Factsheet: Quota Refugee Health Services Model

November 2019

In September 2018, the New Zealand government announced the annual refugee quota would increase to 1,500 from July 2020. The delivery of government funded health services for quota refugees will change from 2020 as a result of this quota increase.

BACKGROUND

• The model applies to quota refugees referred for resettlement to New Zealand by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

• Current health services model:
  o Immigration medical examinations (visa medical assessments) are completed outside of New Zealand (offshore), during or directly following, the quota refugee selection mission.
  o Health screening is completed on arrival in New Zealand during the six-week reception programme (or intakes) at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC).

• In order to meet the increased quota, the number of quota refugees taking part in an increased number of intakes will increase and the length of the MRRC reception programme will decrease to five weeks.

• Due to MRRC facility constraints, the current quota refugee health services model is not sustainable under the quota increase, which has led to the development of the new model.

• Moving health screening offshore will also allow individuals to concentrate on the MRRC reception programme and orientation without interruption by health appointments.

• Quota refugee applicants are required to meet the Immigration New Zealand (INZ) limited health requirements to be included for resettlement under New Zealand’s Refugee Quota Programme.

OVERVIEW: NEW QUOTA REFUGEE HEALTH SERVICES MODEL

• Provision of offshore health screening, including for medical history and mental health conditions, examinations, radiology, and blood tests.

• Immunisations offered offshore (aligned with the New Zealand Immunisation Schedule).

• Access to offshore healthcare services will be offered to individuals with health conditions which would otherwise worsen while awaiting travel to New Zealand.

• Mental health screening at multiple stages of the health services model - access to mental health services offered to individuals with significant conditions.

• On arrival in New Zealand and during the five week reception programme a primary care-style service at MRRC will be available to quota refugees, including an initial health review for every individual, with chronic care and acute walk-in services also available.

• In New Zealand there will be an increased focus on and additional resources for early primary care in settlement communities.
Offshore Health Services

- Health information identified through settlement health screening will be used to understand the need for access to offshore health services and, later, for health services in the community in New Zealand, for those individuals with significant medical conditions.
- These will not impact the quota refugee’s eligibility for selection for resettlement to New Zealand.
- INZ has contracted the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to undertake offshore health services including visa medical assessments, health screening, immunisations and offshore health management services.
  - IOM conduct immigration medical examinations for New Zealand, as well as refugee health screening and immunisations on behalf of other countries.
  - IOM are committed to consulting with refugee populations on their experiences with all their health programmes.
  - IOM have a dedicated Quality Assurance and Compliance team based in Geneva which oversees all international IOM clinics. Visit the [IOM website](#) for details on the methods IOM use for health assessment and screening.
  - UNHCR will resume oversight of the health management for individuals who are assessed as requiring health management following offshore screening, but who do not resettle in New Zealand.

**Benefits include:**

- Quota refugees with significant health conditions who access health services offshore are expected to arrive in New Zealand in a better state of health.
- Offering immunisations to refugees offshore will improve immunity and decrease the risk of outbreaks of serious communicable diseases, both in refugee locations worldwide and in New Zealand.

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1 It is estimated that the number of refugees who are not selected for resettlement under the Refugee Quota Programme will be approximately one percent of those interviewed by INZ at the selection mission.
HEALTH SERVICES AT MANGERE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT CENTRE (MRRC)

- Completing health screening and immunisation services offshore changes the type of health services required onsite at MRRC.
- A new primary care service including general practitioners and primary care nurses will provide extended hours access to health care at MRRC.
  - It will be open from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm and will provide an initial health review for every individual shortly after arrival.
  - In addition, the service will offer follow-up appointments and ‘walk-in’ clinics for urgent health needs.
  - It will supply immunisations when required on a case by case basis to supplement those given offshore or expected to be given later in the community.
- Outside of these hours, individuals who are unwell will be taken to an urgent care clinic, or Middlemore Hospital depending on their health needs. An ambulance will be called for emergencies.
- Refugees As Survivors NZ (RASNZ) will continue to provide their current services to support newly arrived quota refugees’ mental health needs.
- Health services such as oral health, optometry and audiology, will be provided at MRRC to support successful settlement outcomes.
HEALTH SERVICES IN SETTLEMENT COMMUNITIES

- All quota refugees are granted permanent resident visas on arrival in New Zealand and are eligible to access public health care services.
- Increased emphasis on early interactions with primary care in the settlement community, including additional resources to support clinic administration and interpreting services.
- The Ministry of Health (MoH) is reviewing the resourcing needs for all services required by newly arrived quota refugees throughout New Zealand, regardless of their settlement location. Further information will be made available to stakeholders in early 2020.

INFORMATION FLOWS

- A new integrated information system will allow electronic allocation of a National Health Index (NHI) number to each quota refugee’s health record before they arrive in New Zealand.
- Secure electronic information transfer processes will ensure that all health information collected at each stage of the resettlement process is available for health professionals at MRRC and in settlement communities.

REFUGEE HEALTH LIAISON TEAM (RHLT)

- The model includes the establishment of a new INZ team - the Refugee Health Liaison Team (RHLT), dedicated to the coordination of high quality refugee health services.
- The RHLT will coordinate offshore health settlement services provided by IOM, as well as liaising with and supporting all health services delivered onsite at MRRC.
- The RHLT will facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise in refugee health matters with partners in the broader New Zealand health community, especially primary care providers in settlement communities.
- The RHLT will participate, alongside refugee resettlement partners such as the Ministry of Health, in evaluation of the new Refugee Health Services Model.