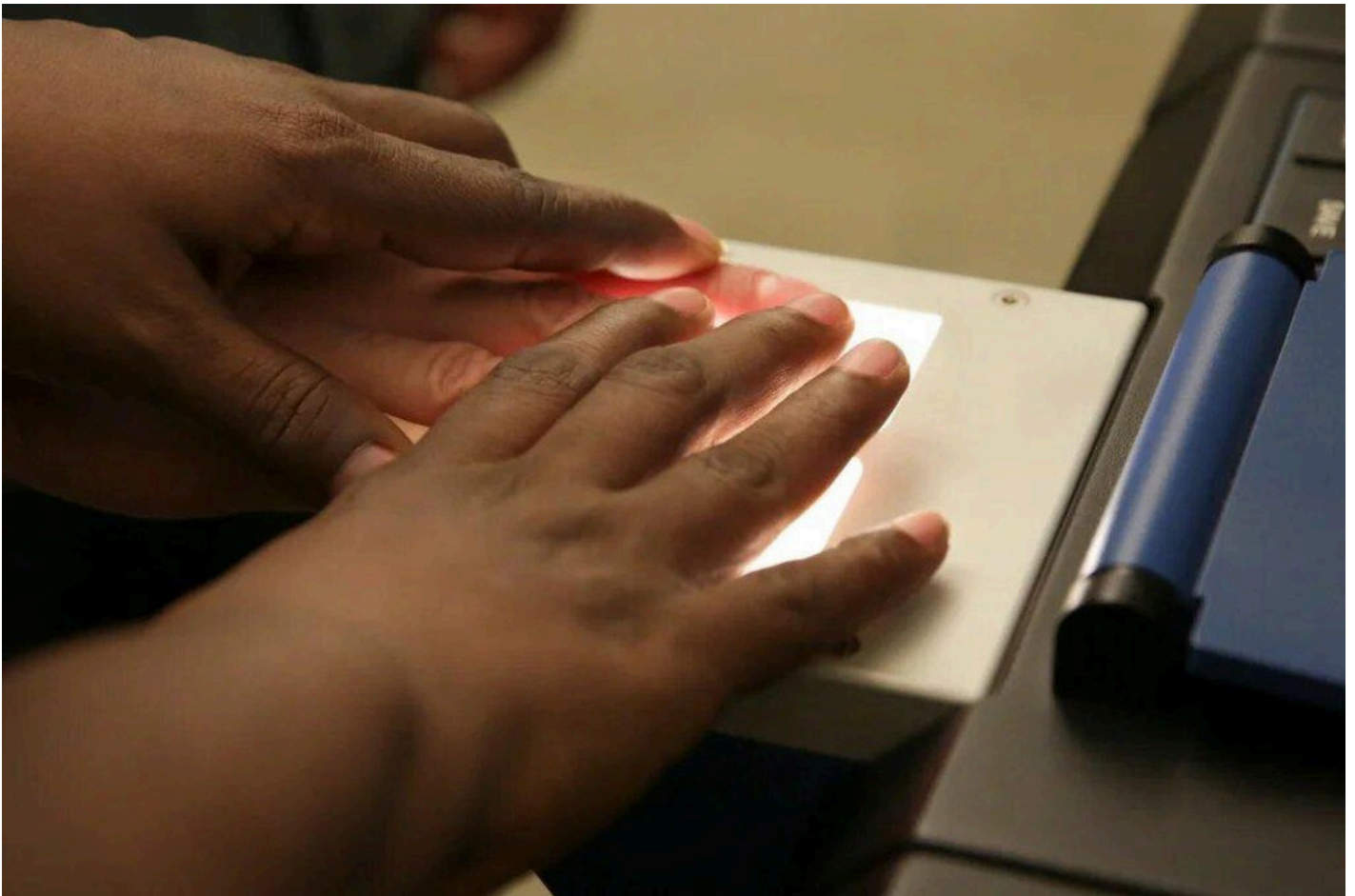




Guide to Digital Fingerprinting for Canadian Citizenship



Obtaining Canadian citizenship is a significant milestone for many individuals and families. As part of this process, applicants may be required to undergo a criminal record check, which often involves providing fingerprints. In recent years, digital fingerprinting has emerged as a fast, reliable, and efficient method for this purpose. This guide provides detailed insights into digital fingerprinting, its benefits, its relevance to Canadian citizenship applications, the process, associated costs, and its validity.

What is Digital Fingerprinting?

Digital fingerprinting is an advanced method of capturing and processing fingerprints electronically. Unlike traditional ink-and-paper fingerprinting, digital fingerprinting uses specialized scanners to create high-resolution, digital images of an individual's fingerprints. These digital prints are then securely transmitted to the appropriate authorities for processing and verification.

Benefits of Digital Fingerprinting

Digital fingerprinting offers numerous advantages over traditional methods, making it the preferred choice for many applications, including Canadian citizenship. Below are some key benefits:

1. **Accuracy:** Digital fingerprinting ensures high precision and clarity, reducing the chances of errors and rejections due to smudged or unclear prints.
2. **Speed:** The electronic transmission of fingerprints allows for quicker processing compared to mailing physical fingerprint cards.
3. **Convenience:** Many authorized agencies provide digital fingerprinting services, making it accessible to applicants across Canada and internationally.
4. **Security:** Advanced encryption methods ensure that digital fingerprints are securely transmitted to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) or other relevant authorities.
5. **Environmental Impact:** Digital fingerprinting eliminates the need for paper and ink, making it an eco-friendly alternative.

How Digital Fingerprinting is Useful for Canadian Citizenship

The Canadian government emphasizes maintaining a safe and secure society, which includes ensuring that applicants for citizenship meet the legal requirements, including a clean criminal record. Digital fingerprinting plays a vital role in this process by enabling:

1. **Criminal Background Checks:** Fingerprinting is used to verify if an applicant has any criminal history in Canada or other countries. The RCMP uses these fingerprints to search its database for any matches.
2. **Identity Verification:** Digital fingerprints provide a unique identifier, ensuring that the applicant's identity is accurately verified.
3. **Compliance with Legal Requirements:** Digital fingerprinting is often mandatory for applicants who have been asked to provide a police certificate or if their name matches someone with a criminal record.
4. **Streamlined Processing:** The efficiency of digital fingerprinting helps reduce delays in the citizenship application process, ensuring timely decision-making.

The Digital Fingerprinting Process

The process of obtaining digital fingerprints for Canadian citizenship is straightforward and involves the following steps:

1. **Determine the Requirement:** Applicants should confirm whether they need to provide fingerprints. This may be requested as part of the citizenship application process or when applying for a police clearance certificate.
2. **Choose an Authorized Service Provider:** Digital fingerprints must be taken by an RCMP-accredited agency or organization. These agencies are equipped with certified fingerprinting devices and software.
3. **Book an Appointment:** Most agencies require applicants to book an appointment for digital fingerprinting. This ensures minimal waiting times and a smooth process.
4. **Provide Required Documents:** Applicants must bring the following documents to their appointment:

- ü A valid government-issued photo ID (e.g., passport, driver's license, or PR card).

- ü The request letter or form from IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) or another requesting authority.

5. **Capture Digital Fingerprints:** During the appointment, the technician will scan the applicant's fingerprints using a digital fingerprint scanner. This process is quick, clean, and non-intrusive.
6. **Submit Fingerprints to RCMP:** The digital fingerprints are securely transmitted to the RCMP, who then conduct a criminal record check and provide the results.
7. **Receive the Results:** Once processed, the RCMP sends the criminal record check results to the requesting organization or the applicant, depending on the instructions provided.

Cost of Digital Fingerprinting

The cost of digital fingerprinting can vary depending on the service provider and location. Below is a general breakdown:

1. **Service Fee:** Authorized agencies charge a service fee for capturing and transmitting fingerprints. This fee typically ranges from CAD 50 to CAD 75.
2. **RCMP Processing Fee:** In some cases, the RCMP charges an additional fee for processing the fingerprints, which is usually around CAD 25. However, this fee may be waived for specific applications, such as immigration or citizenship.

3. Additional Costs:

- If you require expedited services, some agencies may charge extra.
- International applicants may incur additional costs for shipping or translation of documents.

It is advisable to confirm the total cost with the service provider before booking an appointment.

Validity of Digital Fingerprints

Digital fingerprints themselves do not have an expiration date. However, the validity of the criminal record check results generated from these fingerprints is determined by the requesting authority. For Canadian citizenship applications, the results are usually considered valid for six months. Applicants should ensure that their fingerprints are submitted and processed within the timeframe specified by IRCC.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can I use digital fingerprints taken for another purpose for my citizenship application?

No. Digital fingerprints are generally tied to a specific purpose and cannot be reused. You must provide fingerprints specifically for your Canadian citizenship application if requested by IRCC.

2. Can digital fingerprinting be done outside Canada?

Yes. Many RCMP-accredited agencies and Canadian embassies provide digital fingerprinting services internationally. Ensure that the service provider is recognized by the RCMP.

3. How long does it take to get the results?

The processing time for criminal record checks using digital fingerprints is typically 3 to 5 business days. However, this may vary based on the volume of applications and any additional checks required.

4. What if my fingerprints are rejected?

In rare cases where fingerprints are rejected due to poor quality, you will need to provide a new set. Digital fingerprinting significantly reduces the likelihood of rejection compared to traditional methods.

Digital fingerprinting is an essential step for many individuals seeking Canadian citizenship. Its accuracy, efficiency, and security make it the preferred method for criminal background checks and identity verification. By understanding the process, costs, and benefits of digital fingerprinting, applicants can ensure a smoother and more efficient citizenship application process. While it is a small step in the larger journey toward citizenship, its significance cannot be understated in maintaining the integrity of Canada's immigration and citizenship system.