



Services for Asylum Seekers

CHRISTCHURCH

This brochure contains information about services and support that are available to people seeking refugee or protected person status in New Zealand (known as “asylum seekers”).



CONFIRMATION OF YOUR STATUS IN NEW ZEALAND

People who fear returning to their own country can ask New Zealand to recognise them as refugees or protected persons. People who lodge a claim for refugee or protection status in New Zealand are known as refugee and protection *claimants*. You will receive a letter from the Refugee Status Unit (RSU) confirming that you have lodged a refugee and protection claim in New Zealand.

It is very important that you keep this letter and take it with you when you visit other government agencies, health and education providers, and service providers.

If necessary the RSU can confirm your status as an asylum-seeker directly with the government agencies listed in this brochure. Agencies can call the RSU on **(09) 928 2236** or email: **RSU@mbie.govt.nz**

INTERPRETING SERVICES

When contacting a government agency, either in person or over the phone, you can ask for the help of an interpreter and let the government agent know what language you speak. Telephone/video interpreters are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in over 180 languages.

You can use this service when speaking to government agencies and service providers, including: Immigration, Health, Inland Revenue, Internal Affairs, Education, Work and Income, Career Services and the Police.

IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

To access services, you may need an identity document (ID). Usually, a passport is sufficient to establish your identity with most organisations.

Certificate of Identity

If you do not have a passport, you will need to obtain a Certificate of Identity (COI) from an Immigration New Zealand (INZ) branch. A COI is issued when you apply for a visa application and it is approved. A COI will have your photograph and biographical details such as your name and date of birth. INZ can issue a visa into a COI.

Other agencies such as Work and Income and banks will also accept a COI as proof of identity. For further information please visit the INZ website:

www.immigration.govt.nz

VISAS

While awaiting the status of your claim, you may apply for an appropriate visitor, work, student or limited visa to suit your needs. For further information please refer to relevant immigration instructions on E8.10 Temporary visas for refugee or protection status claimants.

RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Most government agencies and service providers (such as banks, electricity and internet companies) require proof of your residential address. This can be an official letter addressed to you — for example, RSU's letter confirming you have lodged a claim. If you do not have an official letter with your correct address on it, you can ask RSU for one.

Accommodation

If you need to find accommodation, many local newspapers advertise rental accommodation — either a "flat" or a room in a shared house. Trademe (www.trademe.co.nz) also has rental accommodation. Your local supermarket, library or community centre may have a noticeboard where people advertise rooms or flats. Real estate agents and letting centres can help you find accommodation. They will charge for this service. If you are struggling to find accommodation contact Work and Income: www.workandincome.govt.nz

BANK

You will need to open a bank account for tax purposes and to receive wages and income. Most banks require:

- › two forms of ID such as a passport and a driver's licence or birth certificate, and
- › proof of your address such as a letter from a government agency or service provider (electricity company for example).

Visit your local bank to open an account.

INLAND REVENUE

To work in New Zealand, or to receive support from Work and Income, you need a tax number from Inland Revenue (IR). To obtain an IR number, complete an IR742 form.

To obtain a copy of this form, telephone **0800 257 773** or download it **here**. This form requires proof of visa, address, photo ID and fully functional NZ bank account. You can email the form to IRD (offshore@ird.govt.nz). If you do not hold a NZ bank account then get the form verified by AA, NZ post or IRD.

Once your documents have been verified you will receive a tax number.

- › Website: www.ird.govt.nz
- › Free phone: **0800 377 774**

EMPLOYMENT

If you are issued a work visa while your refugee and protection claim is being processed you are able to work in New Zealand.

Websites

Most jobs are advertised online and there are a number of useful websites where you can search for jobs according to region, type, and your skills and qualifications. Some popular websites are: **www.seek.co.nz** and **www.trademejobs.co.nz**

Government agencies

Career Services and Work and Income can assist you with practical advice to help you find a job, such as workshops, training opportunities, job listings, job search skills and writing a curriculum vitae (CV). Visit their websites:

- › Career Services: **www.careers.govt.nz**
- › Work and Income: **www.workandincome.govt.nz**

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

If you have a valid and current visa you may be eligible to receive an Emergency Benefit from Work and Income while your refugee and protection claim is being processed.

You will need to contact Work and Income to make an appointment to see a case manager at the branch closest to where you live.

For more Information visit your local Work and Income office, or phone them on: **0800 559 009**, or go to their website: **www.workandincome.govt.nz**

If you speak little or no English, Work and Income provides information in other languages:

- › Mandarin **0800 661 001**
- › Cantonese **0800 664 004**
- › Hindi **0800 993 003**
- › Farsi **0800 996 006**
- › Khmer **0800 994 004**
- › Punjabi **0800 995 005**



EDUCATION

English lessons

You may apply to attend English language classes. There are many organisations that teach English language courses, including tertiary institutions, secondary schools, home tutors and community education centres. You may have to pay a fee to attend these courses.

If you are issued a work visa while your refugee and protection claim is being processed, permission is given only to attend English as a second language courses, not any other course.

For more information see The Tertiary Education Commission www.tec.govt.nz (search for “ESOL students”) and/or English Language Partners englishlanguage.org.nz

Primary and secondary schools

All children between the ages of 6 and 16 years old must attend school in New Zealand. Children who are asylum seekers will generally be issued a student visa.

Health

New Zealand has a public health system that provides subsidised health care. Asylum seekers are eligible for this.

The cost of a doctor’s visit varies depending on your age, location and personal circumstances. Doctors’ visits are free for children under 13 years of age.

You must take the letter from RSU confirming you have lodged a claim for refugee and protection status with you to the clinic or hospital in order to receive subsidised health care.

Hospitals and public health services will provide an interpreter if needed. You must contact them in advance.

For free health advice, call Healthline anytime:

0800 611 116

Urgent medical care

In an emergency call 111 for an ambulance to take you to hospital, or you can go directly to the hospital closest to your home.

Canterbury (including Christchurch) Community and Public Health

Phone **03 364 1777** or visit

www.cph.co.nz/your-health/migrant-health/



SUPPORT AGENCIES:

There are a number of agencies and organisations offering support to asylum seekers.

Refugee Council of New Zealand

A national organisation which provides advice, information and assistance to asylum seekers.

- › Email: info@rc.org.nz
- › Website: www.rc.org.nz

Community Law

Provides free initial legal advice to resolve legal problems.

- › Website: www.communitylaw.org.nz

Refugee Resettlement & Resource Centre Canterbury

Provides advice and liaises with other agencies for resettlement support.

- › Email: cantyrefugeecouncil@gmail.com
- › Website: www.cantyrefugeecentre.org
- › Phone: **03 377 2544** or **03 377 2538**

Christchurch Resettlement Services

Provides social work support and connects people to mental health and resettlement support.

- › Website: www.crs.org.nz
- › Phone: **03 335 0311**

Hagley Community College

Provides support to learn English, information about schools and services for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants across the Canterbury region. Free activities and classes for children.

- › Website: www.refugeemigrant.hagley.school.nz
- › Phone: **03 379 3090**

Citizens Advice Bureau

Provides free, confidential, independent advice and information, helping people understand what their rights are and access the services they need.

- › Website: www.cab.org.nz

New Zealand Red Cross

Provides a range of support services for refugees and asylum seekers including a Pathways to Employment programme.

- › Website: www.redcross.org.nz

Rainbow Path NZ

Connects LGBTQA+ refugees and asylum seekers and provides information about rainbow friendly support services.

- › Email: rainbowpath@protonmail.com
- › Website: www.rainbowpathnz.com

