

## **Are You or Do You Know A Woman Without Residency Status Who Is Fleeing Violence?**

Women who are fleeing domestic violence are often navigating many systems, from family court, criminal justice, and the Ministry of Child & Family Development to government and community systems pertaining to financial assistance, housing, and mental health services. To say the least, the road to safety for women is daunting.

At the same time, women who are in Canada without status, or with precarious status, must navigate through another system – immigration. Humanitarian grounds applications entail complex and sometimes

overwhelming rules and regulations. Perpetrators often threaten that if women leave their households and report the abuse, they will be deported from Canada. Some perpetrators give false promises about starting sponsorship paperwork to obtain status for their partners.

Unfortunately, these threats of deportation by the perpetrator create an atmosphere of fear. Abused women face a real risk of removal from the country by Canada Border Services Agency, the enforcement arm for the nation's immigration laws.

### **Temporary Resident Permit (TRP) Offers Hope**

As of July 2019, there is some hope for abused women seeking to stay in Canada. In response to years of advocacy for regulatory changes, the Canadian Government has acknowledged the need to help non-status women flee violence. Canada will now provide abused women without status with a fee-exempt, Temporary Resident Permit (TRP) as well as an initial fee-exempt Work Permit (WP) and Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) coverage.

The TRPs are supposed to be provided as expeditiously as possible and are intended for cases of family violence from a spouse or common-law partner. Here are the eligibility criteria and related application information:

- The abused woman must be located in Canada and experiencing abuse, including physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse or neglect from their spouse or common-law partner while in Canada;
- The abused woman must be in the process of seeking permanent resident status, which is contingent upon her remaining in a “genuine relationship” in which there is abuse and when the relationship with the abusive spouse or common-law partner is critical for the continuation of her status in Canada;
- Dependent foreign national children of victims of family violence are also eligible for a family violence TRP. Both mother and children must be in Canada;
- All TRP applications, to be processed quickly, are identified by the code “FV” (signifying Family Violence) on the first page. Approved applications are issued a

TRP for a minimum of six months or more.

- To apply for a TRP, please see the Government of Canada’s [web page](#) on new TRP for family violence cases.

### **Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) Coverage**

- To apply for health coverage please see the application on the Government of Canada’s [web page](#).

### **For More information on Immigration Options for Victims of Family Violence**

- See the Government [web page](#) on immigration options for victims of family violence.

### **Fleeing During the Pandemic**

It is important to remember the following:

- Those fleeing violence can find support at [VictimLinkBC](#): 1-800-563-0808. This help line is available 24/7 in multiple languages and can assist those harmed to get connected with an anti-violence advocate in their community.

- Some Transition Houses across BC are converting hotel spaces and other locations into additional safe havens for women and children fleeing gender-based violence.
- While Canada and most countries are on lockdown during COVID-19, only travellers deemed “essential” are admitted into other countries. See Government [web page](#) for exemptions to travel restrictions.
- BC’s Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equality has reassured victims and survivors of gender-based violence: “If you reach out for help, we will make sure there is a safe space during this emergency – no matter where you live in BC.”
- Call Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Client Support Centre (CSC) at 1-888-242-2100.

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