THIS IS DISCLOSURE

Treat each other like humans.

COUNTRY GUIDE



AMERICAS

Canada.

Canada's duties to help are narrow: the Criminal Code duty to provide necessaries covers dependents, while Quebec's Charter creates a general duty to assist a person whose life is in peril. Some provinces, such as British Columbia, protect people who give emergency aid, and federal law bars charging people who call for help in a drug overdose with simple possession. Federal programs include a donation tax credit, bravery decorations and the Canada Service Corps.

DUTY TO HELP A STRANGER

Varies by region

PROTECTION FOR HELPERS

Varies by region

GIVING AND SERVICE

4 programs and laws

Is there a legal duty to help a stranger?

VARIES BY REGION

Under Criminal Code section 215 the legal duty to provide necessaries of life covers a child under 16, a spouse or common-law partner, and a person under one's charge, not strangers in general. In Quebec, section 2 of the Charter of human rights and freedoms states that every person must come to the aid of anyone whose life is in peril, personally or by calling for aid, unless it involves danger to themselves or a third person or there is another valid reason.

Criminal Code, section 215 (Duty of persons to provide necessaries) (Department of Justice Canada) Charter of human rights and freedoms, CQLR c C-12 (Légis Québec, Government of Quebec)

Are people who help protected?

VARIES BY REGION

Protection is mostly provincial. British Columbia's Good Samaritan Act (RSBC 1996, c. 172) says a person who renders emergency medical services or aid at the immediate scene of an accident or emergency is not liable for damages unless grossly negligent. Federally, section 4.1 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act provides that a person who seeks emergency medical or law enforcement help for a medical emergency (an overdose) is not to be charged or convicted of simple possession under section 4(1) on evidence found as a result.

Good Samaritan Act [RSBC 1996] Chapter 172 (BC Laws, Province of British Columbia) Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (section 4.1) (Department of Justice Canada)

How the government promotes giving and service

Donations and gifts tax credits

The Canada Revenue Agency explains that individuals may claim federal and provincial or territorial non-refundable tax credits for gifts of money or property to certain institutions; the credit rules are set in section 118.1 of the Income Tax Act.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Decorations for Bravery

The Governor General presents the Cross of Valour, Star of Courage and Medal of Bravery, which recognize people who risked their lives to try to save others, including strangers.

GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Order of Canada

Recognizes people across the country, including community volunteers, whose lives have enriched others; its motto is Desiderantes meliorem patriam, 'they desire a better country'.

GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Canada Service Corps

A federal program that offers volunteer service opportunities to youth aged 12 to 30 across the country.

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Ways to give and volunteer

Canada has a federal register of charities that you can search for free. Giving to a registered charity gets you an official tax receipt, so check the register first.

Check a charity before you give

The Canada Revenue Agency's search for registered charities, updated each business day, with a link to its search tool.

CRA List of Charities and Other Qualified Donees

Give your time

Volunteer Canada
The national voice of volunteering, with links to local volunteer centers across the country.

Canadian Red Cross
The national Red Cross society, which recruits volunteers for emergency response, first aid and community programs.

Give money, blood or a donation

Canadian Blood Services
The national blood, plasma and stem cell donation service outside Quebec, where you can book a donation.

Organs and Tissues, Canadian Blood Services
Information about organ and tissue donation and how to register your decision in your province or territory.

Food Banks Canada
The national organization that supports a network of food banks and publishes research on hunger.

Community Foundations of Canada

The national network of local community foundations that pool gifts for local needs.

In an emergency or a crisis

9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline: 9-8-8
Call or text 9-8-8 any time, every day of the year, for anyone in suicidal crisis or worried about someone.

988 Suicide Crisis Helpline
A national 24-hour call or text line for anyone in suicidal crisis or worried about someone else.

Before you act

- **Scammers pose as charities by phone, text and email, and some copy the names of real ones, so look up the charity on the CRA list and give on its own website.**
- **Ask whether any caller or canvasser is paid and how much of your gift goes to the cause, and do not feel pressed to give right away.**
- **Visitors and foreign residents should confirm their work permit or visa rules before doing regular unpaid work for any organization.**

This list does not cover provincial programs, local faith or neighborhood groups, or Quebec's separate blood and organ services. Checked 2026-10-28. Listing an organization is not an endorsement, and none of them has endorsed this site. Some official sites block automatic checks, so a link may need a second try.

One thing worth knowing

The Governor General's bravery decorations explicitly honor people who risked their lives for a loved one or a perfect stranger, and Quebec is the one province whose rights charter includes a general duty to assist a person in peril.

What this does not mean

Law differs by province and territory, and only provincial statutes checked here are British Columbia's and Quebec's. Ontario and other provinces have their own statutes that this guide did not verify, and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act has been amended recently. Nothing here is legal advice. This is a plain-language summary of public sources, not legal advice, and it does not rank countries. No government named here has endorsed this site. Not reviewed by a lawyer. Statutes were read in public sources and may have changed. Last checked October 26, 2026.

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