



# Orientation to Ontario

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

There are many ways of becoming involved in your community. Some examples are described here.

### COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTRES

Most communities in Ontario have a place where community groups can meet. Many centres also have skating rinks, swimming pools, gyms and sports fields. Programs for adults and children are either free or offered at a low cost.

- Call 211 to find your local recreation centre

### PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Here are some types of programs that may be available at your local library:

- English as a second language resources.
- Settlement workers who provide information.
- Homework clubs for students and reading clubs for children.
- Free public Internet access.
- Books, CDs, DVDs video games, newspapers and magazines in English and other languages.

To get a library card, you will need one piece of official identification (passport or driver's license) and proof of your address such as a telephone, hydro or cable bill.

To find your local public library, visit the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism, Culture Industries at [ontario.ca](http://ontario.ca) or [findlink.at/opl](http://findlink.at/opl)

### PLACES OF WORSHIP

Under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Canadians have the freedom to practice their religion. While Ontario is a secular society, many Ontarians express their faith by gathering in churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other places of worship.

- Visit [settlement.org](http://settlement.org) or [findlink.at/worship](http://findlink.at/worship)
- View the yellow pages at [yellowpages.ca](http://yellowpages.ca)
- Ask a settlement counsellor.

### VOLUNTEERING

Giving your time to an agency is a good way to meet people, gain work experience and learn about your community.

- To learn more about volunteering, visit the Government of Ontario at [ontario.ca](http://ontario.ca) or [findlink.at/MCI-Active](http://findlink.at/MCI-Active)

To find a volunteer centre in your area,

- visit Volunteer Canada at [volunteer.ca](http://volunteer.ca) or the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network at [ovcn.ca](http://ovcn.ca)

- To explore volunteer positions in the non-profit sector, visit [charityvillage.com](http://charityvillage.com) or [findlink.at/volunteer](http://findlink.at/volunteer)

1-855-626-0002

<https://settlement.org/o2o>

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## FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

### MARRIAGE

You can be married to only one person at a time in Ontario. If you married someone in another country or province, you must get a divorce before you can legally marry another person in Ontario.

Same-sex marriage is legal in Ontario and across Canada. Ontario recognizes marriages from other countries where same-sex marriage is legal.

If you and your partner live together but are not married you may be considered common-law partners. Common-law partners must be in a conjugal relationship for more than three years, or for one year if they have a child together.

### DIVORCE

Either partner can apply for a divorce. Only a court can grant you a divorce, but you can settle a divorce without having to go to court using mediation, arbitration or negotiation between lawyers. Common-law partners who separate may face legal issues when it comes to property and child custody, so it is important to seek legal advice.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

All forms of physical violence against a spouse, common-law partner or any other family members are illegal. This includes unwanted sexual activity. Threatening to hurt or kill someone is also a crime. Anyone convicted of domestic violence is subject to severe punishment, including imprisonment.

If you are in danger, call 911 and ask for police.

Women who experience abuse from a family member or any other person can call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-863-0511, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For more information, visit [awhl.org](http://awhl.org). Phone services are available in 154 languages.

### CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional and/or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that causes injury or emotional damage to a child or youth. Types of child-youth abuse include emotional, physical or sexual (contact or non-contact) abuse, exposure to family violence and neglect. Neglect can be identified by failing to provide shelter, food, clothing, education, good hygiene, supervision, health care, adequate rest, moral guidance, exercise, safe environment and fresh air.

Learn more about child abuse and neglect at [justice.gc.ca](http://justice.gc.ca) or [findlink.at/protechild](http://findlink.at/protechild)

To learn more about family law in Ontario, including your rights and obligations, visit the Ministry of the Attorney General at [attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca](http://attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca) or [findlink.at/on-famlaw](http://findlink.at/on-famlaw)

To learn about women's rights under Ontario family law, visit Family Law Education for Women at [onefamilylaw.ca](http://onefamilylaw.ca)

To find help for victims of sexual or domestic violence, visit the Ontario Women's Directorate at [women.gov.on.ca](http://women.gov.on.ca) or [findlink.at/serviwomen](http://findlink.at/serviwomen)

To get more information about victim services, visit [attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca](http://attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca) or [findlink.at/ovs](http://findlink.at/ovs)

