

# Health Care Guide for Florida's Refugees

Florida Department of Health, Division of Community Health Promotion  
Bureau of Family Health Services  
Refugee Health Program





# Foreword

Welcome to the United States (U.S.) and to the state of Florida.

This guidebook was developed by the Florida Department of Health to ensure that you understand Florida's health care system and have access to quality health care services. Health care in Florida may be different from the health care in your native country.

This guidebook includes general information about the services available to you and your family, a summary of the healthcare services that are covered under Florida's Refugee Health Program, and a description of terms used in the health care system.

Florida's Refugee Health Program (RHP) is a leader in providing culturally sensitive health services to all refugees in search for a better life and self-sufficiency in America. The primary goal of the Refugee Health Program is to offer protection of public health

from communicable disease through the review of overseas medical examination records and the provision of health screenings and immunizations.

The health screening will help identify and treat conditions that could keep you from getting a job and is needed by all children entering school.

The Refugee Health Program provides, through federal funding from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, a health screening and immunization services for: refugees, asylees, Cuban/Haitian asylum applicants, Cuban/Haitian entrants (including parolees), Amerasians, unaccompanied refugee minors, Afghan and Iraqi special immigrants, and certain victims of severe forms of human trafficking.

If you have concerns or questions you should first contact your resettlement agency. You may also contact the Florida Refugee Health Program, Florida Department of Health at (850) 245-4350 or visit us at [floridashealth.com](http://floridashealth.com) or [doh.state.fl.us/disease\\_ctrl/refugee/](http://doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/refugee/).



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# Initial Health Screening

Your first contact with the U.S. healthcare system will probably be at your initial health screening conducted at the county health department (CHD). In Florida, your sponsor or voluntary agency (VOLAG) is responsible for helping you schedule your appointment at the CHD for your initial health screening.



Your initial health screening will include a medical examination provided by your local CHD. This screening should be conducted within the first 30 days of arrival, so it is very important that you schedule your appointment as soon as possible.

If you receive your health screening within 90 days of the date of your arrival (or the date your asylum was granted) into the U.S., your health screening is provided at no cost to you.

The purpose of the health screening is to evaluate your health, to identify health conditions, make referrals to healthcare providers if treatment is needed, and to prevent the spread of any communicable diseases. This health screening will be different from the exam you may have received overseas.

This screening will include a physical exam, laboratory tests, and a review of your medical history and immunization (shot) records. You will be asked to give blood and urine samples while in the office. You will be given a kit with instructions and asked to collect samples from your stool (bowel) movements at home.

These samples will be tested for diseases like hepatitis, anemia and parasites. You will also get a tuberculin skin test and any needed immunizations. Children are tested for the presence of lead in



their blood. On the following pages you will find a description of the different types of examinations that will be conducted during your initial health screening.

Immunizations are responsible for the control of many infectious diseases that were once common in this country, including polio, measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, rubella (German measles), mumps,

tetanus, and Haemophilus influenzae type b. Up-to-date immunizations are required when you are ready to adjust your immigration status to Lawful Permanent Resident.

If a problem is found during your health screening, you will be informed and will be told how to get more medical attention. It is VERY important that you seek appropriate medical care for these problems. If you are receiving Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) or Medicaid, your healthcare costs have been paid and you should use these services while they are available to you.

To be prepared for your initial health screening, you will need to collect and bring the following items to your appointment:

- ◆ Overseas medical records and X-rays (if you have them)
- ◆ Immunization records (if you have them)
- ◆ Other medical records or information concerning your health
- ◆ Any medicines you are currently taking

- ◆ I-94 card or other immigration documents showing your immigration status and arrival date
- ◆ Medicaid and Social Security cards (if you have received them)
- ◆ A photo identification card

## Initial Health Screening Activities

The items below are what you can expect at the health screening:

### Physical Examination

Your healthcare provider will:

- ◆ Review your medical records and discuss your health history
- ◆ Measure your height and weight
- ◆ Listen to your lungs and heart
- ◆ Look at your eyes, ears, nose and throat
- ◆ Look at your teeth and gums
- ◆ Check your abdomen/tummy/stomach
- ◆ Measure your blood pressure

- ◆ Test your vision and hearing
- ◆ Collect a urine sample

### Immunization Review and Updates

- ◆ Review your previous immunizations (shots)
- ◆ Ask about diseases you have had
- ◆ Physical examination to find scars consistent with varicella (chickenpox)
- ◆ Provide immunizations, as needed

### Blood Sample

- ◆ A small sample of blood will be taken to test for: lead (children), hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and malaria



### Stool (Bowel Movement) Sample

- ◆ You will be given a kit and asked to collect two or three individual stool (bowel movement) samples and return them to the county health department.

These samples will be used to test for unhealthy bacteria and parasites.

## **Tuberculosis (TB) Screening**

- ◆ Conduct a tuberculosis skin test
- ◆ Obtain a chest x-ray **if**:
  - ✓ Skin test is positive or
  - ✓ You had a Class A or B tuberculosis condition (per overseas exam) or
  - ✓ Symptomatic

## **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Screening**

You will be asked a series of questions, such as, whether you or your partner have had sex with more than one person or are showing signs and symptoms suggestive of STIs. Based on your answers, the healthcare provider may recommend testing for STIs, such as: human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and viral infections. Testing for STIs requires a blood test and/or collection of body fluid/discharge.

## **Eosinophilia Screening**

Eosinophilia is a type of white blood cell that is produced in bone marrow and normally found in the bloodstream. Eosinophilia contain proteins and when increased helps the body fight infection from parasitic organisms, such as worms. Eosinophilia is a condition where an abnormally high amount of eosinophils is found in the blood or body tissues.

A variety of tests may be done to evaluate for eosinophilia such as blood test and collection of urine. All tests results are combined with clinical signs and symptoms to make a specific diagnosis.

## **Malaria Screening**

This blood test should be done if you have been in an area where malaria is present, were exposed to mosquitoes, and have developed flu-like symptoms (fever, chills, and sweats).

If the first blood smear does not show the presence of malaria parasites but your healthcare provider suspects malaria, you should have a repeat test every 8 to 12 hours for 36 hours.

## Domestic Violence Screening

Domestic violence is when a spouse, partner, or family member hurts or threatens to hurt you. This is against the law in the U.S. You may be asked a series of questions if domestic violence is suspected, such as:

- ◆ Does someone threaten to hurt or injure you?
- ◆ Does someone force you to have sex when you don't want to?
- ◆ Does someone keep you from going to a healthcare provider?
- ◆ Does someone control your money?
- ◆ Does someone not allow you to leave your home or keep you from seeing your friends or family?
- ◆ Has someone taken your immigration documents and refuses to give them to you?
- ◆ Does someone verbally abuse you? Call you names and threaten you?



Your children may be asked questions if abuse and neglect is suspected. They may be asked about:

- ◆ Bruises or evidence of sexual molestation
- ◆ Malnutrition
- ◆ Lack of necessary medical care or education

Your elderly family member may be asked questions if abuse and neglect is suspected. They may be asked about:

- ◆ Bruises or evidence of sexual molestation
- ◆ Mental abuse such as verbal threats, name calling, isolation
- ◆ Money taken without permission
- ◆ Malnutrition
- ◆ Lack of necessary medical care or personal care

If you are experiencing any of these issues, tell your healthcare provider so they can help you.

If you or someone you know is in danger, call 911 for emergency help. If you are not in immediate danger but want to talk with someone about your

situation, you should call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) or Florida's toll-free domestic violence hotline (1-800-500-1119).

In the U.S. we also have rules about acceptable child discipline, and you will need to become familiar with these practices to learn how you should discipline your children.

## Mental Health Screening

Moving to a new country is stressful. Moving away from your loved ones, your homeland, losing your possessions, your traditions, your status and your work is stressful, especially for those who don't speak the language. Everyone experiences stress in different ways. Some of the feelings you will experience at the beginning will go away over time; but if they don't, you should discuss



these feelings with your healthcare provider. You might have problems dealing with a new culture, settling into your new home life, trauma, guilt about surviving, loss, grief, and depression. These are normal reactions to difficult situations that you may have encountered. Services are available to help you deal with them better.

Your healthcare provider may ask questions to evaluate your mental health and determine if you need medical care. The following are examples of questions they might ask:

- ◆ Are you having trouble sleeping or eating?
- ◆ Are you sad all the time?
- ◆ Do you cry a lot?
- ◆ Are you nervous all the time?
- ◆ Are you frustrated and irritable?
- ◆ Do you have nightmares?
- ◆ Are you having trouble remembering things and concentrating?
- ◆ Do you have bodily aches/pains?
- ◆ Are you tired all the time?

You may not experience these symptoms at first, but if you find that you can answer yes to most of these questions at some point, talk to your healthcare provider. They will be able to assist you with seeking medical attention for you and your family. You should not feel embarrassed or ashamed if you need help. These are normal emotions some people develop and asking for help is best.

You can request to see a professional who speaks your language or one who can provide an interpreter.

Like a physical problem, mental health issues can be relieved and minimized if you seek timely and appropriate help. All of these screenings, follow-up medical care, and other needs for services can be treated at a number of places by different doctors.

## **Various Healthcare Services in Florida**

### **County Health Departments**

As mentioned in the first chapter, county health departments (CHDs) provide most of the public health services to Floridians. These services include health screening services, immunizations (shots), and testing and treatment for communicable (contagious) diseases.

Most services from the CHD are free or you may be charged a small fee based on your income.

An important service provided by the CHD is immunizations for children enrolling in school. All children enrolling in the public school system must provide their immunization record at registration. Before enrolling your children, check with the local CHD about immunizations for your children.

## Community Clinics or Neighborhood Health Centers

In your local area, various community clinics or neighborhood health centers are available that provide a variety of services. Most accept Medicaid, and for those without health insurance, payment is based on household income.

## Private Doctors

This is a person who is licensed to practice medicine. They may work by themselves, as part of a private clinic or work in a group with other doctors. Most expect payment on the day you receive services. You may pay through an insurance plan, with cash, or a credit card. It is important to know the types of insurance plans a doctor will accept before going to your appointment.

## Hospitals

Most communities in Florida have hospitals available that are primarily used by people who need surgery or have severe injuries. You can be sent to the

hospital for special problems, tests, and observation. Babies are usually born in hospitals. You will be expected to show proof of health insurance or explain how you plan to pay for services.

## Emergency and Urgent Care Centers

Most emergency and urgent care facilities are provided at your local hospitals. Using **emergency care** is for sudden, life threatening and extreme health problems that need immediate care, such as:

- ◆ Severe injuries or bleeding
- ◆ Pain in your chest, shoulder or arm with the feeling of pressure on your chest, shortness of breath, cold hands and a lot of sweating (these can be signs of a heart attack)
- ◆ Difficulty breathing
- ◆ Choking on food



- ◆ Loss of consciousness, fainting
- ◆ Suspected poisoning or overdose (taking too much of a drug)
- ◆ Suicide attempt (when a person tries to take their own life)
- ◆ Seizures or convulsions
- ◆ Sudden numbness or not being able to move an arm, or leg on one side of the body
- ◆ A sudden severe headache, especially with neck pain or change in consciousness

In the types of situations listed above, you can receive emergency medical help by calling 911 from any phone. It is a free phone call. When you call 911, you will need to tell the emergency operator that you have a medical problem and where you are located. An ambulance and possibly other emergency vehicles will be sent to you as soon as possible. Do not hang up until the 911 operator tells you to do so.

It is important for you to remember that ambulances should only be used when you are in an emergency situation and you do not have another safe way to

transport a sick or injured person to the hospital. Ambulance services are not free. You will be charged for the ride to the hospital. You or your insurance company will also have to pay for services provided at the hospital.

**Urgent Care** is for medical problems that are not life-threatening, but are severe and need immediate attention, such as:

- ◆ High fever, especially in babies, young children and the elderly
- ◆ Vomiting or diarrhea that won't stop, especially in babies, young children, and the elderly
- ◆ Vomiting or coughing up blood
- ◆ Abdominal pain that continues or becomes worse
- ◆ A severe throbbing headache with blurred vision
- ◆ A sudden change with your eyesight, like seeing double
- ◆ Any health problem that becomes much worse

When you have a medical problem that does not require urgent care, you can call your primary

healthcare provider to schedule an appointment. This is your doctor, nurse, or clinic that you see for regular care, not the healthcare provider in the emergency department at the hospital. Your resettlement agency may also be able to help you locate a healthcare provider in your area.

Your ability to pay should not prevent you from seeking medical attention for your medical problems. Most providers and hospitals can help you find a way to pay for needed treatments.

## Poison Control Centers

Many items in your home contain ingredients that are poisonous if swallowed. Such items include household cleaning products, detergents, chemicals, plants, pesticides, certain drugs, and alcohol. Prescriptions and over-the-counter medications can be poisonous if not taken as directed.

These and many more items should be kept away from children and stored away from food.

If someone swallows something poisonous, you will need to call the Poison Control Center right away at 1-800-222-1222. This call is free. When you call, you will need to have the poisonous substance with you so you can tell the operator what it is.

## Health Insurance

People in the U.S. pay for their own healthcare coverage, and at times it can be very expensive. But health insurance is very important. **Health insurance** pays for medical expenses when you are sick and limits the amount you must pay for care. It can be purchased as an individual, in a group or provided by your employer. Premiums (the money you pay for health insurance) are paid to help protect you and your family from high or unexpected healthcare costs.

When you have health insurance you are more likely to go to the doctor when you are not feeling well, and you have a better chance of staying healthy. If possible, it is very important that you and your family always have health insurance coverage.

Obtaining and paying for healthcare can be very complicated. Some people receive assistance to pay for healthcare while others pay for their own health insurance. Most employers offer health insurance, but if your employer does not, you may qualify for public assistance programs that will provide you with healthcare coverage.

## Public Assisted Health Insurance

**Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA)** is a federal health insurance program that provides health care to refugees for the first eight months from the date of arrival into the U.S. (or for asylees, from the date asylum is granted).

**Medicaid** is a state and federal partnership that provides health care for eligible individuals for free or at a reduced cost.

**Florida Healthy Kids** and **Florida KidCare** are state and federal partnerships that provide health insurance to eligible uninsured children under the age of 19 free or at a reduced cost.

**Medicare** is a federal health insurance program that provides benefits to individuals who are 65 years of age and older, disabled, and certain people with end-stage renal disease for free or at a reduced cost.

## Other Health Insurance Options

In most cases, there are two basic ways health plans work: managed care and fee-for-service care.

1. A fee-for-service plan provides you with more control of your choices for your health care but usually costs more than managed care.
2. A managed care plan usually includes an agreement that you will use their network of healthcare providers, clinics and hospitals. A managed care plan can be one of the following:

### **Commercial Health Maintenance**

**Organizations (HMOs)** are managed care plans that provide you with a network of healthcare professionals and usually include doctors, dentists, pharmacists, therapists, chiropractors, other health services, and hospitals. You are required to pick from the provider list and

if you choose to use a healthcare provider not included in the provider list, you may have to pay more for those services.

**Prepaid Health Clinics (PHCs)** are managed care plans that provide healthcare services to individuals who have paid their premiums. PHCs provide services similar to those of an HMO.

**Exclusive Provider Organizations (EPOs)** are individual providers or groups of providers who have entered into a written agreement with an insurer to provide healthcare services. You are charged a contracted fee for their services. EPO health insurance usually costs more than an HMO.

**Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs)** are health insurance companies that contract with doctors and hospitals that are “preferred” by the company. These network doctors and hospitals charge a contracted fee for their services. PPO health insurance usually costs more than an HMO.

As you can see, there are many options for health insurance and unfortunately, it can be confusing at times. Most health insurance companies offer Help Line phone numbers, so be sure to use this resource when you have questions.

To keep your Medicaid and insurance cost down, the next chapter discusses ways to stay healthy.

## Preventive Health

Good health is more than treating illnesses when they occur. It also means having and keeping a healthy weight, eating nutritious foods, exercising and staying fit, and taking steps to prevent disease. Taking control of your health and well-being gives you the best chance of living a full and rewarding life.



To stay healthy, you should have regular exams/ check-ups with your healthcare provider. Don't wait until you are sick to seek medical care. Many diseases, if found early, are easier to treat and cure. Some people think that if they feel healthy, there is no reason to see a healthcare provider, but this is not always true. Healthcare providers can find early signs of illness by exams and screening tests.

Some common exams and screening tests that are important for all adults to have regularly are:

## **Blood Pressure**

Your blood pressure should be checked regularly. If your blood pressure is high, getting it under control will help protect you from heart disease, strokes, and kidney problems. High blood pressure cannot be cured, but it can be controlled by changing your diet, losing weight, and taking medicine, if necessary.

## **Cholesterol**

Your cholesterol level should be checked at least every five years. High cholesterol can lead to

atherosclerosis (arteries clogged by fatty materials) causing heart disease and other serious problems. If your cholesterol is high, your healthcare provider can tell you how to lower it by changing your diet, losing weight, or taking medicine.

## **Diabetes**

You should be checked regularly for diabetes, especially if you are overweight. If tests show that you are diabetic, you will have to change your diet and possibly begin drug therapy. You will also need to see your healthcare provider more often for check-ups.

## **Sexually Transmitted Infections/Diseases**

If you or your partner have sex with more than one person, or have in the past, you should be checked for sexually transmitted infections/diseases, such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and hepatitis. These may cause very bad health problems if they are not treated early.

## Immunizations for Adults and Children

Immunizations (also called vaccinations) are one of the most powerful and necessary tools needed to protect you and your family from diseases that can kill. Your healthcare provider will discuss an immunization schedule for you and your child(ren).



Proof of immunizations is required before enrolling in school and when applying to adjust your immigration status to Lawful Permanent Resident. Get your immunizations right away while you have insurance coverage, as adult immunizations can cost a lot of money.

## Important Health Screening Tests for Women

### Breast Self-Exam and Mammogram

Conducting monthly breast self-examinations are important for good breast health. Your healthcare provider can show you how to do a breast self-exam.

Obtaining a yearly mammogram is also very important for early detection of breast cancer or tumors. A mammogram is a type of x-ray test that can detect cancerous tumor(s) in the breast. Most women start having regular mammograms at the age of 40.

Most breast cancer and tumors can be found through these methods and early detection is important for treatment.

### Pelvic Exam and Pap Smear

A pelvic exam is a way for your healthcare provider to examine your female organs and check for any gynecological problems. At the same time, a pap smear test is usually conducted. A healthcare

professional will use a special tool to collect cells from the inside of the uterus to detect cancer.

## Important Health Screening Tests for Men

### Testicular Self-Exam

Conducting regular testicular self-exams will help detect early signs of cancer. Your healthcare provider can show you how to do a simple self-exam.

### Prostate Exam and Screening

All men over the age of 50 will have their prostate checked during their routine physical exam. The purpose of this test is to detect early signs of cancer. The prostate is checked through a rectal exam, and a blood test called, Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA).

## Dental Care

Keeping your teeth and gums clean and healthy is very important to your overall health. You can prevent tooth decay by brushing your teeth several times a day and flossing once a day. Children and

adults should have regular dental examinations/check-ups. A dental hygienist will take x-rays, clean and floss your teeth, and teach you how to take care of your teeth and gums. The dentist will examine your mouth, gums and teeth for plaque, cavities, and gum disease.



## Eye Care

You should be checked by a professional who specializes in eye care (optometrist or ophthalmologist). They will check your vision to determine if you need glasses. To examine your eyes, eye drops may be added to your eyes so they can check for several different types of eye diseases such as glaucoma, cataracts, and retina problems.

## Personal Hygiene

Good personal hygiene is the first step to a healthy lifestyle. Taking a bath or shower once daily is very important to keeping your body clean. Cleaning

your body is also important to ensure your skin rejuvenates itself, as the scrubbing of your arms, legs, and torso will remove dead, dry skin and bacteria and will help your skin stay healthy.

Using deodorant and washing your hands and clothes frequently are ways to maintain good personal hygiene. Ignoring good personal hygiene can cause problems with your friends, employers and coworkers, and may spread germs. Good personal hygiene is very important when you want to get or keep a job.

**Washing your hair** regularly will keep it clean, healthy and strong. Washing your hair at least every other day helps keep it healthy and in good shape. If you wash it too much, your hair will become brittle and dry. Conditioning your hair will keep healthy nutrients within your hair.

**Washing your face** at least once a day will remove the dirt and grime that you have come in contact with during the day. Keeping a clean face will help prevent wrinkles and other skin problems.

**Trimming your nails** regularly will keep them in good shape. Proper trimming techniques will also help you avoid hangnails and infected nail beds.

**Washing your hands** before a meal is important so that you have clean hands before you eat. *Wash your hands immediately after you use the restroom* so that you don't carry bacteria to other parts of the body or to other individuals. To avoid unnecessary illness don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth until you have washed your hands. *Washing your hands before preparing food* is very important to ensure you don't spread bacteria to your food, particularly when you handle poultry or raw meat. Wash them with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds before you begin working with food. This will keep your food free from bacteria, and will ensure your food is healthy to serve once it's cooked! *Washing your hands after preparing food* will ensure you don't carry bacteria with you.

## Food Hygiene

Good food hygiene is very important. Handling food properly can prevent the spread of many illnesses.

Keeping bacteria from spreading from one food to another prevents food poisoning. Food poisoning can happen when raw meat touches or drips onto ready-to-eat food, or when cutting boards, utensils or hands have touched raw meat. Food poisoning is usually caused by micro-organisms (germs), including bacteria, viruses and molds. The spread of these germs can be prevented by practicing good food hygiene.

The most serious types of food poisoning are caused by bacteria. Just a single bacterium on an item of food left out of the refrigerator overnight could generate many millions of bacteria by the morning, enough to make you sick, if eaten.

To prevent bacteria from spreading:

- ◆ Wash your hands and nail areas with warm, soapy water before handling food, between handling cooked and uncooked foods, and after going to the toilet.
- ◆ Rinse your hands well and dry them on a clean hand towel, or disposable paper towel. Wet hands transfer germs more effectively than dry hands.

- ◆ Use different dishcloths for different jobs. Never wash dishes with a dishcloth that's been used to clean up after cutting meats or spills on the floor.
- ◆ Wash and disinfect your countertops using warm water and dish detergent or equal parts of water and bleach. You will want to use rubber gloves to protect your hands.
- ◆ Do not handle food if you have stomach problems such as diarrhea and vomiting, or if you're sneezing or coughing frequently.
- ◆ Cover up cuts and sores.



- ◆ Use a cutting board when chopping or slicing food. Never cut directly on the countertop or on the floor.

## **Cooking Food Safely**

If food isn't cooked at the correct temperature, bacteria can still survive. You should:

- ◆ Follow the recipe or packet instructions for cooking times and temperature, ensuring the oven is pre-heated properly.
- ◆ Serve food hot (steaming).
- ◆ Take special care that pork, sausages, burgers and poultry are cooked all the way through and are not pink in the middle. When cooked properly, the juices run clear. Lamb and beef joints and steaks can be cooked rare, but must be thoroughly sealed (browned) on the outside.
- ◆ Don't cook foods too far in advance. Keep cooked foods covered and hot until served.
- ◆ When microwaving, stir often to ensure even cooking.

- ◆ Only reheat food once and serve hot.
- ◆ Use a food thermometer to check that meat is cooked to the right temperature.
- ◆ Raw eggs can contain harmful bacteria which can be dangerous to pregnant women, older people and babies. Don't serve eggs with runny yolks or foods containing eggs that are not cooked.

## **Storing Food Correctly**

Knowing proper food storage is very important, as some foods need to be kept in the refrigerator or in the freezer until you are ready to cook. It is very important that food is stored in the right place and at the correct temperature.

Always remember to:

- ◆ Cover and place food that needs to be chilled in the refrigerator.
- ◆ Cool cooked food as quickly as possible; place food in airtight containers and store it in the refrigerator.

- ◆ Store raw meat and poultry in a sealed container at the bottom of the refrigerator or the freezer to keep it from touching or dripping onto other foods.
- ◆ Don't overload the refrigerator — this may stop cold air from circulating.
- ◆ Always check labels for guidance on where and how long to store food, in particular, fresh or frozen food.
- ◆ Store fresh or frozen food in the refrigerator or freezer within one hour of purchase — sooner if the weather is hot.
- ◆ Allow meal leftovers to cool slightly before storing them in airtight containers and placing them in the refrigerator, within two hours of preparation.
- ◆ Eat leftovers within two days.
- ◆ Defrost frozen foods in the refrigerator; place your frozen food items on a plate or in a container so they don't drip on or contaminate other foods in the refrigerator.
- ◆ Keep the refrigerator at less than 5°C/41°F and the freezer at less than -18°C/0°F — consider getting a thermometer.

- ◆ Don't store opened cans of food in the refrigerator — put the contents in a suitable airtight container and store it in the refrigerator.

## Maintaining a Clean Home

### The Kitchen

You should keep your kitchen counters, oven, sink and refrigerator clean. Clean your kitchen countertops every day with soap and water. Clean your stovetop and inside of the refrigerator at least once a month with soap and water. If you are renting, ask your landlord if you have a self-cleaning oven and learn more about how to clean it properly. If you have a dishwasher, scrape and rinse dishes before putting them into the dishwasher. Dishwashers require special detergent. Do not use laundry or liquid dishwashing soap. Your trash/garbage should be taken out of the house daily to a secure garbage bin or dumpster. If you are renting, your landlord will tell you where the garbage bin or dumpster is located.

## The Floors

You should sweep your kitchen daily to keep crumbs from attracting bugs. You should sweep and mop your non-carpeted floors at least once a week; spills on the non-carpeted floor should be cleaned immediately with soap and water. You should use a vacuum cleaner to clean your carpet at least once a week.



## The Bedroom

You should remove the sheets from your bed(s) and wash them at least once every week. Turning the mattress helps make it last longer. Dusting/polishing your furniture regularly helps to keep them clean.

## The Bathroom

You should clean the sink, bathtub and/or shower, the inside and outside of the toilet every week. You should sweep and mop the floor every week too. Use a toilet brush to clean the inside of the



toilet. Only flush toilet tissue. Never flush any other products down the toilet.

## The Laundry Room

Learn to sort your clothes by colors and types: 1. whites 2. brights 3. reds, darks, and blacks, 4. towels and 5. delicates. Look at tags for washing and drying instructions. You will need to look at your clothes for stains and pre-treat them. Read information on the laundry detergent box or bottle for instructions on the amount of laundry detergent to be used and if you should use bleach and fabric softener. Learn the washing machine wash cycles. Do not overload the washer.

If you have a clothes dryer, you should read the care labels on your clothes so you do not ruin your clothes. To save energy, you should hang your laundry to dry as much as possible.

If you are renting a house or apartment and you have problems with bugs, roaches and other pests in your home, you will need to discuss this issue with your landlord. If you are not renting you should

contact a local pest control company. They charge a fee for their service but they will rid your home of pests that carry diseases.

Maintaining a clean house will contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

## Healthy Habits

### Don't Smoke

If you smoke, STOP! If you don't smoke, don't start. Smoking hurts your health and the health of those around you. Smoking, including second-hand smoke, has been shown to cause diseases such as lung cancer, heart disease, and problems during pregnancy.

If you want to stop smoking, talk to your healthcare provider about various programs that can help you. A program offered in Florida is the Quit Line at 1-877-U-CAN NOW (1-877-822-6669). The Quit Line is a toll-free, telephone-based service to help you stop smoking and offers the following services:

- ◆ Counseling sessions in English and Spanish
- ◆ Self-help materials in English and Spanish
- ◆ Translation service for other languages
- ◆ Pharmacotherapy assistance
- ◆ TDD service for hearing impaired

## Physical Activity

A lifestyle that includes regular exercise and a variety of physical activities will keep you healthy and strong and will aid in maintaining a healthy body, weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol. It also strengthens your heart, muscles, and bones. Daily walking is an easy, simple way to exercise. Talk to your healthcare provider about an exercise program that is best for you.

For additional information on physical fitness, visit [www.HealthyFloridians.com](http://www.HealthyFloridians.com).

## A Healthy Diet

Eating the right foods, managing portion size and limiting fats and sugar can help you live a longer, healthier life. Your diet should be rich in fresh vegetables, fruits and whole grains.



Medical studies show that many illnesses, such as diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer can be prevented by eating a healthy diet.

Sometimes, even if you do all the right things, you can still get sick.

## Communicable Diseases

Communicable (also called contagious) diseases are sicknesses that can pass from one person to another. These illnesses can spread through:

- ◆ Air, when someone coughs or sneezes

- ◆ Body fluids, such as sexual contact
- ◆ Blood, by using infected needles or shaving razors
- ◆ Skin-to-skin contact

Screening for communicable diseases is important for your health, your family's health, and the people around you.

During your initial health screening you may be tested for the most common communicable diseases. If you test positive for these, you will be informed about treatments.

## Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) can be in your body as tuberculosis infection or tuberculosis disease. Both are treatable and preventable. If TB is not identified and treated, it can spread to other people and/or kill you.

The following tests are used to screen for TB:

- ◆ A tuberculin skin test involves injecting a very small amount of liquid under the skin of your forearm. After 48 to 72 hours you will return to

have the area looked at by a healthcare provider. If the healthcare provider determines that the skin test is positive, you may need to have a chest x-ray.

- ◆ A chest x-ray will determine if the TB bacteria in your body is causing TB disease in your lungs.
- ◆ To confirm if there is TB bacteria in your lungs you may need to cough mucus (sputum) from your lungs into a cup. A sputum culture is the most reliable test for tuberculosis.

It takes months to treat TB, whether it is for latent TB infection (LTBI) or for active TB disease. The treatment is different for each.

- ◆ Latent TB infection (LTBI) is most often treated with one drug - isoniazid (INH). LTBI treatment is for people with a TB infection, but no active TB disease (these people are not contagious). By treating the latent (not active) TB infection, active TB disease can be prevented.
- ◆ Active TB disease must be treated with INH plus other TB drugs. After 2 or 3 weeks of treatment,

the person is usually not contagious anymore. Some symptoms of active TB in the lungs are: a cough lasting 3 weeks or more, fever, fatigue, poor appetite, and night sweats.

## Hepatitis B and C

Hepatitis B and C are serious diseases that can cause health problems including liver failure or liver cancer. Hepatitis B and C are spread by contact with blood or body fluids. Your healthcare provider will discuss treatment options and protection of others. A vaccine is available to protect you against hepatitis B but not for hepatitis C.

## Intestinal Parasites and Unhealthy Bacteria

Many refugees come from countries where intestinal parasites (“worms”) are common. You will be provided a kit and told how to collect the stool (bowel movement) samples for testing. If these tests find problems you will need to see your doctor for treatment. Your doctor will prescribe medications

and even if you feel well, you should finish all of the medicine prescribed.

## Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Sexually transmitted infections are passed during sexual activity with another person. These include:

- ◆ Herpes
- ◆ Syphilis
- ◆ Gonorrhea
- ◆ Chlamydia
- ◆ Hepatitis B
- ◆ Genital warts (Human Papilloma Virus)
- ◆ Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

These infections may lead to serious health problems if they are not treated. If it is determined that you have an STI, you will need to talk to your doctor about the risk factors, testing and treatment. Some STIs can be cured or controlled. However, there is no cure for HIV infection or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

## Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

HIV is the virus that gives people **AIDS**. HIV is a sexually transmitted infection and is spread when infected blood, semen, or vaginal fluids enter the body. HIV is also transmitted in breast milk, so women who have HIV should not breastfeed. Common transmission occurs during sex or by sharing needles for injecting drugs. HIV is not transmitted through donating blood, kissing, holding hands, or being near a person who has HIV.

A person with the HIV infection may not have symptoms for months or years, but can pass the virus on to other people. As the immune system weakens, symptoms of HIV infection will begin to appear. The following are some symptoms which may indicate an HIV infection:

- ◆ Swollen lymph glands
- ◆ Fever
- ◆ Night sweats
- ◆ Severe fatigue
- ◆ Weight loss

If you have symptoms of HIV infection, see a healthcare provider right away. There is no cure for HIV infection or AIDS, but there are medical treatments and drugs that can make you feel better and may help you from becoming ill. Pregnant women infected with HIV can take medicine to reduce the chance of infecting their newborn babies.

## Chronic Conditions

Other diseases are considered long-lasting or chronic, and need long term treatment. If you are diagnosed with any of the following conditions, your healthcare provider will need to monitor your health. You may need to take medication daily or receive regular treatments. You can also help yourself by following a specific diet and exercise program.

Examples of some chronic conditions that require ongoing care, treatment, and monitoring are:

### Diabetes

Diabetes is a condition when the body is unable to process and use glucose (sugar) properly, causing

you to have high blood sugar levels. If diagnosed with diabetes you must control your blood sugar to prevent serious health problems such as blindness, heart disease, kidney failure, and loss of limb due to poor circulation. Your healthcare provider may also prescribe medications to lower your blood sugar.

### High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, may cause heart attack, stroke, or kidney disease, if untreated. Usually, there are no warning signs to tell you that you may have high blood pressure, which is why it is important to have regular medical check-ups. If diagnosed with high blood pressure, you must monitor your blood pressure to prevent damage to your heart and blood vessels. Your healthcare provider may also prescribe medications to decrease or control your blood pressure.

### Angina

Angina/chest pain is caused from damaged blood vessels around the heart. If you are diagnosed with this condition, you must take medication as prescribed by your healthcare provider.

## Asthma

Asthma is a lung disease that can be life threatening. It causes breathing problems, often-called “attacks”. Cigarette or other smoke, dust, cold air, feathers, foods, or mold may trigger an asthma attack. Your healthcare provider may want to do allergy testing to find out what triggers your asthma. There are medicines that your healthcare provider will prescribe to prevent or help with asthma attacks. It is important to take these medications daily.

## Human Trafficking

A very serious problem in the world today is human trafficking. Human trafficking is the illegal trade of human beings for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation or forced labor. It is also referred to as a form of modern-day slavery and is one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world. Trafficking victims can be young children, teenagers, men, and women, of all ages, from all nations, and of all colors. Children under the age of 18 are most vulnerable.

Traffickers use various ways to create fear in victims to keep them enslaved. Some traffickers keep their victims under lock and key. However, the more frequent practice is to use less obvious ways to control that include:

- ◆ Isolation from the public — limiting contact with outsiders and making sure that any contact is monitored or superficial in nature
- ◆ Isolation from family members and members of their ethnic and religious community
- ◆ Confiscation of passports, visas and/or identification documents
- ◆ Use or threaten violence toward victims and/or families of victims
- ◆ Telling victims they will be imprisoned or deported for immigration violations if they contact authorities
- ◆ Control of the victims’ money, such as, holding their money for “safe-keeping”

You may be asked a series of questions to ensure that you are not and will not become a victim of human trafficking:

- ◆ Can you leave your job or situation if you want?
- ◆ Can you come and go as you please?
- ◆ Have you been threatened if you try to leave?
- ◆ Have you been physically harmed in any way?
- ◆ What are your working or living conditions like?
- ◆ Where do you sleep and eat?
- ◆ Do you sleep in a bed, on a cot or on the floor?
- ◆ Have you ever been deprived of food, water, sleep or medical care?
- ◆ Do you have to ask permission to eat, sleep or go to the bathroom?
- ◆ Are there locks on your doors and windows so you cannot get out?
- ◆ Has anyone threatened your family?
- ◆ Has your identification or documentation been taken from you?

- ◆ Is anyone forcing you to do anything that you do not want to do?

If you think you are victim of human trafficking or you know a victim of human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-373-7888.

## Healthcare Interpreter

If you cannot speak or read English, you may need someone to help you talk to your healthcare providers. This person is called an interpreter. An interpreter is someone who speaks your language and also speaks English. An interpreter has been trained to interpret information so you can understand it in your native language. A healthcare interpreter will make sure that the communication between you and your healthcare provider is accurate.



Here are some tips to help you communicate with an interpreter:

- ◆ Speak directly to the healthcare provider, not the interpreter
- ◆ Ask the interpreter to write down information/ instructions specific to your treatment
- ◆ Only tell the interpreter what you want the healthcare provider to know
- ◆ Do not ask the interpreter any medical questions if the healthcare provider is not present
- ◆ Do not ask the interpreter for their personal advice or to help you make decisions
- ◆ Always ask questions if you don't understand something or if the information you receive is unclear

Interpreters are required to keep all information private/confidential. This means that they cannot speak to anyone about your health, medical treatment, or medical appointments. Additionally, interpreters must not share their own thoughts, beliefs, advice or answers about your health.

You or the person who calls to make a medical appointment for you should always tell the receptionist at the provider's office that you will need an interpreter. If they do not have someone who speaks your language, ask them to phone the "Language Line" at 1-800-874-9426, or another phone interpreter service.



Friends, relatives or children should not be used as healthcare interpreters, as this could result in misleading information or other problems related to your illness or treatment.

# Your Rights and Responsibilities

The Patient's Bill of Rights was created with the intent to:

- ◆ Help patients feel more confident in the U.S. healthcare system
  - ✓ ensure that the health care system is fair and works to meet patients' needs
  - ✓ give patients a way to address any problems they may have
  - ✓ encourage patients to take an active role in staying or getting healthy
- ◆ Stress the importance of a strong relationship between patients and their healthcare providers
- ◆ Stress the key role patients play in staying healthy by laying out rights and responsibilities for all patients and healthcare providers

# Florida Patient's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

Florida law requires that your healthcare provider or facility recognize your rights while you are receiving medical care. It also recognizes the healthcare provider's right to expect appropriate behavior from patients. You may request a copy of the full text of this law from your healthcare provider or facility.

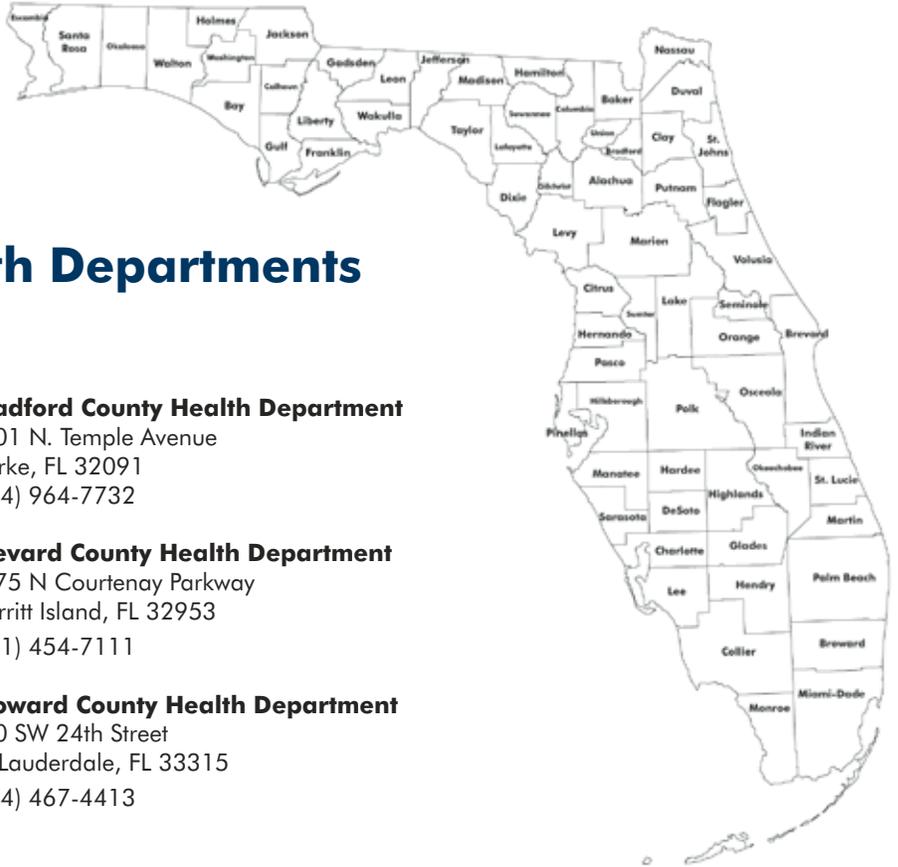
## Summary of Patient's Rights

- ◆ Quality health care, regardless of race, creed, age, sex, sexual preference, or nation of origin
- ◆ Care that includes respect for your psychosocial, spiritual, and cultural beliefs that shape the view of illness
- ◆ Considerate and respectful care
- ◆ Access information about your healthcare providers, healthcare plan, and healthcare facilities
- ◆ Have information presented to you in a way that you can understand

- ◆ Receive emergency health care with consent (you may be required to pay for these services)
- ◆ Express any complaints or concerns you have about your care or services received, and have them addressed promptly
- ◆ Have your medical records and information kept private
- ◆ View and copy your medical records
- ◆ Have errors, misinformation or anything that is vague removed from or corrected on your medical records
- ◆ Ask questions of your healthcare provider, workers and technicians
- ◆ Have medical tests and treatment explained to you in a way that you can understand
- ◆ Choose what kind of medical treatment you receive
- ◆ Actively participate in your health care

### **Summary of Patient's Responsibilities**

- ◆ Talk with your healthcare provider
- ◆ Educate yourself about your condition and treatment
- ◆ Provide information that is as honest and complete as possible
- ◆ Follow treatment and take medicine as directed



# Florida's County Health Departments Contact Information

## **Alachua County Health Department**

224 SE 24th Street  
Gainesville, FL 32641  
(352) 334-7900

## **Baker County Health Department**

480 W. Lowder Street  
Macclenny, FL 32063  
(904) 259-6291 x 2230

## **Bay County Health Department**

597 W. 11th Street  
Panama City, FL 32401  
(850) 872-4720 x1122

## **Bradford County Health Department**

1801 N. Temple Avenue  
Starke, FL 32091  
(904) 964-7732

## **Brevard County Health Department**

2575 N Courtenay Parkway  
Merritt Island, FL 32953  
(321) 454-7111

## **Broward County Health Department**

780 SW 24th Street  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33315  
(954) 467-4413

**Calhoun County Health Department**

19611 SR 20 West  
Blountstown, FL 32424  
(850) 674-5645

**Charlotte County Health Department**

1100 Loveland Blvd  
Port Charlotte, FL 33980  
(941) 624-7200

**Citrus County Health Department**

3700 W. Sovereign Path  
Lecanto, FL 34461  
(352) 527-0068 x 261

**Clay County Health Department**

301 S. West Street  
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043  
(904) 529-2801

**Collier County Health Department**

3301 E. Tamiami Trail, Building H  
Naples, FL 34112  
(239) 252-8200

**Columbia County Health Department**

217 N.E. Franklin Street  
Lake City, FL 32055  
(386) 758-1068

**Dade County Health Department**

315 N.W. 27th Avenue  
Miami, FL 33125  
(305) 643-7300

**DeSoto County Health Department**

34 South Baldwin Avenue  
Arcadia, FL 34266  
(863) 993-4601

**Dixie County Health Department**

149 NE 241st Street  
Cross City, FL 32628  
(352) 498-1360

**Duval County Health Department**

900 University Boulevard North  
Jacksonville, FL 32211  
(904) 253-1000

**Escambia County Health Department**

1295 W. Fairfield Drive  
Pensacola, FL 32501  
(850) 595-6500

**Flagler County Health Department**

301 Dr. Carter Blvd.  
Bunnell, FL 32110  
(386) 437-7353

**Franklin County Health Department**

139 12th Street  
Apalachicola, FL 32320  
(850) 653-2111

**Gadsden County Health Department**

278 LaSalle LeFall Drive  
Quincy, FL 32353  
(850) 875-7200 x 325

**Gilchrist County Health Department**

119 NE 1st Street  
Trenton, FL 32693  
(352) 463-3120

**Glades County Health Department**

998 Highway 27  
Moore Haven, FL 33471  
(863) 946-0707

**Gulf County Health Department**

2475 Garrison Avenue  
Port St. Joe, FL 32456  
(850) 227-1276

**Hamilton County Health Department**

209 S.E. Central Avenue  
Jasper, FL 32052  
(386) 792-1414

**Hardee County Health Department**

115 K D Revell Road  
Wauchula, FL 33873-2051  
(863) 773-4161

**Hendry County Health Department**

1140 Pratt Boulevard  
LaBelle, FL 33975-0070  
(863) 674-4056 x 108

**Hernando County Health Department**

300 South Main Street  
Brooksville, FL 34601  
(352) 540-6800

**Highlands County Health Department**

7205 S. George Boulevard  
Sebring, FL 33875  
(863) 386-6040 x215

**Hillsborough County Health Department**

1105 E. Kennedy Boulevard  
Tampa, FL 33602  
(813) 307-8000

**Holmes County Health Department**

603 Scenic Circle  
Bonifay, FL 32425  
(850) 547-8500

**Indian River County Health Department**

1900 27th Street  
Vero Beach, FL 32960  
(772) 794-7460

**Jackson County Health Department**

4979 Healthy Way  
Marianna, FL 32446  
(850) 526-2412

**Jefferson County Health Department**

1255 W. Washington Street  
Monticello, FL 32344  
(850) 342-0170

**Lafayette County Health Department**

140 SW Virginia Circle  
Mayo, FL 32066-1806  
(386) 294-1321

**Lake County Health Department**

16140 US Hwy 441  
Eustis, FL 32726  
(352) 483-7926

or

Satellite Office  
835 7th Street, Building B, Suite 4  
Clermont, FL 34711  
(352) 394-4399 x113

**Lee County Health Department**

3920 Michigan Avenue  
Ft. Myers, FL 33916  
(239) 332-9501

**Leon County Health Department**

2965 Municipal Way  
Tallahassee, FL 32316  
(850) 606-8150

**Levy County Health Department**

66 W. Main Street  
Bronson, FL 32621  
(352) 486-5300

**Liberty County Health Department**

12832 North Central Avenue  
Bristol, FL 32321  
(850) 643-2415

**Madison County Health Department**

218 S.W. Third Avenue  
Madison, FL 32340  
(850) 973-5000

**Manatee County Health Department**

410 6th Avenue East  
Bradenton, FL 34208-1968  
(941) 748-0747 x 1222

**Marion County Health Department**

1801 S.E. 32nd Avenue  
Ocala, FL 34478  
(352) 629-0137

**Martin County Health Department**

3441 SE Willoughby Boulevard  
Stuart, FL 34994  
(772) 221-4000

**Monroe County Health Department**

1100 Simonton Street  
Key West, FL 33041  
(305) 293-7534

**Nassau County Health Department**

30 South 4th Street  
Fernandina Beach, FL 32035  
(904) 548-1800

**Okaloosa County Health Department**

221 Hospital Drive, NE  
Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32548  
(850) 833-9255

**Okeechobee County Health Department**

1728 N.W. 9th Avenue  
Okeechobee, FL 34973  
(863) 462-5819

**Orange County Health Department**

832 West Central Boulevard  
Orlando, FL 32805  
(407) 836-2600

**Osceola County Health Department**

1875 Boggy Creek Road  
Kissimmee, FL 34745-0309  
(407) 343-2009

**Palm Beach County Health Department**

1150 45th Street  
West Palm Beach, FL 33407  
(561) 514-5300

**Pasco County Health Department**

10841 Little Road  
New Port Richey, FL 34654  
(727) 861-5250

**Pinellas County Health Department**

205 Dr. M. L. King Street North  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701  
(727) 824-6900

**Polk County Health Department**

1290 Golfview Avenue  
Bartow, FL 33830  
(863) 519-7900 x 1002

**Putnam County Health Department**

2801 Kennedy Street  
Palatka, FL 32177  
(386) 326-3200

**Santa Rosa County Health Department**

5527 Stewart Street  
Milton, FL 32572-0929  
(850) 983-5200

**Sarasota County Health Department**

2200 Ringling Boulevard  
Sarasota, FL 34237  
(941) 861-2900

**Seminole County Health Department**

400 West Airport Boulevard  
Sanford, FL 32773  
(407) 665-3000

**St. Johns County Health Department**

1955 US 1 South, Suite 100  
St. Augustine, FL 32086  
(904) 825-5055

**St. Lucie County Health Department**

5150 NW Milner Drive  
Port St. Lucie, FL 34983  
(772) 462-3800

**Sumter County Health Department**

415 E. Noble Avenue  
Bushnell, FL 33513  
(352) 793-6979

or

Satellite Office  
104 Rutland Street  
Wildwood, FL 34785  
(352) 330-1313 x 245

**Suwannee County Health Department**

915 Nobles Ferry Road  
Live Oak, FL 32060  
(386) 362-2708

**Taylor County Health Department**

1215 North Peacock Avenue  
Perry, FL 32347  
(850) 584-5087 x 174

**Union County Health Department**

495 East Main Street  
Lake Butler, FL 32054  
(386) 496-3211

**Volusia County Health Department**

1845 Holsonback Drive  
Daytona Beach, FL 32117  
(386) 274-0614

**Wakulla County Health Department**

48 Oak Street  
Crawfordville, FL 32327  
(850) 926-3591

**Walton County Health Department**

475 State Highway 83  
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32433  
(850) 892-8015

**Washington County Health Department**

1338 South Boulevard  
Chipley, FL 32428  
(850) 638-6240

# Resources

The following resources were used to compile this guidebook:

## **Health Guide for Refugees in Minnesota**

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/refugee/hcp/healthguideeng.pdf>

## **A Health Guide for Refugees (Illinois)**

Hard copy dated 1997

## **Welcome to California: A Health Guide for Refugees, Asylees and Victims of Trafficking**

Hard copy dated 2004

## **Guidelines for Initial Medical Screening and Care of Refugees Resettled in New Hampshire**

Hard copy dated 2005

## **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families**

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/index.html>

## **USCRI Tool Kits**

<http://www.refugees.org/home.aspx>



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