



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

Global Families Resource Guide



International Student Services

<https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/iss/settling-calgary/living-family>



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

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Accessing UCalgary Resources

Student services are funded through student fees. Some supports are available to varying degrees for spouses/partners and their children.

Student Services Access Table

UCalgary Student Service	Available to Spouse/Children	Description	Additional Fees Apply
Active Living	Yes	Students are automatically enrolled and may add family members.	Yes, for family members.
Centre for Career & Personal Development (CCPD)	Yes	International students can book appointments and register for workshops on behalf of their spouses. Online resources also available.	No
Faith and Spirituality Centre (FSC)	Yes	Most services are accessible to both students and their spouses.	No
International Student Services (ISS) – Immigration	Yes	Immigration advising and Global Families events are available to students, their spouses, and children. Off-campus housing advising available.	No
Student Legal Assistance (SLA)	Yes	Free legal assistance and representation for undergraduate students. One-time application fee may apply.	Yes, for graduate students and members of the public.
Women's Resource Centre (WRC)	Yes	Two lactation rooms freely available to anyone.	No
Wellness Centre – Physical Health	Yes	Most medical and mental health services are covered for students by provincial health care. Non-students may access chiropractic/massage; dependents may use medical services.	Yes, some services may include additional fees

Childcare and Schooling

Childcare Options

For children who are not school aged yet, there are a few options for childcare:

- **Family Day homes:** Family day-homes are located at private residences. They are typically less expensive than daycares, but you would want to be sure to access ones that are regulated and licensed.
- **Daycares:** Daycares are regulated, safe environments for children to stay when parents are otherwise engaged. They serve infants, toddlers and pre-school aged children (two and a half to six years of age).
- **Preschools:** Preschools accept children between the age of three and five, with a focus on building their education and preparing them for elementary school. They are operated on limited hours (typically programs are approx. 3hours/day).

Childcare Search Resources

- **Child Care Lookup Tool:** Parents can find information about licensed childcare programs and family day home agencies with the Child Care Lookup tool. This tool provides information about the location, ages of children served, number of children that can be served in the program, the program's status and recent inspection results.
<https://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/oldfusion/childcarelookup.cfm>
- **CareFind:** This easy-to-use website helps you find daycares, preschools, out of school cares and approved dayhomes - <https://carefind.ca>
- **Child Care Connect Helpline:** Call Child Care Connect toll free for help finding childcare or any questions you might have about childcare in Alberta. [Call toll-free at 1-844-644-5165](tel:1-844-644-5165)
- **Choosing Child Care Guide:** <https://www.alberta.ca/about-child-care-in-alberta>
- **University Child Care Centre:** UCalgary has a dedicated childcare program open to staff/faculty, and full-time students. On average, applicants spend one to three years on the waiting list before receiving a place at the centre. <https://www.ucalgary.ca/child-care>

To learn about childcare subsidy, please refer to the Financial Subsidy Program for Families section in this document.

Alberta School System

I am an international student; can my children attend school in Alberta? Yes, but they may require a study permit depending on their level of study and whether they're already inside Canada. If your children are in Canada with you, they may begin studying without a study permit based on your status as a student and you holding a valid study or work permit. If your child reaches the age of 18 and they're still in school, they must apply for a study permit.

Please see below for the age ranges for the various schools in Alberta:

School Age Ranges:

- Ages 3–4: Preschool (not-mandatory)
- Ages 5: Kindergarten
- Ages 6–11: Elementary School (Grades 1–6)
- Ages 12–14: Junior High/Middle School (Grades 7–9)
- Ages 15–17: Senior High/High School (Grades 10–12)

Out-of-School/Before & After School Care Programs:

Most schools in Calgary operate on an 8:30am to 3:15pm schedule. For working/studying parents who are unable to drop-off/pick-up during these times, out-of-school/before & after school care programs operate before and after school and on days when school are closed (PD days, non-instruction days, teacher convention days). They are a series of free or low-cost programs for children and youth offered at by third-party organizations at various recreation facilities, community centres, community-based partner agencies and schools.

School System Options

Public Schools are subsidized by the government and therefore, have no tuition fees. Parents must only pay general school fees, which vary from school to school. The public system includes:

- **Calgary Board of Education (CBE):** The Calgary Board of Education is the largest school board in Alberta and operates 247 schools grades K-12. Calgary public schools are run by the CBE and is the default district for all students in Calgary. They are often referred to as Public Schools.
- **Catholic Schools:** In Alberta, faith-based Catholic education students is also available. Catholic schools have their own school board: Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD). As the provincial government funds Catholic schools, there is no fee to attend. CCSD is the default district for families where **both** parents identify as Roman Catholic. If one or neither parent is Roman Catholic, the default district will be CBE.
- **Charter Schools:** Charter Schools are publicly funded educational institutions that operate independently of the traditional public school system. They follow the same curriculum as the other districts, but have additional mandates such as a focus on academics, the arts, or experiential learning. They are open to all students; however, each school has a different registration system and there may be long wait lists or additional fees associated with them.

Private Schools: While most students go to a publicly funded school, Alberta has more than 180 private schools across the province. The difference is these schools operate as a business, and you will have to pay for your child to attend. Registered private schools are not required to teach the Alberta curriculum or use certified teachers. However, the province also has accredited and funded private schools that receive a government grant. These schools must follow the curriculum and hire certified teachers and principals.

Registering in School:

In Calgary, each Public and Catholic school is assigned a **catchment zone**. This is a geographic area that determines which school your child is eligible to attend based on your home address. When choosing housing, it's important to consider nearby schools, as living within a school's designated catchment zone increases the likelihood of placement at that school. However, it is not guaranteed that your child will attend the designated school for that zone. Use the [CBE Find a School tool](#) or the [CCSD School Finder tool](#) to find designated schools based on your current/potential Calgary address.

How to register:

1. Review the frequently asked questions (FAQ) of each school type
 - a. CBE (Public) [international student FAQ](#)
 - b. CCSD (Catholic) [international student FAQ](#)
 - c. Calgary Economic Development [Finding a school in Calgary](#)
2. Contact your district type as soon as you are confirmed to be travelling to Alberta/Calgary.
 - a. CBE (Public), Welcome Centre – welcome@cbe.ab.ca (default district)
 - b. CCSD (Catholic), St. John Centre - stjohn@cssd.ab.ca (for children where **both** parents are Roman Catholic)
3. Notify them of your expected arrival date and age of children.
4. Ask about the registration and placement process. Note that all public schools follow the same curriculum and have supports for English Language Learners.
5. After arriving and securing permanent address, set up an appointment with Welcome Centre (CBE)/St. John Centre (CCSD), based on your chosen school district. They will then conduct a language assessment with your child(ren).
6. Receive placement based on location and availability.

Maternity and Parental Leave

What is Maternity/Parental Leave?

Parental leave is leave from studies for pregnancy, childbirth, post-childbirth recuperation, adoption and to allow for time to care for their newly born or adopted child.

Immigration Impacts

How much time away from my studies can I take for parental leave?

From an immigration standpoint, international students may be limited to 150 days leave (approved by your faculty) without impacting their student status in Canada and eligibility for a post-graduation open work permit (PGWP) in the future.

Please review information on leaves of absence:

- [International Student Services – Leaves of Absence](#)
- [Faculty of Graduate Studies – Leave of Absence](#)
- Contact [International Student Services](#) for questions related to parental leave.

Financial Support

Employment Insurance (EI)

Students who have worked in Canada may be eligible for a time-limited amount of financial support via Employment Insurance (EI) while on maternity/paternity leave. Find out if you are eligible for EI benefits: [EI maternity and parental benefits: How much you could receive - Canada.ca](#)

Health Services

Medical Insurance

You and your family will need adequate insurance to cover any medical care or accidents while you are in Canada. Without medical insurance, you will have to pay the full cost of medical treatment which is very expensive (thousands of dollars).

Coverage for Family Members: For students who are degree-seeking and planning to stay in Canada for 12 months or more, you will need to have **two** different kinds of coverage. The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP) **AND** either the Student Union (SU) Supplemental Health and Dental Plan (undergraduate) or the Graduate Students Association (graduate) Health and Dental Plan.

1. Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP):

- **What it covers:** Basic medical services like doctor visits, hospital stays, surgeries, and some diagnostic tests.
- **Who provides it:** The provincial government of Alberta.
- **Cost:** Free for eligible residents (including most international students after registering).
- **Purpose:** Ensures you have coverage for essential health care needs.
- Spouses and children under the age of 21 must register together.
- You must visit an Alberta Registry office to apply. For information [click here](#).

2. GSA/SU Health Plan:

- **What it covers:** Services **not included** in AHCIP, such as prescription drugs, dental care, vision care, mental health services, and ambulance rides.
- **Who provides it:** UCalgary Students' Union (SU) (undergraduate) or the UCalgary Graduate Students Association (GSA) (graduate)
- **Cost:** Paid as part of student fees (can sometimes opt out if you have other coverage).
 - **Important note:** Even though you pay for this plan, it usually covers only a percentage of costs (e.g., 70–80%), so you will likely have additional out-of-pocket expenses for many services.
- **Purpose:** Fills the gaps that AHCIP doesn't cover.
- Full-time students will be automatically enrolled. You can choose to add your family members to your supplemental Health & Dental plan through SU or GSA for an additional cost by their specified deadline.

More details are available through the SU and GSA health and dental websites:

- [GSA Health & Dental Plan](#)
- [SU Health & Dental Plan](#)

UCalgary Health Services

Student Wellness Services provides medical care to students and their dependents right on campus. To book an appointment, please call 403.210.9355 or book an appointment online. Booked medical services are available Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Students without valid medical insurance can still access services, such as counselling, for a fee. For more information on what is provided visit: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services>

Finding a Family Doctor

Although you can visit the physicians on campus and at walk-in clinics, it is recommended that if you are planning to be in Canada for at least one year, that you find a family doctor. In Canada, a **family doctor** is your first point of contact and is the doctor who will make any referrals to specialists, order lab tests, write prescriptions, etc. Family doctors are the best option for ongoing medical care and are covered by the AHCIP.

In recent years, there has been an increasing demand as Calgary's population has grown rapidly, and it is getting harder to find doctors who are accepting new patients. The best way to find a family doctor is to visit the **Primary Care Network website**: <https://albertafindadoctor.ca> and search for a doctor near you, call them and ask if they are accepting patients. If they are not at the moment, you can request to be put on a waitlist.

Medical Facilities

- **Walk-in Clinics:** Walk-in clinics are available to any Alberta resident and do not require an appointment. They are staffed by family physicians, but if you do not have a family doctor, you can visit a walk-in clinic, and you will be seen on a first-come, first-served basis. They are typically used when you are experiencing concerns such as sprains, ear infections, flu symptoms, or one-time prescription needs. A walk-in doctor will only address the medical issue that you have that day and should not be used as a replacement your family doctor.
- **Urgent Care Centres:** Urgent care centres provide extended hours access for unexpected, but non-life-threatening health concerns, which require same day or evening treatment. Patients coming to urgent care centres may arrive on their own or be transported there by ambulance. Urgent Care is not a first-come, first-served system. Patients are seen based on their medical condition and the severity of their situation. Urgent Care teams typically consist of nurses, nurse practitioners, and physicians. An urgent care centre is also supported by an on-site laboratory and x-ray department. There are 2 urgent care centres in Calgary.
 - Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre (downtown)
 - South Calgary Health Centre (SE)
- **Hospitals in Calgary:** For serious and life-threatening health concerns always go to your nearest emergency department or call 911. There are 5 general hospitals in Calgary (listed below), one in each quadrant of the city, plus the Children's Hospital:
 - Rockyview General Hospital (SW)
 - Foothills Medical Centre (NW)
 - Alberta Children's Hospital (NW)
 - South Health Campus (SE)
 - Peter Lougheed Centre (NE)

Emergency & Advice Lines

211 Community Programs and Services - 211 is an essential service that helps Alberta residents find the right resource or service for whatever issue they need help with, at the right time. 211 is available 24/7 by phone, text, and online chat. The service is free, confidential, and available in over 170 languages over the phone.

811 Health Link - A telephone service, which provides free 24 / 7 advice and general health information for Alberta residents. Health Link provides several clinical services including tele-triage and health advice, navigation services, and online content support for all. You will be connected with highly experienced Registered Nurses who can provide you with advice and information about treating conditions such as colds and flu, fever, earaches, rashes and many other conditions. This service is available in multiple languages and is a great option for when kids are experiencing symptoms, and you are trying to decide whether they need to be seen by a doctor.

911 Emergency Services - Used for fire, police, and ambulance in life-threatening situations. Ambulances are not covered by AHCIP, but if you have additional coverage through the SU or GSA health and dental programs, ambulances will be partially or fully covered.

For more information about your health care options [click here](#).

Financial Subsidy Programs for Families

Canada Child Benefit (CCB): The Canada child benefit is a non-taxable amount paid monthly to help eligible families with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age. The CCB may include an additional amount for the child disability benefit. [CCB Info](#)

Alberta Child and Family Benefit (ACFB): The Alberta Child and Family Benefit (ACFB) provides financial assistance to lower and middle-income families with children under 18. You are automatically considered for the ACFB when you file your annual tax return and qualify for the federal government's Canada Child Benefit. [ACFB Info](#)

Child Care Subsidy: Eligible families can apply for childcare subsidies if they have children age 0 to Grade 6 enrolled in a licensed facility-based program (daycare, out-of-school care, and preschool); family day-home program overseen by a licensed family day home agency; or a group family childcare centre. Subsidy rates vary based on the child's age, family income, the childcare program, and the number of hours a child attends each month. [Apply Here](#)

Legal Support

Student Legal Assistance (SLA): An on-campus law clinic that provides free representation and legal assistance to UCalgary undergraduate students. A one-time application fee applies for graduate students and members of the public. <https://slacalgary.com>

Calgary Legal Guidance: Provide legal assistance, information and support to no-to-low-income people. Services provided by appointment only. <https://clg.ab.ca> | Call: 403-234-9266

Family Justice Services: Provides no-cost or low-cost support to lower-income families dealing with family law issues. Offer educational seminars and parenting courses as well as mediation services. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/fjs-sjf/index.html>

Legal Aid Alberta: Provide affordable legal services in family law, domestic violence, child welfare, immigration and youth and adult criminal defense. <https://www.legalaid.ab.ca>

External Resources for Expecting Mothers/Families

Made by Momma: Free meals, supplies, and support for families in crisis. Made by Momma is a grassroots non-profit organization and registered Canadian charity located in Calgary. They help families facing situations of adversity and crisis by providing healthy prepared meals, wholesome baked goods, baby essentials, children's items, supportive in-home visitors and other services to allow mothers the time they need to rest, recover and focus on their families and their health. <https://madebymomma.org>

Best Beginning Program: Prenatal care and support for low-income or teen parents. Provide prenatal information and support to pregnant women living on a low income or teens of any income. Services include consultations with social workers, registered nurses, dieticians and multicultural outreach workers. First language support is offered in several other languages. <https://birthandbabies.com/best-beginning-program>

Women in Need Society (WINS): Basic needs support, referrals, and guidance. A non-profit agency dedicated to providing access to essential needs and a diverse range of resources to thrive. WINS provides compassionate listening and guidance, access to supports, and referrals to women, men, and their families who may be facing barriers due to: Financial challenges, leaving or currently in difficult situations, transitioning housing needs, being a new arrival or being a single parent. <https://www.winsyyc.ca>

Family Resource Network (YW): Parenting workshops, trauma support, and child development programs. The Family Resource Network is a collaborative group of community-based service providers offering prevention and early intervention services and supports for families with young children and teens. Family Resource Network programs focus on supporting the whole family. This includes providing caregivers and parents with skills and knowledge to strengthen family relationship, teaching children and teens to cope with trauma and improve child and youth development by building resilience and fostering well-being. <https://www.ywcalgary.ca/programs/family-resource-network>

Families Matter: Free parenting programs, postpartum support, and mom-tot groups. Offers programs geared toward parenting education and family support at several locations around the city. Provide in-home, telephone and group support for those dealing with postpartum depression and their partners. Provide free parenting programs and mom-and-tot groups. <http://www.familiesmatter.ca>

Recreation Programs for Families

Global Families Events: The UCalgary International Student Services office (ISS) provide low-cost opportunities for you and your family to experience Calgary culture and meet other UCalgary students

who are studying here with their families. <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/iss/student-life/global-families>

Calgary Public Library: Discover a wide range of engaging events for all ages. Learn about space or ancient history, drop in for live theatre and musical performances, learn about different dances performed at a powwow, enjoy a storytime, and so much more. Sign up for your free membership. <https://www.calgarylibrary.ca/>

Calgary Fair Entry Program: Apply once for multiple subsidies including **Recreation Fee Assistance** (pool, gym, skating, lessons). Your eligibility is based on your income. If you are approved, you can apply for Recreation Fee Assistance and access any of the City of Calgary Recreation Facilities for just a fraction of the cost including daily pool rates, the gym, swimming lessons, and ice-skating lessons. <https://www.calgary.ca/social-services/low-income/fair-entry-subsidy.html>

KidSport Calgary: Provides grants of up to \$500/year per child for sport registration fees. Visit their website for information on eligibility requirements. <https://kidsportcanada.ca/alberta/calgary/>

Calgary Flames Grade 6 YMCA Membership: Free 13-month YMCA membership for Grade 6 students. Every grade 6 student in Calgary is eligible to receive a free YMCA 13-month membership to the YMCA, thanks to the generous support of the Calgary Flames Foundation. It gives youth a safe place to practice independence, develop healthy habits, and establish a sense of belonging. <https://www.ymcacalgary.org/calgary-flames-grade-6-ymca-membership>

Telus Spark Grade 7 Purple Galaxy Pass: Every Grade 7 student in Calgary and surrounding areas is eligible to receive a one-year pass for free admission at TELUS Spark. Enjoy unlimited admission, live science shows, hands-on galleries, and more!

Free Soccer Play Fridays (CMSA): The Calgary Minor Soccer Association (CMSA) is providing a FREE, unstructured, drop-in' style soccer opportunity. This is a drop-in style soccer opportunity for youth of all ages, abilities, and skill levels to participate in sport, make new friends and stay active – no previous soccer experience required! For the schedule, please check their website. <https://www.calgaryminorsoccer.com/community/free-play-fridays>