



Here & Well

Getting ready for your
new life in Québec



Centre intégré
universitaire de santé
et de services sociaux
du Centre-Ouest-
de-l'Île-de-Montréal



Preamble

About *Here & Well*

As part of the 2022–2026 Interministerial Action Plan on Mental Health [in French], the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration (MIFI) and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux tasked the Centre d'expertise sur le bien-être et l'état de santé physique des réfugiés et demandeurs d'asile (CERDA) and the SHERPA University Institute with creating a mental health information toolkit for immigrants and refugees.

Here & Well is intended to support the well-being of people who are new to or about to arrive in Québec. It aims to inform immigrants and refugees and ensure they are aware of the challenges they may face throughout the immigration process, as well as the associated mental health challenges. *Here & Well* is also intended to serve as a reference and support tool for counsellors from various sectors who support immigrants and refugees.

It was developed based on a literature review and in collaboration with professionals, counsellors and people from diverse backgrounds who have themselves recently arrived in Québec.

For any questions about *Here & Well*, we invite you to contact our team at cerda.ccomtl@ssss.gouv.qc.ca.

Bibliography

The full bibliography of sources cited in *Here & Well* is available at the following address: <https://infobienetre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Bibliographie.pdf>

About the CERDA and the SHERPA University Institute

The CERDA and the SHERPA University Institute are part of the Direction of Learning Partnerships and Knowledge Activation at the CIUSSS du Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal.

The CERDA supports concerted efforts in the health and social services network to help refugees and refugee claimants settle in Québec. Part of the CERDA's mission is to support the 11 CISSS and CIUSSS tasked by the MSSS with performing physical health and wellness assessments for newly arrived refugees. It also advises the MSSS and helps promote Québec's expertise provincially, nationally and internationally.

For more information: [CERDA](#) [in French]

The SHERPA University Institute conducts research, assessment and knowledge transfer activities to support the development of knowledge and best practices in front-line intervention in a multi-ethnic context. Its designation as a university institute specializing in immigration and intercultural intervention makes it a key player in Québec's health and social services network.

For more information: [SHERPA University Institute](#)

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In alphabetical order

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Avec la participation financière de :



Acronyms

CAQ Québec Acceptance Certificate

CSQ Québec Selection Certificate

CLSC Local community services centre

DYP Director of Youth Protection

ECEEHQ Comparative evaluation of studies taken outside Québec

HRO Human relations officer

MIFI Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration

SIN Social insurance number

IFHP Interim Federal Health Program

RAMQ Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec

TET Temporary foreign workers

How to use Here & Well?

This toolkit is designed to support the well-being of immigrants and refugees before they leave and after they arrive.

Here & Well offers:

- Information on well-being and what can influence it
- Tips to tackle the challenges you may face as you get settled in Québec
- Resources to support you and help you adjust.



Short version in PDF format

- You can view it online, download it, or print it.
- Individual PDFs for each section are available.



Full web version

- You can view it online from a computer or a smartphone.



Important

Administrative procedures and the contact information of resources may change over time. It is therefore important to check the date of the latest update of *Here & Well*. This date is displayed at the bottom of the website and on the pages of the short PDF version. Updates are made regularly.

Also, please note that the content of *Here & Well*:

- Does not replace psychosocial support or the advice of a mental health professional
- Is not exhaustive and does not cover every specific situation.



Visual cues

The orange icons help you identify information and tips specific to your migration status.

- IE** Economic immigrant
- FC** Immigrant sponsored under the family class category
- IS** International student
- TFW** Temporary foreign worker
- R** Refugee selected abroad

Information and tips for asylum seekers can be found at <https://carnetsderoute.info/>.

These three icons highlight important information.

-  Resources that can support you
-  Key or surprising facts
-  Precautions to avoid potential problems

Three fictional characters share their experiences and tips.



Mariam, a teenager refugee from Syria



Malika, an international student from Senegal



Carlos, an economic immigrant from Colombia

 QR Code	 Hyperlinks
QR codes and hyperlinks at the beginning of each section lead to <i>Here & Well</i> website.	Hyperlinks within the text lead to useful websites.

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Getting Ready



Things to do before you leave

Getting ready before you leave helps you feel more confident and in control when you arrive.

Getting the right information

- The Government of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/>
- The Government of Québec <https://www.quebec.ca/>
- Accompagnement Québec <https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/integration-service-for-immigrants>
- The website of your educational institution — IS
- This toolkit!

Check your eligibility for public health insurance plans

- To find out more, see **Régie d'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ), Interim Federal Health Program and Private insurance plans** (p. 22-23).

Contacting people in Québec to connect with them before you arrive

- Family members or friends already in Québec
- Groups of people from your country in the province
- Your sponsor (private sponsorship) — R

Making a list of essentials

Make sure to bring the most important documents with you in your carry-on bag.

For more information, see the Government of Canada Website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/settle-canada/border-crossing.html>

Checking if you are eligible for the public insurance plans

TFW

IS

In Québec, your migration status determines whether you can access certain public services in Québec, including health care and education. To find out more, see **Taking Care of Self-Care** (p. 20) and **Learning and Training** (p. 30).

It is important to plan ahead by reading the conditions on your documents carefully (work permit, study permit, etc.) and to stay informed of any changes to immigration policies or procedures.

If you plan to immigrate with a child aged 6 to 16, you must complete certain steps before entering Canada to obtain a CAQ (Government of Québec) and a study permit (IRCC).

"Contacting people you know in Québec can help you get ready! I was lucky: a friend of my mom's came to meet me at the airport. She also put me in contact with other people in the province and gave me helpful addresses."

Malika, international student from Senegal

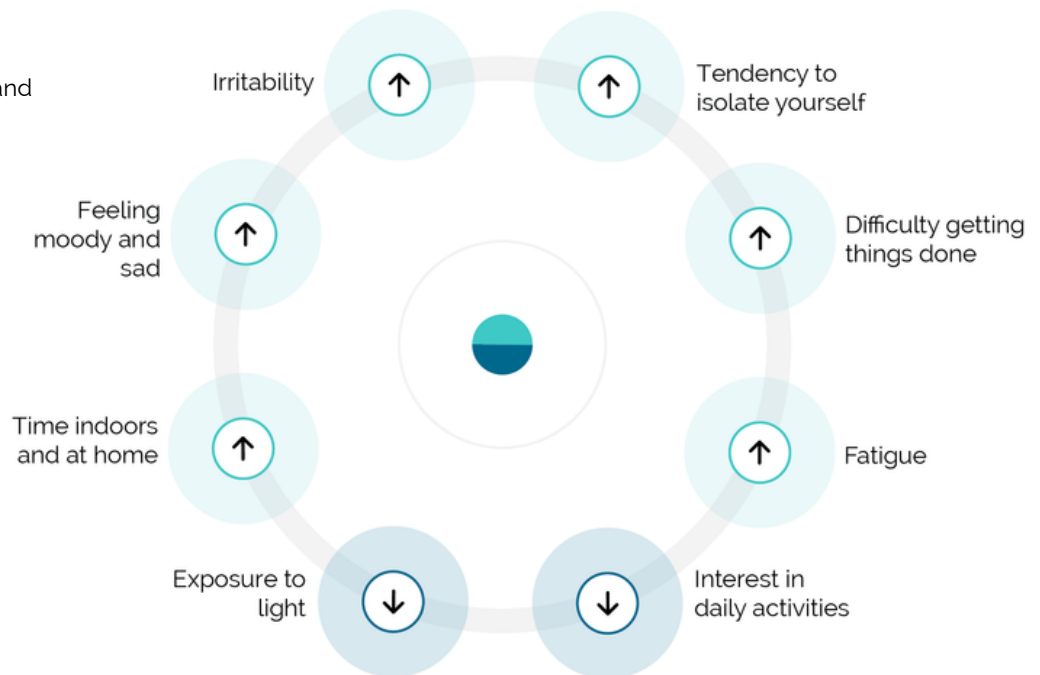


Your First Winter

Learning about winter can help you relax and fully enjoy the season.

Winter in Québec lasts from November to April. Dreading this season is normal: it is the coldest and darkest of the year.

Winter is often associated with:



Here are some tips to help you overcome your concerns about winter and enjoy the season.



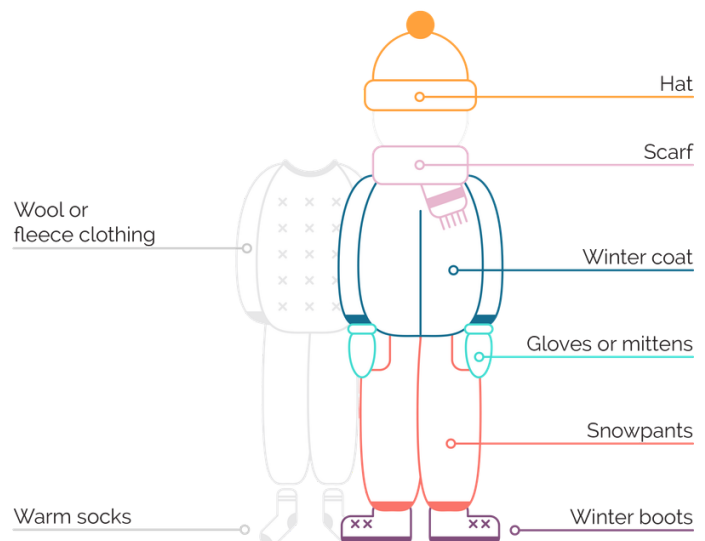
"I bought a coat before immigrating to Québec and quickly realized it wasn't warm enough to get me through the winter. My advice is to bring clothes for the first few days and buy the rest when you arrive."

Malika, international student from Senegal

Having suitable clothing

Tips to save money:

- Ask people you know in Québec, your sponsor or your host organization for advice
- Visit community organizations, second-hand stores, etc
- Take advantage of end-of-season sales.



Getting enough natural light

Going outside on sunny winter days helps to combat seasonal depression.

"Municipal parks sometimes have equipment to rent for winter activities. Close to my home, you can rent tubes for free to slide down the hill at the park. The kids love it!"

Carlos, economic immigrant from Colombia



Keeping in touch

Keeping in touch with your loved ones and making new friends helps to avoid feeling lonely during winter.

For example, you can:

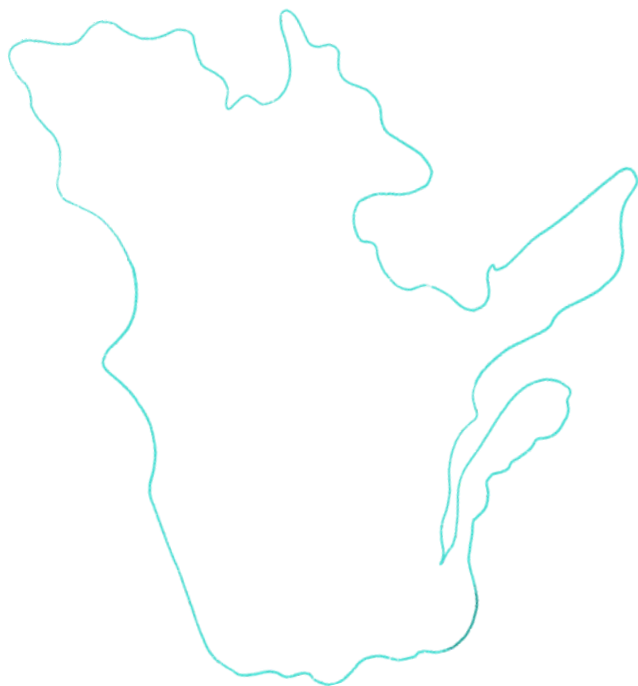
- Go to events for all ages (local winter carnivals, Québec Winter Carnival, etc.)
- Send photos and videos of the winter to your family abroad.

Asking for help if needed

Winter can be a difficult time. Don't hesitate to contact professional resources. To find out more, see **Mental health resources** (p. 24).

Geography and history of Québec

Learning about the geography and history of Québec can help you know what to expect and feel at home more quickly.



Check out the Toolkit to:

- Discover Québec's 17 administrative regions
- Test your knowledge of Québec society by taking a quiz.





Getting Settled



First Experiences

Preparing for when you first arrive can make the adjustment process smoother and help you manage your emotions and get your bearings.

Adjusting to a new environment

Being in a new environment can be unsettling and confusing. Differences in behaviour, social norms and even food can make the adjustment more difficult than expected.

Experiencing hardship when you arrive in a new country is common and can be overcome.

To find out more about these phases, see [the chart on the phases of adaptation](#) (p. 35).

"When I arrived, I hoped to find a job as an engineer right away, but then the reality of the situation hit me. I was frustrated and stressed, and the bills were piling up. Friends who had already been here for a long time told me to improve my French, adjust my CV and consult an employment integration organization. I was able to find a job outside my field, which gave me my first experience in Québec. I learned the importance of keeping an open mind and asking for help."

Carlos, economic immigrant from Colombia



Did you know?

- **For the first 6 months**, you have the right to receive public services in a language other than French.
- Interpreting and translation services are offered in some regions. You may have to wait. Institutions must inform you that a free and confidential interpreter is available.
- **After 6 months**, public organizations must assess your needs and provide services in French, except in health care and public safety.
- You cannot be denied **emergency or health services** because of the language you speak.
- Speaking French can give public service employees (for example, in the health and social services sector) a better understanding of your needs.

Notes



Getting through the airport: what to expect

Here is some practical information to cross the border without any issues.



- R** MIFI agents will meet you when you get off the airplane and can guide you through the next steps.

YUL Aéroport International Montréal-Trudeau

1 →

Customs and immigration declaration

- The declaration is available in multiple languages.
- Option 1: up to 72 hours before your flight, you can fill out a declaration in advance using the ArriveCAN mobile app.
- Option 2: kiosks are available at the airport to fill out the declaration, and agents can help you.

2

Presenting immigration documents

- Keep your passport and your documents (CSQ, CAQ, work permit or study permit confirmation) readily available.
- Present your documents to the border services officers.

→ 3

Receiving official documents

- At customs, you will receive your immigration documents (work or study permit, etc.).

← 4

Checked baggage

- Check the signs for the baggage carousel number for your flight.
- Collect your bags and check that everything is in order.
- Are your bags lost or delayed? Visit the luggage claim service counter (arrivals level, gate 28).

← 5

MIFI Reception Service

- Offered from noon to midnight, only at Montréal-Trudeau international airport.
- Follow the blue stickers on the ground to the "Immigration Québec" area.
- Information about the services offered by MIFI and community organizations to make your settling in easier.

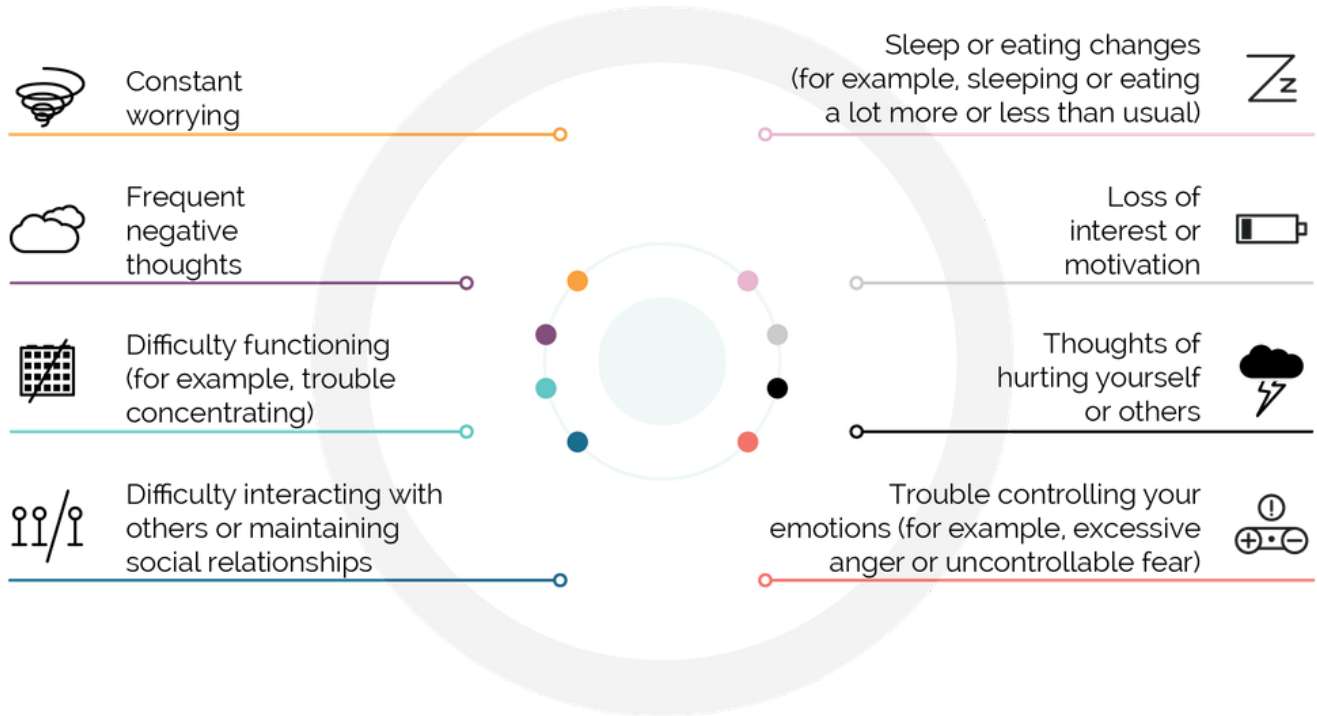
6 ←

Transportation

- Paid options: bus, taxi, carpooling, shuttle to some hotels.
- If your destination is not Montréal, check how to get there before you leave.
- Your host organization authorized by the MIFI or your sponsor will let you know about transportation arrangements before you arrive.



Signs of stress or depression to watch for



This list is for reference only. The signs can change over time and based on your experiences.

Talk to someone you know or a health and social services professional if:

- You are showing signs of stress or depression
- Your condition is affecting your daily life (your job, studies, family responsibilities, etc.)
- What you are experiencing is very intense or is not going away
- You are concerned about someone you know.

Don't wait until the situation gets worse to ask for support. Free and confidential resources are available 24/7.

To find out more, see **Mental health help and support resources** (p. 24).

Notes

Resources available to newcomers

Using free support services can make it easier to get settled in Québec.

Where to start?

These two resources can help you get started with the installation process.

Your family in Québec can also be a great help upon arrival.

FC



Accompagnement Québec

- Free and personalized public service for immigrants and refugees
- Accessible abroad and throughout Québec
- Access to an integration assistance agent from the MIFI
- Needs assessment (settling in, recognition of skills, employment, French classes, immigration, etc.)
- Personalized action plan
- Support the specific needs of sponsored refugees
- <https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/integration-service-for-immigrants>

R



Community organizations offering support to immigrants and refugees

- Free community services for immigrants and refugees
- Information to help you settle in in (RAMQ, SIN, driver's license, daycare registration, finding housing, etc.)
- Referrals to appropriate resources (employment, housing, health, education, etc.)
- Information on Québec society
- Intercultural exchange program
- <https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/partners> (select the filter "Accueil, installation, intégration, renseignement et référence")
- <https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/partners> (select the filter "installation et accompagnement des personnes réfugiées prises en charge par l'État")

R

Practical tips

Find useful information to start settling in and recognize risky situation on the toolkit website:

<https://infobienetre.ca/en/arriving/#practical-tips>



Government-assisted refugees	Privately sponsored refugees
The MIFI has authorized a host organization to support you in your settlement process. This includes temporary accommodation when you arrive.	Your sponsor agreed to support you for your first year in Québec. Among other responsibilities, they must find suitable housing for you and cover the rent.

Physical health and wellness assessment

When you arrive, your host organization authorized by the MIFI or your sponsor is responsible for making an appointment for you.

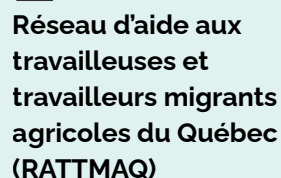
Entirely voluntary and free, this assessment:

- Gives you a better idea of your health and your family's health
- Allows you to get referrals to services that support your physical and mental well-being.

Your assessment is done at two appointments:



 Services offered by your educational institution	• Orientation activities (opportunity to meet students and teaching staff in your program, campus tour, and information on available services) • Social activities that allow you to meet students and learn about Québec society • Immigration advice (study permit, medical insurance, etc.) • Information on scholarships for international students
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- Services for TFWs in the agricultural and food processing sector
- Reception at the airport, guidance and mental health and legal support
- Phone and chat
- WhatsApp : 514 415-8077
- Montérégie, Montréal and Laval: 1 514 415-8077
- Québec and Chaudière-Appalaches: 1 581 849-7941
- Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean: 1 581 574-8174
- <https://rattmag.org/services/>



- Information, support and activities for TFWs
- French, English and Spanish
- 1 888 454-3998
- WhatsApp : 438 543-5062, 438 378-5152
- <https://www.infotetquebec.com/>
- Downloadable information guide in French/English, French/Spanish and French/Tagalog: <https://www.infotetquebec.com/guide/>





Building Your Support System



Support system

Maintaining existing relationships and developing new ones in Québec is essential for feeling like you are supported and belong.

Feeling isolated from others

Moving to a new country means moving away from your family, friends and what you are used to.

Making new friends takes time. The language, culture, and geographical isolation can also make socializing harder.



This means it is normal to feel distant from your support system in your country of origin and isolated from the people around you.

Here are a few tips for maintaining ties with your original network and building a strong network in Québec.

Maintain regular contact remotely and in Québec

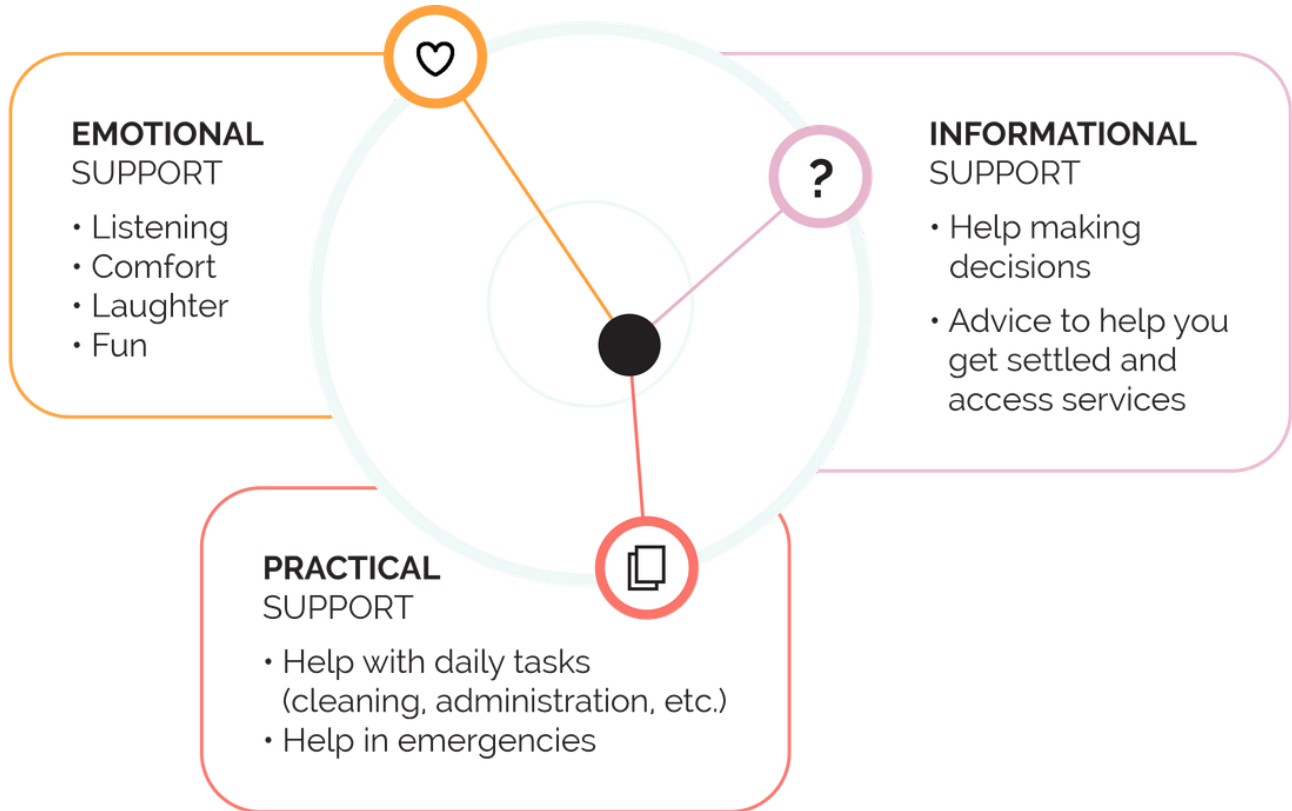
Regular social interactions, even short-term, contribute to your well-being.

- Contact your loved ones regularly (messages, photos, video calls)
- Spend more time with people (family members, friends, neighbours, acquaintances, etc.).



Diversifying your sources of support

It isn't the number of people in your network that counts, but the variety of connections and types of support. You can get support from your family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances or new people you meet.



Reconnecting with your communities and exploring diversity

- Join networks of people with the same background, experiences or interest as you.
- Join other networks and explore new activities and ways of doing.

If you experience misunderstandings or miscommunication, it's best to talk about it and ask questions rather than keep it to yourself.

Asking for help outside your support system

Sometimes, confiding in the people around you is hard. At times like these, talking to someone who understands what you are going through can help.

To find out more, see [**Mental health help and support resources**](#) (p. 24).



Meaningful activities

Doing activities that make you feel good is a great way to build relationships and thrive in Québec.

Here are some tips for finding enjoyable and fulfilling activities in Québec.

Getting involved in the community or volunteering

- Find out how you can get involved with organizations and groups that support causes, defend rights, or promote social change.
- Find out about volunteer opportunities offered by community organizations, associations, religious institutions, etc.
- Explore the Fédération des centres d'action bénévole du Québec website: <https://www.jebenevole.ca/>

Participating in sports and recreational activities

- Find out what sports and recreational facilities and activities (pool, sports field, art class, etc.) are offered by municipalities and community centres.
- Take advantage of municipal, regional and national parks for walking, biking, etc.
- Encourage your child to participate in activities offered by their school, the municipality or community centres.
- Take advantage of the activities offered by your educational institution.

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"What helped me in the first few months was joining a youth group at the Assyrian church. The activities introduced me to new friends who spoke my language and gave me a place to be myself. At school, I also joined an art club. I'm learning to express my emotions through art—it's helping me a lot!"

Mariam, teenage refugee from Syria



Did you know?

Volunteering means using your time, energy and skills to help the community, by choice and for free. This kind of activity can help you learn about the local job market and build your network.

Participating in activities offered by your educational institution

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- Find out about the activities offered, including those intended for international students (student associations, sports clubs, study or support groups, etc.)

"Members of the African student association at my university gave me valuable advice when I arrived. Having a supportive space to share was essential for me. Feeling supported also helped me stay connected to my culture while I was studying in Québec. I highly recommend joining this type of group!"

Malika, international student from Senegal





Taking Care of Yourself



Health care and services

Knowing certain information about resources and insurance can help you access care and services.

Immediate emergency assistance



Emergency services – 911

- For emergencies (police, ambulance, fire department, etc.)
- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- 911
- <https://www.quebec.ca/securite-situations-urgence/urgence-9-1-1> [in French]



Find a hospital

- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Contact information for hospitals in Québec
- <https://www.indexsante.ca/hopitaux/> [in French]



Important

If you are not covered by the RAMQ, the IFHP, or a public health insurance plan from another Canadian province, **a significant surcharge** (200%) applies to fees for care and services received at a public institution (hospital, CLSC, etc.).

To find out more, see **Private insurance plans** (p. 23).



Appointment for non-urgent care

 CLSC Santé	• Online appointments for free (with the RAMQ) or fee-based services (vaccination, testing, screening, contraception, etc.) • https://portal3.clicsante.ca/en
 Bonjour-Santé	• Online appointments for free medical appointments with the RAMQ • https://bonjour-sante.ca/uno/clinic
 Find a same-day or next-day medical appointment	• Search engine to find a free (with the RAMQ) or fee-based medical appointment • For people without a family doctor or whose family doctor is unavailable • https://sante.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoire-ressources/consultations-medicales-sans-rendez-vous/
Educational institution	Find out if your educational institution offers care and services to its students.

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Important

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People who are eligible and registered to the RAMQ have free access to covered health care and services.

If you have private insurance coverage, certain professionals can offer you covered care and services. To find out more, see **Private insurance plans** (p. 23).



Referral to the right resources



Info-santé 811

- Health advice and referrals
- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Free
- 811, option 1



Pediatric 811 line

- Health advice and referrals for children aged 0–17
- Free
- 811, option 1, then option 2

Régie d'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ)

People who are eligible and registered to RAMQ have free access to covered health care and services. They also have access to prescription drugs at a reduced rate.

To find out more about Québec public Québec's health and prescription drug insurance plan, visit the RAMQ website: <https://www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca/en/citizens/health-insurance>

You are eligible for RAMQ coverage.



If your country has a social security agreement with Québec, you can register with the RAMQ when you arrive. This also applies to family members who are accompanying you.



Important

When you register for public health insurance, coverage usually starts after a waiting period of up to 3 months. During this waiting period:

- The RAMQ does not reimburse you for health care and services received, with certain exceptions (pregnancy, childbirth, sexual assault, etc.).
- It is strongly recommended that you take out private insurance coverage.

To find out more, visit the RAMQ website: <https://www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca/en/citizens/health-insurance/medical-services>

If you have a closed work permit, check if your employer is responsible for paying for private insurance that covers emergency medical care.

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Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)

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When you arrive in Québec, you are automatically covered by the IFHP.

This coverage applies:

- While you are waiting to receive your health insurance card from the RAMQ (waiting period)
- To some complementary services (psychologist, physiotherapist, dentist, optometrist, etc.) during your first year in Québec.

Many CLSCs and some clinics accept the IFHP. To find out which providers offer care and services covered by the IFHP, use the Provider search tool:

<https://ifhp.medaviebc.ca/en/providers-search>

Know that hospitals are required to provide the necessary care to people whose lives or physical integrity is at risk.

Private insurance plans

If not covered by the RAMQ, taking out **private insurance** can help **cover part of the cost** of health and social services and prescription drugs.

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It is essential to check exactly what is covered by your private insurance and how much is reimbursed. If needed, you can take out private insurance with more coverage.

Health and hospitalization insurance is **mandatory** for international students. When you arrive in Québec, you have 5 to 30 days to take out private insurance, if you are not eligible for the RAMQ.

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Most educational institutions in Québec require you to be covered by their own private plan. This type of insurance generally covers basic medical and hospital costs.

To find out more, visit the Government of Québec website: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/study-quebec/required-conditions>

Asking for help when things get hard

Paying attention to your mental health and knowing where to find support helps you recognize your needs.

How to know if you need help

Use the *How's It Going?* tool to:

- Better understand how mental health affects your thoughts, body, behaviours and emotions
- Reflect on and identify ways to feel better.

Check it out on the toolkit website: <https://infobienetre.ca/en/taking-care-of-yourself/#how-to-know-if-you-need-help>



Good



Not great



Very bad



Who to talk to or ask for help

If you are not doing well, don't face it alone. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It is a strength to be able to recognize what you are going through and talk about it.

Sometimes, their support is not enough. You may also prefer talking to someone you don't know. If so, you can seek professional help.

You can start by talking to people you trust:

- Family members, friends, colleagues
- Support groups
- People in your religious or spiritual community (imam, priest, reverend, pastor, etc.).

Mental health help and support resources

Immediate assistance for an emergency

 Suicide.ca	• Support from a counsellor trained to talk openly about suicide • French and English • 24 hours a day, 7 days a week • Phone: 1-866-277-3555 (in Québec), 988 (outside Québec) • Text: 535353 • Chat • https://suicide.ca/en
 Emergency services - 911	• For immediate emergency assistance (police, ambulance, etc) • 24 hours a day, 7 days a week • https://www.quebec.ca/securite-situations-urgence/urgence-9-1-1 [in French]
 Finding a hospital	• 24 hours a day, 7 days a week • Contact information for hospitals in Québec • https://www.indexsante.ca/hopitaux/ [in French]
 Finding a crisis centre	• Crisis intervention service • 24 hours a day, 7 days a week • https://resicq.ca/resicq-en/

Orientation vers les bonnes ressources



Info-social 811

- Conseils et références en matière de services sociaux
- 24 heures sur 24, 7 jours sur 7
- Gratuit
- 811, option 2

"At some community organizations, an intercultural community counsellor (ICI Santé) can guide you and help you with the process. Don't hesitate to use this service!"

Carlos, economic immigrant from Colombia



Psychological and social support (psychosocial support)

 Find a CLSC psychosocial intake	• Services for people covered by the RAMQ (human relations officer, social worker, etc.) • Some CLSCs accept the IFHP • https://sante.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoire-ressources/clsc/	R
 Mental health counselling - Private practice	• Paid services (social worker, sexologist, psychotherapist, psychologist, etc.) • Private insurance through your workplace may cover some services and costs • Some private services are covered by the IFHP. Make sure the professional accepts this coverage. Remember that you need a referral from a doctor first • Some professionals offer sliding scale fees based on income for people without private insurance. • https://www.ordrepsy.qc.ca/english • https://www.otstcfq.org/public/trouver-un-professionnel/ [in French]	R
 Milieu d'études	Check if your educational institution offers mental health services.	IS



Did you know?



When you arrive, you are entitled to a physical health and wellness assessment. Using this service can help you access the care and services you need. Your host organization authorized by the MIFI or your sponsor can help you make an appointment with your local refugee health team.

Medical consultation

Family doctors can:

- Make diagnoses and prescribe medication
- Refer you to a specialist (a psychiatrist, a psychologist, etc.) if necessary.

To find out about resources that can help you access this service, see **Make an appointment for non-urgent care** (p. 21).

Services for young people

 Aire ouverte	• Free health and well-being services for youth aged 12 to 25, regardless of migration status • https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/finding-a-resource/aire-ouverte-services-for-young-people-aged-12-to-25
 School	Schools also offer support for children. Ask the staff for information.





Working



Job market

Some strategies can help newcomers face challenges entering the workforce.

The most common challenges may include:

- Trouble getting your diplomas, qualifications and skills obtained abroad recognized
- Not having work experience in Canada or Québec
- Meeting the requirements of professional orders (engineers, doctors, nurses, etc.)
- Dealing with the language barrier
- Experiencing prejudice or discrimination during the hiring process
- The length of your work permit and renewing your permit.

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This can have several consequences, such as unemployment, deskilling and job insecurity.

These situations can:

- Complicate long-term planning (savings, family planning, etc.)
- Increase uncertainty and stress
- Reduce self-confidence
- Impact personal relationships.

Using employment integration resources

On arrival, these two resources can help you get started and direct you to the right services.

Some CEGEPs and universities can help their students and graduates find a job or provide them with career advice.

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Accompagnement Québec

- Free and personalized public service for immigrants and refugees
- Accessible abroad and throughout Québec
- Access to an integration assistance agent from the MIFI
- Needs assessment (settling in, recognition of skills, employment, french classes, immigration, etc.)
- Personalized action plan
- Support for the specific needs of sponsored refugees
- <https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/integration-service-for-immigrants>

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Community organizations offering support to immigrants and refugees

- Free community services for immigrants and refugees
- Information to help you settle in in (RAMQ, SIN, driver's license, daycare registration, finding housing, etc.)
- Referrals to appropriate resources (employment, housing, health, education, etc.)
- Information on Québec society
- Intercultural exchange program
- <https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/partners> (select the filter "Accueil, installation, intégration, renseignement et référence")
- <https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/partners> (select the filter "installation et accompagnement des personnes réfugiées prises en charge par l'État")

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Getting your skills recognized

In Québec, **many jobs and professions are legally regulated**. To perform them, you must get **authorization** or a **licence**.

- To find out if your profession or trade is regulated, you can use the Qualifications Québec search engine: <https://qualificationsquebec.com/chercher-votre-profession/>
- If your trade or profession is regulated, register for Accompagnement Québec service: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/integration-service-for-immigrants>

Obtaining a **comparative evaluation of studies done outside Québec** (ECEEHQ) can help you demonstrate your skills to:

- An employer, when you are looking for a job
- An educational institution, if you would like to study in Québec
- A regulatory body.

To find out more about the process and eligibility to financial assistance, see the Government of Québec website:

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/work-quebec/recognition-skills-acquired-abroad>

"I had trouble finding a job in my field while I was studying, even with a degree and a background in education. In interviews, I got the impression that my experience wasn't recognized. A friend recommended that I get involved with a community organization. The staff there soon recognized my skills and gave me responsibilities. This experience allowed me to get advice, expand my network and build my confidence."

Malika, international student from Senegal



Workplace and rights

Taking the time to get familiar with local practices in the workplace and learn about labour laws can help you feel more confident.

Adjusting to a new workplace

Joining a new workplace can be stressful. Some ways of doing things or expectations may be new to you.

Tips:

- Talk to and build relationships with your colleagues
- Ask questions to improve your understanding and prevent miscommunication
- Get involved with a community organization or volunteer to get familiar with local practices
- Participate in an **Objectif Intégration information session**.



Objectif Intégration information session

- Free 24-hour session offered throughout Québec
- Information about Québec (cultural norms, workplace, etc.)
- Age 18 or older
- Intermediate French required
- Eligibility verification required
- Financial assistance available in some cases
- <https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/settle-and-integrate-in-quebec/objectif-integration>

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Asserting your rights

In Québec, all workers have rights, regardless of their migration status.

Different laws regulate working conditions. To find out more, see the toolkit website:

<https://infobienetre.ca/travailler/#connaitre-ses-droits>



Did you know?

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You can work on campus or off campus while you study if certain conditions are met. Check which conditions apply before you start working to protect your status.

To find out more, see the Government of Canada website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work.html>



Did you know?

Asserting your rights at work will not affect your migration status, even if your employer says otherwise.

Here are some tips if you experience a dispute or injustice at work:

- Ask government agencies that promote labour rights or your union (if you have one) for information
- Contact a community organization to talk about your situation and receive confidential support.

To find out more on these resources, see the toolkit website :

<http://infobienetre.ca/travailler/#ressources-de-soutien>

Notes





Learning and Training



Welcoming your children to school

Knowing the key aspects of the school experience in Québec can help parents support their children's learning journey.

Making school an important part of family life

School is much more than a place to learn. It can help your child:

- Make meaningful connections (friends, teachers, coaches, mentors, etc.)
- Develop their talents
- Learn or improve their French
- Participate in arts activities that support self-expression.

For parents, school is a place where you can get information, find support and get to know other parents.

Registering for childcare services (daycare) or for school

To find out about the key steps and how students progress through the Québec school system, see the toolkit website: <https://infobienetre.ca/en/learning-and-training/#quebecs-school-system>

Getting ready for the welcome interview

When you arrive, you and your child will be invited to a welcome interview. This is an opportunity for the school to:

- Get to know your child's academic background, immigration experience, skills and interests
- Check if a French language skills assessment is needed to determine whether they need support (for example: welcome class or regular class with support to learn French).

You are not required to share everything. You should feel comfortable sharing it.

You can also take advantage of the interview to ask questions and share your concerns.

An interpreter can attend if you don't speak French. Check with the school or a community organization offering support to immigrants and refugees.



Coming to Québec to study

Knowing what to expect as an international student in Québec can help you settle in and make the best of the experience.

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Adjusting to a new learning environment

Coming to an educational institution as an international student often requires:

- Improving your language skills
- Getting used to a new culture and different ways of doing things.

It is normal to feel confused, lonely or misunderstood. It takes time and patience to adjust.

Tips:

- Participate in language or intercultural exchange programs offered by educational institutions can help you integrate with the support of other students
- Find out about certain aspects of the learning environment in Québec (teaching style, academic expectations, evaluations, workload, etc.).

Participating in discussions

In Québec, classroom participation and teamwork are valued.

Even if this may be new, it is important to:

- Participate in discussions
- Be able to express yourself in a respectful environment.

If you experience incivility, harassment or discrimination, don't hesitate to talk to your professors, your student association or student services.



Important

Health and hospitalization insurance is mandatory for international students. To find out more, see **Private insurance plans** (p. 23).

Types of education in Quebec

To find out about the differences between university, CEGEP, and vocational training, visit the toolkit website:

<https://infobienetre.ca/en/learning-and-training/#quebecs-school-system>

"I've met many international students who've experienced financial stress. There's a difference between the student budget recommended by the Government of Québec and the actual cost of living in Québec. I highly recommend setting aside extra money to avoid going into debt."

Malika, international student from Senegal



Did you know?

Your educational institution may also offer options like:

- On-campus health care and services for students (mental health services, medical appointments, testing, dental care, etc.)
- Additional insurance you can buy to cover other types of care and services (dental care, mental health counselling, pregnancy-related care, etc.).



Respecting the requirements of your migration status

To maintain your international student status, you must respect the conditions of your study permit.

The process of renewing your status can be stressful and take time. Get started early and check for changes to policies or procedures on official websites. To find out more, see the Government of Canada website:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/extend-study-permit.html>

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Learning French for adults

Learning French can help you get settled in Québec.

Why learn French

In Québec, being able to express yourself in the language and understand it allows you to:

- Improve your confidence and independence in your daily life
- Understand and access services (health care, education, etc.) more easily
- Access jobs
- Interact with people from different backgrounds.

Facing the challenge of learning a new language

When you arrive, some things can make it harder to learn French: responsibilities, getting settled, challenging experiences before and while migrating, etc.

It is normal to feel discouraged or frustrated.

Tips:

- Find out what services are available to meet your needs (French classes, conversation workshops, language exchanges, French literacy classes)
- Participate in activities organized by a community organization offering support to immigrants and refugees to interact with others in French.



Services to learn French

Community organizations offering support to immigrants and refugees can guide you through the steps.



French classes offered by Government of Québec

- Available from abroad or in Québec
- Registration is optional, **but strongly recommended**
- To find out more, see the Québec government website:
<https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/learn-french>



French literacy programs

- Designed for people aged 16 or over with limited education in their first language
- Programs usually offered by community organizations or adult education centres



Language exchanges and conversation groups

- Often free activities to improve your pronunciation, vocabulary, confidence
- Activities offered by libraries, community organizations and educational institutions
- Basic knowledge of French sometimes required

Notes





Living Together



Diversity and intercultural exchanges

Feeling like there is a place for you in your new society can support your well-being and help you settle in.

Finding your bearings

Participating in an Objectif Intégration information session offered by the MIFI can help you get your bearings in your new environment.



Objectif Intégration session

- Free 24-hour session offered by community organizations throughout Québec
- Information about Québec (cultural codes, workplace, etc.)
- Age 18 or over
- Intermediate-level French required
- Eligibility verification required
- Financial assistance available in some cases
- <https://www.quebec.ca/en/immigration/settle-and-integrate-in-quebec/objectif-integration>

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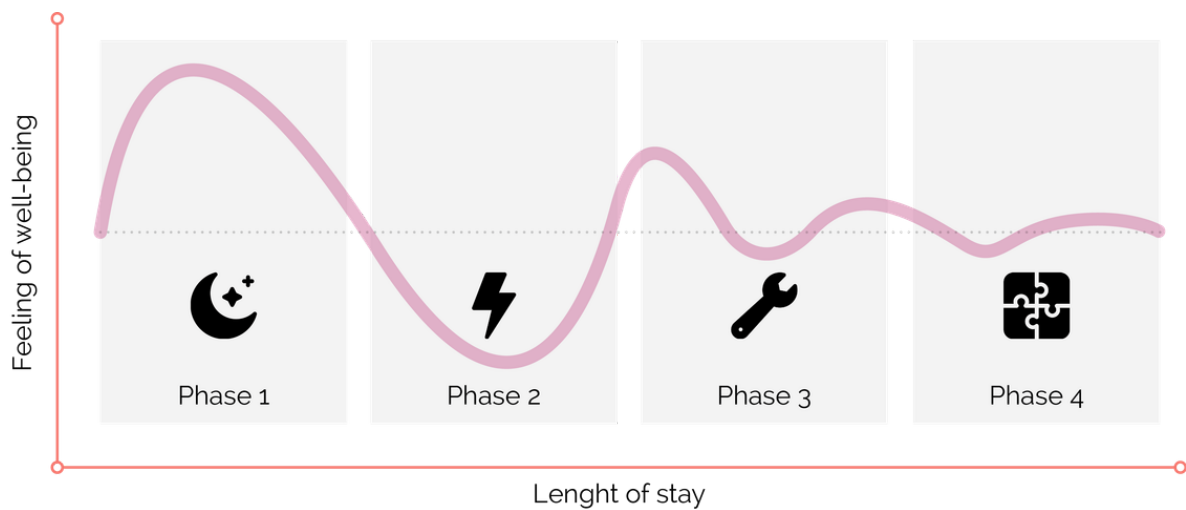
Adjusting to a new environment

Adjusting to a new environment can be stressful and confusing. It is normal to question certain ways of doing things or ways of thinking that are different from what you are used to.

Difficulty adjusting varies for each person and often happens in phases, some easier, others more challenging.

Don't hesitate to ask for help if you are having a hard time. To find out more, see [Who to talk to or ask for help](#) (p. 24).

Explore the following graphic to better understand these phases and recognize what you are feeling.



Phase 1 The honeymoon phase	Phase 2 The confrontation	Phase 3 The adjustment phase	Phase 4 The acceptance phase
Enthusiasm: Everything is new and exciting, and the experience is seen as positive. Expectations: The new environment may seem ideal and the adjustment feels quick and easy.	Trouble adjusting: Some local practices make daily life more difficult (ways of communicating, bureaucracy, work habits, etc.). Confusion and discomfort: Some norms and habits can be hard to adjust to. Seeking familiarity: Tendency to spend time in more familiar environments to feel better.	Understanding: Growing familiarity with local codes and social expectations. Asking for support: Turning to resources and individuals to make the adjustment process easier.	Accepting the new environment: A more nuanced view of local practices and an appreciation for different lifestyles. Feeling like you belong: Feeling at home, striking a balance between different cultures.

Connecting with your community and beyond

Connecting with your community of origin can provide comfort and help you preserve practices that are important to you.

Learning about the local culture is not rejecting your culture. Navigating different cultural environments allows you to learn from others and share your experiences.

Bringing together people from different backgrounds and sharing experiences helps build a sense of community.



Did you know?

Some community organizations and educational institutions offer intercultural exchange activities. These activities connect newcomers with people who were born in or have been living in Québec for several years.

They provide opportunities to meet people from different backgrounds, learn from one another, and develop new relationships.

Dealing with discrimination

Knowing what discrimination is, what its effects are and what resources are available to support you can help you cope with difficult situations.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination means treating someone unfairly because of who they are and preventing them from asserting their rights. It can be based, for example, on a person's ethnic origin, skin colour, religion or gender identity.

Discrimination can take different forms:

- Attitudes (ignorance, contempt, indifference)
- Words (insults, taunts, threats)
- Behaviours (withholding services, exclusion, being watched without a valid reason)
- Verbal, psychological or physical violence.

Whether it is intentionally or not, discrimination can:

- Influence the way you are treated by institutions
- Make it harder for some people to access services and opportunities.

It can also affect mental health and cause, for example, anxiety, negative emotions and loss of self-confidence.



Did you know?

In Québec, there are laws and resources that protect you from discrimination:

- The Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms prohibits all forms of discrimination
- The Act Respecting Labour Standards protects you from psychological harassment and discrimination in the workplace.





Living as a Family



Staying in touch

Little daily things can help you stay connected to your loved ones and make the distance seem smaller.

Leaning on family, despite the distance

When you are still getting your bearings in Québec, staying in contact with your loved ones can provide stability and comfort.

Simple gestures can help you stay connected with your loved ones, such as:

- Schedule a regular time to talk each week
- Exchange voice messages
- Make video calls.

"My parents are paying for most of my studies. Sometimes, I feel guilty. I feel like they idealize my life here and don't realize the challenges I face. I don't want to worry them or disappoint them. I found out that many international students experience the same thing. It felt good to learn I'm not alone and to share my experience with others."

Malika, international student from Senegal



Coping with difficult feelings

Being far from your family can bring feelings of guilt, longing, or powerlessness. This is common and normal.

Little gestures can help you overcome these feelings, such as:

- Being available for moral and emotional support for your loved ones
- Offering to organize an event from a distance
- Talking to other people in similar situations
- Feeling useful and volunteering or getting involved in a community organization
- Focusing on your family's future and your plans
- Strengthening your relationship with family members in Québec.

"My cousins are still in Syria, in an unstable situation. I worry about them a lot. I feel like there's nothing my mom, sister and I can do."

Mariam, teenage refugee from Syria



Getting settled as a family

Getting settled in a new society can disrupt family roles and habits

Upon arrival, each member of the family may have their own path to adjusting, which can lead to changes.

At first, they may be unsettling, raise doubts or concerns and even cause tension. However, with time, they can also strengthen family bonds.

To support your family, it can be useful to know each generation's unique hopes and challenges.

Grandparents	
Hopes	Challenges
• Passing down their language and culture to younger family members • Spending time with their family • Feeling useful	• Maintaining their independence • Learning French or understanding Québec French • Building a social circle
Parents	
Hopes	Challenges
• Giving their family a good quality of life • Being there for their family members	• Navigating the process of settling in • Helping their children navigate a society they are still discovering themselves • Finding a job that matches their skills
Enfants	
Hopes	Challenges
• Doing well in school • Making friends • Staying close to their parents and grandparents	• Communicating in a new language • Meeting expectations that may be different (for example, parent/school) • Feeling like they belong to multiple communities

Thriving as a parent

Striking a balance between your values and local practices can help you feel accomplished as a parent.



Did you know?

In Québec, parents have rights and obligations under the Civil Code of Québec.

Every child (aged 0–18) has the right to protection, security and attention from their parents. Parents must make decisions in the child's best interest and respect their rights.

The Director of Youth Protection (DYP) is a government agency that can intervene when the security or development of a child is in danger.

To find out more, see the toolkit website: <https://infobienetre.ca/en/living-as-a-family/#thriving-as-a-parent>

Navigating a new context

All parents want what is best for their child: love, security and a promising future. However, in Québec, some ways of raising and taking care of children may be new to you. These may include :

- How children are disciplined
- How much independence children have
- How some situations are handled.

Newness may surprise you or raise questions. Adjusting to new norms can take time.

Participating in Espace Parents workshops

It is important to feel supported through this transition.

Some community organizations offering support to immigrants and refugees hold workshops for newcomer parents.

"Attending Espace Parents workshops was a very positive experience for me and my partner! We got to share experiences and tips with other parents. We developed a strong sense of solidarity! I learned what resources are available to support us and help us understand how school works in Québec. I feel much more confident in my role as a parent now."

Carlos, economic immigrant from Colombia



The Espace Parents program offers:

- A warm welcome and activities tailored to your situation
- Discussions with a counsellor and other newcomer parents
- Help learning about local practices while respecting your values
- 9 workshops of 2 hours each on parenting in an migration context.

To find out about the organizations offering these workshops, see the Espace Parents website:

<https://www.espace-parents.ca/organismes-offrant-les-activites-espace-parents/> [in French]



Here & Well

Getting ready for your
new life in Québec

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