employment services.
- KWMC provides employment counselling incl. Pre-Employment Program with one-on-one assessment of job search needs, First Job in Canada workshops targeted to clients with lower English language levels, preparation for licensure/certification (e.g. WHMIS, First Aid, CPR, Health and Safety, cashier training, etc.), as well as WR Connectors networking program matching highly skilled newcomers with volunteers in a related profession.
- KWMC organizes the annual Global Skills Conference for newcomers/employers, as well as employer engagement
- Conestoga College provides entrepreneurship workshops, one to one mentoring, networking opportunities and community events through their Self-Employment for Newcomers program ....other employment programming through provincial funding???
- YWCA In Her Shoes program provides entrepreneurship training for women, in particular for newcomers.
- Reception House provides employment opportunities for refugees through the Working Together Employment Project. The focus of this project is pre employment training, employment placement, on the job language training and ongoing employment counselling and support. The language training is provided by Conestoga College and the program evaluation is provided by CCBR.

#### Legal Issues & Refugee Claimant Process

- **WRCLS provides legal assistance in immigration and other areas of law to low-income individuals and families ranging from summary advice to full representation (incl. Family Class Sponsorship, citizenship applications or denials, and issues with immigration status, but not refugee claim process)**
- MCRC and KWMC provide support for claimants with the refugee claim process

### Physical Health

- SHORE's [newcomer health programs](#) provide information, access to community resources and support.
- CFFM provides [health assessments and primary care](#) for government assisted refugees on arrival to Canada and for the first 6-12 months or longer.
- Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre provides ongoing care for rostered clients. Those seeking care are directed to call the clinic and ask about intake.
- YMCA and Region of Waterloo Public Health provide newcomer [dental and immunization clinics](#).

### Other services

- YMCA provides [other programs](#) such as: [citizenship support groups](#), Healthy Women Together program for newcomer women, newcomer computer literacy classes, income tax clinics for GAR individuals.
- **NEW: YMCA provides a [host program](#) with matches between newcomer and settled immigrants or long-time Canadians.**
- Reception House's [Family Partnership Program](#) matches volunteers with GAR newcomers for informal social connections and support.
- MCRS provides some temporary [housing](#) for refugee claimants and supports them to find more permanent housing.
- St. Louis ESL provides the following additional classes :Citizenship Preparation, IELTS Preparation and Computer classes.
- The City of Cambridge hosts an annual Newcomer Day information fair to connect newcomers with services. **NEW: The City of Cambridge will also host an annual Newcomer Conference (starting Feb2021) bringing together newcomers, service providers, and others, across generations, neighbourhoods, cultures.**

## Services for Specific Groups

### Seniors:

- YMCA hosts conversation circles for seniors.
- **NEW: Cambridge Newcomer Outreach Program by the City of Cambridge and neighbourhood organizations provides senior specific programs.**
- English at First provides [English classes for seniors](#).
- **NEW: Carizon provides Mental Health and Wellbeing groups and consultations for seniors to reduce and eliminate mental health issues that can result as a part of isolation. Groups for Seniors focused on wellbeing and a sense of belonging are offered throughout the year.**

### Youth:

- KWMC provides the LSP "[Let's Talk](#)" program for high school youth to explore career/education goals
- YMCA provides a [youth leader project through youth theatre](#) at 2-3 local high schools. YMCA also provides the [Settlement Workers in Schools \(SWIS\)](#) program in elementary and secondary schools, including [Newcomer Orientation Week](#) in area high schools (with peer leader training) and supports for students and their families. YMCA hosts conversation circles for youth. [Starting School in Canada](#) offers support for newcomer families with children 3-6 years old.
- **NEW: Carizon provides mental health group programs for youth.**
- **NEW: Cambridge Newcomer Outreach Program by the City of Cambridge and neighbourhood organizations provides youth drop-ins and group programs.**
- Reception House New Canadian Youth Youth Connections in partnership with CJI, provides Mentoring, Homework Club and Recreation programming to youth under 24, but focuses on ages 13 - 19 years old.
- Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir offers a SWIS program in Francophone elementary and secondary schools. ANNA (Accueil des nouvelles et nouveaux arrivants) initiative - peer leader training at the secondary level (grade 7 to 12); ANÉ (Accueil des nouveaux élèves) - peer leader training at the elementary level. Newcomer Orientation Week at PRDG High School.

### LGBTQ+

- **NEW: Carizon provides mental health group programs for LGBTQIA+ individuals.**

# Contacts for more information:

**Carizon** - Debbie Engel ([dengel@carizon.ca](mailto:dengel@carizon.ca)) -

**CFFM (Centre For Family Medicine)** – Carolyn Beukeboom ([carolyn.beukeboom@family-medicine.ca](mailto:carolyn.beukeboom@family-medicine.ca)) -

**City of Cambridge & neighbourhood organizations** – Vanessa Lopak ([lopakv@cambridge.ca](mailto:lopakv@cambridge.ca)) -

**Conestoga (Conestoga College)** - Christine Buuck ([cbuuck@conestogac.on.ca](mailto:cbuuck@conestogac.on.ca)) for language learning or Tina Alishaw ([tallishaw@conestogac.on.ca](mailto:tallishaw@conestogac.on.ca)) for entrepreneurship

**English at First** - Lidia Gomez ([lidia@englishatfirst.com](mailto:lidia@englishatfirst.com))

**Idea Exchange (Cambridge public library)** – Shannon Markle ([smarkle@ideaexchange.org](mailto:smarkle@ideaexchange.org))

**KPL (Kitchener Public Library)** - Jarvis Sparks ([Jarvis.Sparks@KPL.org](mailto:Jarvis.Sparks@KPL.org))

**KWMC (K-W Multicultural Centre)** – Lucia Harrison ([lucia@kwmulticultural.ca](mailto:lucia@kwmulticultural.ca))

**MCC (Mennonite Central Committee Ontario)** – Kaylee Perez ([kayleeperez@mcco.ca](mailto:kayleeperez@mcco.ca))

**MCRS (Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support)** – Shelley Campagnola ([director@mcrs.ca](mailto:director@mcrs.ca))

**Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir - French Catholic School Board** – Marie-Pierre Daoust ([mdaoust@cscmonavenir.ca](mailto:mdaoust@cscmonavenir.ca)) -

**Reception House (Reception House of Waterloo Region)** – Carl Cadogan ([carl@receptionhouse.ca](mailto:carl@receptionhouse.ca)) -

**Sanctuary (Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre, Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre)** – Michael Stephenson ([sanctuaryrefugee@gmail.com](mailto:sanctuaryrefugee@gmail.com))

**SHORE (SHORE Centre - Sexual Health Options Resources Education)** – Hoda Ghonim ([newcomerhealth@shorecentre.ca](mailto:newcomerhealth@shorecentre.ca))

**St Louis (St Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education, Waterloo Region Catholic School Board)** – Pauleen Payne ([Pauleen.Payne@wcdsb.ca](mailto:Pauleen.Payne@wcdsb.ca)) or Janet Waito ([janet.waito@wcdsb.ca](mailto:janet.waito@wcdsb.ca)) -

**WPL (Waterloo Public Library)** - Kerstin Habenicht ([khabenicht@wpl.ca](mailto:khabenicht@wpl.ca)) -

**WRCLS (Waterloo Region Community Legal Services)** – Shannon Down ([downs@lao.on.ca](mailto:downs@lao.on.ca))

**YMCA (YMCA Immigrant Services)** – Pari Karem ([pari.karem@ckw.ymca.ca](mailto:pari.karem@ckw.ymca.ca))

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[1] We use the term “immigrants” broadly to include people who were born outside of Canada and now live in Waterloo Region, including permanent residents, temporary residents, foreign nationals and Canadian citizens.