

# ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE BY INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPLICANTS AND BENEFICIARIES IN TURKEY

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Mülteci  
Hakları  
Merkezi

Refugee  
Rights  
Turkey

ULUSLARARASI KORUMA ALTINDAKİ KİŞİLER İÇİN  
SAĞLIK HİZMETLERİNE ERİŞİM

JULY 2021

İNGİLİZCE

This resource is produced by **Refugee Rights Turkey (RRT)** in the context of a project partnership with US-based **Refugee Solidarity Network (RSN)**. The information presented here is for informational purposes only.



Mülteci Hakları  
Merkezi



Refugee Solidarity  
Network

## **I have applied for international protection in Turkey. Do I have the right to access free health care services?**

International protection applicants and international protection beneficiaries who are not covered by any medical insurance and who do not have financial means to purchase health insurance or pay for health care services have the right to access free health care services provided by public institutions for a period of one year following their international protection application. A one-year limit is not sought for those with special needs and those whose continuation of insurance registration is deemed appropriate by the Ministry.

To access free health care services without any restrictions, you need to have your International Protection Applicant Identity Document or International Protection Beneficiary Identity Document issued by the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management which bears your foreigner ID number starting with '99'. As a rule, international protection applicants and beneficiaries can only access free health care services in the province where they are registered.

If you cannot access health care services in your city of registration even though you have your identity document issued by the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management bearing your foreigner ID number starting with '99', you may approach the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management office to receive more information on how to access health care.

If you no longer have access to free health care services because a period of more than one year has elapsed since your international protection application and you believe you have special needs or suffer from a chronic health problem that requires treatment and follow-up, you may apply to the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management with your medical reports issued by public hospitals or other public health institutions.

## **I have not registered yet. Can I benefit from free health care services?**

If you have not yet registered, you may only access emergency health services and health services for communicable diseases at primary health care institutions. To avoid any restrictions in accessing health care services, we strongly encourage you to complete your international protection application at your earliest convenience.

## **I have obtained a residence permit. Can I also benefit from free health care services available to persons seeking international protection?**

Residence permits holders are expected to cover the cost of health services they receive with their own means.

One of the key requirements for obtaining a residence permit is to have a health insurance policy valid for the duration of the residence permit. Thus, persons who have residence permits are required to rely on this health insurance where necessary. It is therefore not possible for those who have residence permits to benefit from the free health care services available to international protection applicants or beneficiaries.

## **I have completed my registration. How can I access health care services?**

An identity document bearing a foreigner ID number starting with '99' is issued to international protection applicants and beneficiaries. If you are not covered by any medical insurance and you do not have financial means, this identity document allows you to access free health care services at public health institutions for a period of one year after you apply for international protection.

You can visit primary health care institutions to receive an initial diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation services. Health centers, maternal and infant care and family planning centers, and tuberculosis dispensaries qualify as primary health care institutions. There are also "migrant health

centers” in some provinces, serving as primary health care providers. All of these centers also provide screening and immunization for communicable diseases, specialized services for infants, children and teenagers, as well as maternal and reproductive health services.

You can also directly approach secondary or tertiary health institutions. State hospitals are considered secondary health institutions, whereas university hospitals and research and education hospitals are considered tertiary health institutions.

Please be aware that except for emergencies, you may not be able to access free services in university hospitals or education and research hospitals without a prior referral. Referrals to university research hospitals and private health institutions are limited to emergency and intensive care services, as well as burn injuries and cancer treatment.

## **My international protection application was rejected. Can I benefit from free health care services?**

If your international protection application was rejected or your application was considered as implicitly withdrawn or inadmissible, you may no longer have access to free health care services. If you believe you have special medical needs or suffer from a chronic health problem that requires treatment and follow-up, you may apply to the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management with your medical reports issued by public hospitals or other public health institutions. The authorities may ask of you to submit a petition. Upon review, a decision will be made regarding your request and you will be notified accordingly.

## **What is the scope of free health care services?**

The costs of health care services are covered if they fall within the scope of the Health Implementation Directive. Although the scope of health care services is considerably wide, for health issues which do not fall within the scope of Health Implementation Directive or exceed the thresholds set forth therein, you may be required to make an additional payment.

## **Should I make an appointment to benefit from health care services?**

You are not required to have an appointment to access health services provided at primary health care facilities. However, to benefit from health services provided in hospitals, you are required to make an appointment. You may make this appointment through the 182 call center or online via Ministry of Health's website at [www.mhrs.gov.tr](http://www.mhrs.gov.tr). However, there is currently no interpretation assistance at the 182 call center. Thus, it is important to have the assistance of a Turkish-speaking person when calling this number.

On the date of your appointment, you must get a barcode number before seeing your doctor. It is also important to have your International Protection Applicant Identity Document or your International Protection Beneficiary Identity Document with you when you visit the hospital.

## **Is it possible to access free health care services in a province other than the province where I am registered?**

Individuals who have applied for international protection are expected to reside in the province assigned to them, called a "satellite city", while they wait for the result of their application. This assigned province, or "satellite city", is indicated on the identity document issued to international protection applicants. International protection beneficiaries might also be under the obligation to reside in an assigned province. As a rule, international protection applicants and beneficiaries can access rights and services, including health care services, only in the assigned province where they completed their registration.

However, if it is not possible to receive adequate treatment in a particular province, you may be referred to another province, subject to the health care provider's discretion. In this case, you need to approach the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management office in your city of registration with the referral form you received from the hospital and request a permit to travel to the province where the hospital you are referred to is located.

For emergency medical conditions, you can receive health care services without any geographic restriction.

## **I have been referred to a hospital. What should I do?**

If you were referred to a secondary or tertiary health institution, such as a university research hospital or a private hospital within the same province, please keep in mind that you need to approach the institution during the validity of the referral.

For outpatient services, the validity of the referral is five working days. The validity period of referrals for individuals with chronic illnesses or for individuals possessing a control document is thirty days. You must approach the institution with your referral form. If you miss the validity period, you will have to seek a new referral.

If you are referred to a hospital in another province, you need to first approach the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management and request a travel permit.

## **I do not speak Turkish. Are there interpretation services available during the course of health services?**

Although there are interpreters in some health institutions providing interpretation services (mainly in Arabic and Farsi, and to some extent in other languages), this service is unfortunately very limited. At the Migrant Healthcare Centers, which are also primary health care facilities, interpretation is available depending on capacity.

The Emergency Call Center that you can contact via the phone number 112 to request medical assistance in case of an emergency will direct you to the Foreigners Communication Center if you request interpretation assistance. The Communication Center for Foreigners is a call center established by the Directorate General of Migration Management and operates in Turkish, English, Arabic, Farsi, Russian and German. Only in cases of emergencies, upon the referral from the 112 Emergen-

cy Call Center, will the Communication Center for Foreigners provide interpretation support.

Civil society organizations that provide support to refugees and migrants in Turkey may also provide interpretation services for accessing health care services depending on their resources and capacity. You may contact civil society organizations in your city to receive further information about their interpretation support services.

The Call Center of the Ministry of Health that you can reach via the phone number 184 also provides interpretation services. This call center provides general information about how to access health care services. You can also share your concerns or grievances about health care services that you have received via this call center.

We also would like to emphasize that the 182 call center you need to call to make an appointment for public hospitals does not have interpretation assistance. Therefore, it is important to have the assistance of a Turkish-speaking person when calling this number.

## **Is the cost of medicines covered?**

You may access free medication, prescribed by doctors and falling within the coverage of the General Health Insurance provided by the Social Security Institution. In some provinces, you may be required to pay a patient share. In addition, should there be a difference between the prescribed medication and the provided medication, you may also be required to pay this difference.

Prescriptions may be either electronic or in written form. If your prescription is electronic, please make sure that you have the prescription number. If your prescription has been provided in written form, it is important to have this document with you when you approach the contracted pharmacies. Registration is a prerequisite to access medication. Please also make sure to have your identity document bearing your foreigner ID number starting with '99' with you when you go to the pharmacy.



## **How can I receive psychological support?**

International protection applicants and beneficiaries are entitled to receive mental health support provided by public hospitals. In addition, you may receive support from centers operated by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and civil society organizations working in cooperation with the Ministry that offer psycho-social services.

## **What are my rights as a patient in Turkey?**

You have the right to access health care services without discrimination, the right to be informed of your health condition and possible treatments, the right to consent or refuse treatment as permitted by law, and the right to privacy and respectful care. You also have the right to make the final decision regarding treatment, the right to benefit from advances in treatment, the right to receive visits and request the company of another person, and the right to receive safe and considerate care.

If you believe that your rights as a patient have been infringed, you have the right to make a complaint and where appropriate, to receive compensation for physical or psychological damage that you have suffered. To this end, you may apply to the Patient Rights Unit in the hospital where you received the health care services. In any case, and particularly in cases where you feel that your grievances have not been sufficiently addressed, you have the right to submit a written complaint to the Patient Rights Board under the Provincial Directorate of Health. It is also possible to voice your concerns or grievances through the 184 call center of the Ministry of Health. This hotline also provides interpretation services.

## **How can Refugee Rights Turkey help me?**

Refugee Rights Turkey provides free information and assistance to persons seeking international protection and those under temporary protection in Turkey. You may approach our office with your questions on the right to access protection mechanisms in Turkey and fundamental rights and freedoms.

## **Is Refugee Rights Turkey related to the Turkish government or to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees?**

No. Refugee Rights Turkey is an independent civil society organization. It is not an implementing partner of the Turkish government or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. However, Refugee Rights Turkey cooperates with the relevant Turkish authorities and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure the legal protection of persons seeking international protection and those under temporary protection in Turkey.

## **Do I need to pay for Refugee Rights Turkey's services?**

All services provided by Refugee Rights Turkey are free of charge. Should you become aware of any person or entity claiming to be acting in our name who requests money or other financial benefits, please report them immediately to our organization. We will maintain your confidentiality.

## **Will Refugee Rights Turkey keep my information confidential?**

Refugee Rights Turkey operates under a principle of strict confidentiality and respects the confidentiality of individuals. Thus, we do not share your information or documents with any third parties without your explicit and informed consent.

## **How can I reach Refugee Rights Turkey?**

Wherever you may be in Turkey, you are welcome to get in touch with us all weekdays (Monday to Friday) from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM to discuss your questions or concerns regarding asylum procedures.



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You can access all of our information booklets and videos for refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey via the Publications section at our official website:

**<https://www.mhd.org.tr>**

Or via our new “Information Portal for Refugees in Turkey”,  
launched as of April 2019:

**<https://multecihaklari.info>**  
**<https://refugeerights.info>**