

Newcomer Health Overview

Background

Since 1979, Washington state has welcomed refugees fleeing persecution in their home country to rebuild their lives in our local communities. Today, Washington state continues to be a welcoming place for individuals and families. Connection to health systems, including health insurance, medical screening, and primary care, is an important component of support and resettlement.

This document was developed by the Washington State Refugee and Immigrant Health Program as a resource for resettlement agencies, sponsors, Sponsor Circles, volunteers, and community partners supporting newly arriving individuals and families. It is intended to provide information and local context to support connection to health insurance, refugee health screening, and primary care for newly arriving refugees, SIVs, humanitarian parolees from Afghanistan, humanitarian parolees from Ukraine, and other eligible humanitarian entrants.

Overview Checklist

Complete each item below for each individual. If you are a Sponsor or Sponsor Circle working with a refugee resettlement agency, clearly identify who will be supporting the client(s) with each task.

- Submit health insurance application for Apple Health through [WashingtonHealthPlanFinder](#) (if younger than 65 years) or [Washington Connection](#) (if 65 years or older) as soon as possible after arrival.
- Schedule health screening examination appointment with [refugee health screening clinic](#).
- Identify primary care provider close to where the client(s) will be living and schedule a new patient appointment within 30 days after arrival, or sooner if needed. **Note:** Health care connection should not be delayed due to lack of permanent housing. If a client is in temporary housing for an extended period, establish primary care close by.

Documentation

Before you begin the application and appointment booking process, it is helpful to have copies of the following documents for each individual, if available:

- I-94 or other immigration documentation
- Foreign passport with DHS/CBP admission stamp
- Form I-765 Employment Authorization Document (EAD) receipt notice
- Form I-765 Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

Health Insurance

Eligibility for Apple Health (Medicaid)

Refugees, humanitarian parolees from Afghanistan, humanitarian parolees from Ukraine and other eligible groups are potentially eligible for Apple Health (Medicaid).

Application process

Submit applications for individuals who are under 65 years of age to the Health Care Authority:

- Online: wahealthplanfinder.org
- Fax: 360-775-1158
- Questions? Call 1-800-562-3022

Submit applications for individuals who are age 65 years or older, have blindness, or a disability, to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS):

- Online: washingtonconnection.org
- Fax: 1-888-338-7410
- Questions? Call 1-877-501-2233

Application Support

- [Health navigators](#) contracted by Washington Health Benefit Exchange can help with health insurance enrollment support. Language assistance is available. A list of agencies by county is available [here](#).

Responsibilities

- Assist client(s) to apply for health insurance.
- Provide client(s) with education regarding health insurance in the United States.

Additional Information

- [Washington State Health Care Authority – Citizenship and Immigration Status](#)
- [Washington State Health Care Authority – Apple Health Eligibility for Individuals from Afghanistan](#)

- Washington State Health Care Authority - [Apple Health Eligibility for Individuals from Ukraine](#)
- [Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Aged, Blind, or Disabled \(ABD\) Program](#)

Domestic Health Screening Examination

Background

The domestic health screening examination provides an opportunity for clients to be seen by a clinician familiar with newly arriving clients and their health needs. The visit includes follow-up for any medical issues identified at the immigration medical exam, immunizations for school enrollment, and immigration requirements, and screening for communicable diseases, nutrition, lead levels, and emotional wellness. Medical interpretation in the client's preferred language is provided for all visits. Medical records from the examination will be shared with the client's primary care provider.

Eligibility and Cost

- All refugees, asylees, special immigrants, humanitarian paroles from Afghanistan, humanitarian parolees from Ukraine and other humanitarian entrants are eligible for a domestic health screening examination.
- This examination is free of charge to the client.

How to Book an Appointment

- Contact your [local health screening clinic](#).

Responsibilities

- Within 1 week of arrival, assist client(s) in scheduling an appointment. Appointments for refugee health screening typically occur within 90 days after a client arrives and it is important to submit a scheduling request in a timely manner.
- Coordinate transportation to and from the appointment. Health screening clinics may be able to provide recommendations for local options.
- Ensure the client brings all copies of overseas or domestic medical records to the appointment. This may include medical paperwork from the client's IOM bag such as form I-693, COVID-19 vaccination card, other vaccination records, and overseas records, including those in a language other than English.

Primary Care

Background

All new arrivals should establish care with a primary care provider near their home. In helping choose a primary care provider, consideration should be given to client preference, language, gender, location, transportation, health insurance, and health needs. Most new arrivals choose to establish care at a local clinic that accepts their insurance, such as a federal qualified health center. Some clients with higher medical complexity may choose to establish care within a primary care provider based within a hospital system. If you are uncertain about local clinics that serve newly arriving refugees in your community, your [local health screening clinic](#) may be able to provide suggestions.

Clients have a right to get language help at no cost when accessing health care. An interpreter is someone who speaks English and the client's language fluently and is trained in medical words to make sure that the patient and the doctor and other health care workers get the right information. A trained interpreter will not share anything about the client or anyone else. All clients should receive information about how to ask for help from a qualified interpreter.

How to Book an Appointment

- Contact the primary care clinic to schedule.

Responsibilities

- Assist client(s) to schedule appointment within 30 days of arrival or sooner if needed. **Note:** if client is in temporary housing for an extended period, establish primary care close by. Health care connection should not be delayed.
- Let the clinic know if medical interpretation is needed for this appointment.
- Coordinate transportation to and from appointment.
- Ensure the client brings all copies of overseas or domestic medical records to the appointment. This may include medical paperwork from the client's IOM bag such as form I-693, COVID-19 vaccination card, other vaccination records, and overseas records, including those in a language other than English.
- Assist the client with follow-up needs from the appointment, if requested (e.g., making a follow-up appointment or helping to fill a prescription). Clients are the decision makers regarding disclosure of their personal health information, such as diagnoses or needs.
- Provide the client with education on primary care in the U.S., including how to book an appointment, how to request interpretation, how to get to the clinic, and how to pick-up medication.

Urgent Health Needs and Emergencies

Health Emergencies

If a newly arrived client has a life-threatening health emergency, dial 911 or take them to the local Emergency Department.

Urgent Health Needs

If a newly arrived client has an urgent health need, contact their local primary care clinic to see if it is possible to schedule a same day appointment or for urgent care clinic options.

Responsibilities

- Ensure the client has access to care to address emergency or urgent health needs

Additional Questions

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Acknowledgements

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