

ISSofBC is forwarding six (6) recommendations to the Province of BC for their consideration.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION (MSDSI)

We would urge the BC Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDSI) to consider the following recommendations for all BC residents on Income Assistance (IA):

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Adjust current regulations to allow all BC IA recipients to earn up to 50% of their monthly allowance without any claw back.

RATIONALE AND BENEFIT:

At present individuals' earnings are clawed back on a dollar for dollar basis in BC. Enabling individuals to earn up to 50% would encourage pathways to full-time employment as recipients could supplement existing IA to better meet basic needs.



RECOMMENDATION 2:

Provide a multi-zone bus pass – or cash equivalency in regions without public transit – for all IA recipients eighteen (18) years old and over.

RATIONALE AND BENEFIT:

Transportation costs create an additional barrier to searching for work, attending English classes and seeking necessary supports for recipients struggling to meet basic needs on existing IA rates. Provision of a monthly multi-zone bus pass – or cash equivalency for IA recipients living in regions of BC that do not have public transit – would reduce barriers to employment and ensure equitability regardless of where the recipient lives in BC.



RECOMMENDATION 3:

Adapt the innovative 'Single Parent Employment Initiative' to target supports for highly vulnerable refugee populations.

RATIONALE AND BENEFIT:

Within the Province of BC if you are a single parent receiving income or disability assistance, you may be eligible for training and support to secure a long-term job through the Single Parent Employment Initiative. We would urge MSDSI to consider adapting this innovative program to target supports to highly vulnerable refugee populations in order to remove barriers to employment such as linking employment training with English language classes.



MINISTRY OF JOBS, TOURISM, AND SKILLS TRAINING

We would urge the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training to consider the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Enhance education and career planning supports that target refugee youth and young adults.



RATIONALE AND BENEFIT:

WorkBC Centres exist to support the needs of unemployed BC residents, ensuring all British Columbians have access to equitable supports. Yet refugee youth and young adults may face additional barriers to employment, including interrupted education, little/no English language proficiency and a lack of transferable work skills and experience. As such, there is a need for a specialized pathway to employment for refugee youth and young adults that includes an education plan and career exploration component. We would like to suggest the MSDSI review ways, in collaboration with the settlement sector and the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training, to enhance supports that target refugee youth and young adults.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

We would urge the Ministry of Health to consider the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Expedite the issuance of personal health numbers (PHNs) for newly arrived refugees.



RATIONALE AND BENEFIT:

Although newly arrived GARs are not subject to a three (3) month residency period before being eligible for MSP, there is a significant delay in the processing and issuance of Care Cards. At present the processing delay is approximately three (3) months for most individuals. Without a PHN or Care Card newly arrived refugees are delayed in accessing specialists and other critical supports, and – in some cases – have been charged as non-residents. ISSofBC has worked with the Ministry of Health to fast track MSP applications by submitting applications within GARs first week in Canada, but further work is needed by the Ministry to expedite the issuance of the personal health numbers (PHN#) in the period while Care Cards are processed and issued. The inability to immediately secure the GAR PHNs causes unnecessary delays in accessing specialists, and subsequently, impacts employment search and English language class attendance.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Establish a province wide refugee health program.



RATIONALE AND BENEFIT:

A province wide refugee health program would ensure a common baseline, as well as establish necessary consistencies and approaches in the provision of primary healthcare screening, assessment and treatment of refugees regardless of where they land in the province.