



## Getting legal help

Applying for refugee status in Canada is complicated. It is easy to make a serious mistake. It is important to try to get legal help.

Here is some information that may help if you:

- cannot afford a lawyer,
- need help to find a lawyer, or
- want to know about immigration consultants.

## If you cannot afford a lawyer:

### Legal Aid Ontario

If your income is [low](#), you may be able to get help through [Legal Aid Ontario](#).

You can apply for a [legal aid certificate](#). To qualify, you must show that you cannot afford to pay for a lawyer. Legal aid certificates pay lawyers for specific services. They do not pay for the services of consultants who are not lawyers.

The [Refugee Law Office](#) is a staff office of Legal Aid Ontario. It can represent refugee claimants who qualify for legal aid.

### Help with the Basis of Claim Form

Legal Aid Ontario uses a [Stream Coded Country List](#). There are two streams. Claimants from most of the "Stream 1" countries get a certificate to pay for seven hours of a lawyer's time to help complete their Basis of Claim Form. For some Stream 1 countries, it also depends on the basis of their claim.

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If you are from a “Stream 2” country, you will have to answer questions about your claim. You will get a certificate only if you show that your claim has some chance of success.

## Help at the Refugee Protection Hearing

You may also be able to get a legal aid certificate to pay for a lawyer to represent you at your refugee hearing.

Legal Aid Ontario will issue a certificate for the hearing only if they have seen your completed Basis of Claim Form and think that your claim has some chance of success.

## Help at the Refugee Appeal Division

You may be able to get a legal aid certificate to pay for legal help with an appeal.

If you are appealing a decision of the [Refugee Protection Division](#) to refuse your claim, Legal Aid Ontario will give you a certificate only if they think that your appeal has some chance of success.

## Other Resources

A [community legal clinic](#) may also be able to give legal advice or refer you to someone who can. They can also tell you about getting access to services and benefits, such as social assistance.

[Getting Legal Help: A Directory of Community Legal Clinics in Ontario](#) gives more information about clinics.



For applications to the Federal Court, [Pro Bono Law Ontario](#) may be able to help. If you do not qualify for legal aid, you can apply for help through their [Federal Court Assistance Project](#).

## Finding a lawyer:

Legal Aid Ontario offers a [searchable directory](#) of lawyers who accept legal aid certificates. You can search for refugee lawyers by location and language.

In Ontario, you can also find a licensed lawyer through the Law Society of Upper Canada's [directory of members](#). Some lawyers who are experts in refugee law are listed in the [Law Society's Directory of Certified Specialists – Refugee Protection Law](#).

## Information about immigration consultants:

Immigration consultants who are members of the [Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council](#) or paralegals licensed by a provincial law society can also represent you at the Immigration and Refugee Board.

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**This information sheet gives only general information. You should get legal advice about your own situation.**

For more information on refugee claims, visit [refugee.cleo.on.ca](http://refugee.cleo.on.ca). For more legal information visit the [CLEO website](#) and [Your Legal Rights](#).