



Photo courtesy of cbc.ca

# Syrian Resettlement in BC

REFUGEE READINESS FUND NEWSLETTER #5

JANUARY 25, 2016

## Introducing the Provincial Refugee Mental Health (PRMH) Toll-Free Line

Do you have questions about refugee mental health? We can help you!

- Are you a mental or primary health professional working with refugees in BC?
- Are you a settlement worker / social service provider working with refugees in BC?
- Are you a private sponsor of a refugee or refugee family in BC?
- Do you have questions about refugee mental health?

If the answer is "yes", call the Provincial Refugee Mental Health Coordinator toll-free throughout British Columbia at **1-866-393-3133** Mondays to Fridays 9:00am to 5:00pm. The 1-866 number is made possible thanks to the Province of British Columbia.

The Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture (VAST), an organization that has been providing community-based mental health services to refugees in British Columbia for 30 years, has established a toll-free telephone support line for service providers working with refugees throughout British Columbia, including mental and primary health professionals, settlement workers, social service providers, and private sponsors. The service is free of charge.

We can assist by providing you with information, referrals and case consultation.

We can also consult with you on assessment for vulnerability, individual and group counselling and working with interpreters.

Whether you are working with refugee claimants, government-assisted or privately sponsored refugees, this service is for you.

Calls to the PRMH line are answered by Mariana Martinez Vieyra (MED, RCC), the Provincial Refugee Mental Health Coordinator (photo at right).



### Reflecting on the first few weeks

To date in 2016, the PRMH line has received a significant number of calls from:

- Schools and post-secondary institutions seeking mental health resources for refugee children, youth & young adults, & expressing concern on how to deal with the stories/trauma refugee students report;
- Private sponsors (current and future), the Canadian Mental Health Association, Metro Vancouver hospitals and Health Authorities seeking information on mental health resources, first language counselling and interpretation services (particularly in Arabic and Tigrinya) available to refugees; as well as case consultation and referral;

- Settlement agencies and Neighbourhood Houses seeking consultation on clients' post-traumatic responses and PTSD; and
- Media outlets wanting to find out more about what mental health services/PTSD treatment are available to refugees.

Mainstream mental health workers are often unaware of settlement services for refugees and desperately looking for cross-culturally sensitive mental health services in first language.

Callers have expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming training opportunities and the possibility of ongoing consultation through the toll-free line. Assessment / screening tools are greatly needed based on significant number of calls directed toward recognizing effects of trauma, and making proper referrals. That said, the question remains as to where to refer. There are a lack of mental health services to deal with the impact of compounded, complex trauma experienced by refugees. Trauma sequelae constitute an obstacle to the settlement process.



*B.C. Refugee Readiness Fund is part of the WelcomeBC umbrella of services, made possible through funding from the Province of British Columbia*

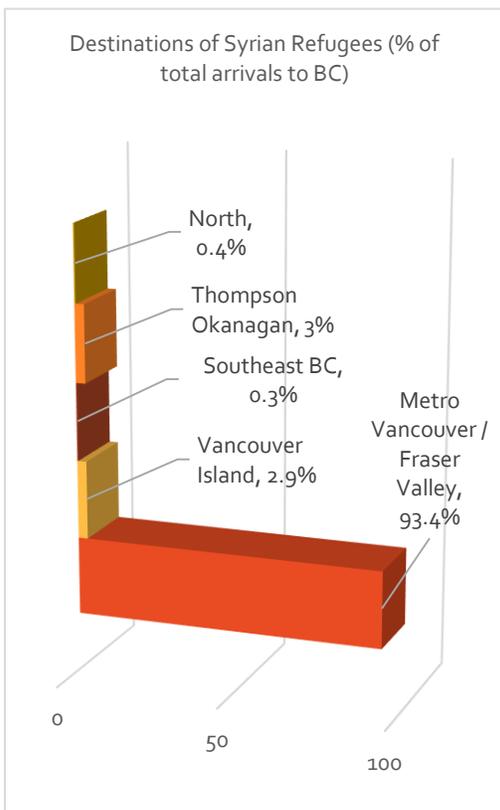
CONTEXT

Historical Arrivals: GARs to BC

BC receives approximately **10-12%** of government assisted refugees (GARs) resettled to Canada. All GARs to BC are destined to Vancouver, and settle across Metro Vancouver. Privately sponsored refugees settle in communities across BC, wherever their sponsors are located.

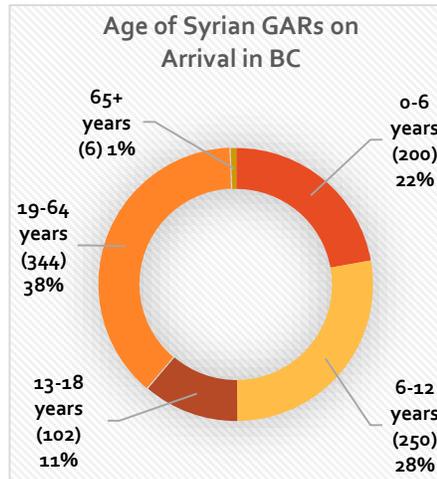
DESTINATIONS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN BC (%)

Since November 4, 2015 and as of Jan 14, 2016 – 19 BC communities have welcomed Syrian refugees.



Updates on Syrian GAR Arrivals

Since November 4, 2015 and as of January 22, 2016, ISSofBC has welcomed 902 Syrian GAR individuals / 197 family units.



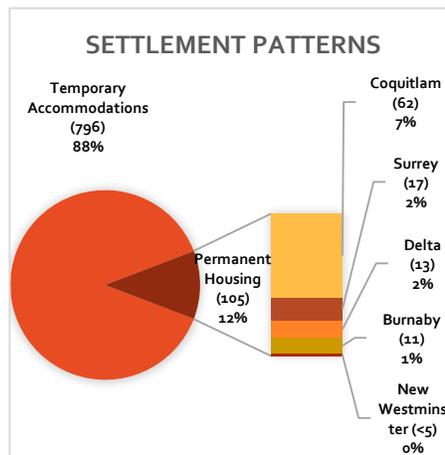
Sixty-one percent (61%) of Syrian GAR arrivals are age 18 and under. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of Syrian GAR arrivals are of school age (6 – 18 years). Over one in five arrivals are children under age 6.

Syrian GAR Settlement Patterns

As of January 15, 2016,

- 796 Syrian GARs individuals /164 units remain in temporary accommodations
- 105 Syrian GAR individuals/ 31 units have moved into permanent housing

Syrian GARs have permanently settled in Coquitlam, Surrey, Delta, Burnaby, and New Westminister.



ISSofBC's current emphasis is on identifying permanent housing across Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley. If you are aware of available housing – particularly for larger families – please let us know: [Offers of Accommodation](#).

BRITISH COLUMBIAN'S RESPONSE

On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 ISSofBC held a Call to Action to encourage people across BC to aid in the resettlement of Syrian refugees through offers of housing, employment & volunteering. We are humbled by the response. To date,



**1,212** housing leads, plus over **110** units offered by developers, property managers and owners for temporary and permanent accommodation

**5,767** people have come forward to offer their time and talent.



**241** job leads have been submitted to our survey

SYRIAN GAR ARRIVALS: NOV 4 – JAN 22



**902**  
Syrian GAR individuals

**197**  
Syrian GAR units



OPERATION SYRIAN REFUGEES

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCCC) is providing regular updates (Monday to Friday) on Milestones and key figures associated with Operation Syrian Refugees (see <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>)

As of January 21, 2015, Canada has welcomed 12,729 Syrian refugees, including: 7,095 Government Assisted Refugees, 762 Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugees and 4,872 Privately Sponsored Refugees.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Additional information, resources and training materials are available on our website (<http://www.issbc.org/prim-corp-nav/our-work-with-refugees>), as well as the Refugee Resettlement Hub ([www.issbc.org/refugee-readiness-hub](http://www.issbc.org/refugee-readiness-hub)). For further information please contact:

EMAIL: [refugee.crisis@issbc.org](mailto:refugee.crisis@issbc.org)

TOLL-FREE PHONE: 1-844-447-9742