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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Home > Research Program > Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

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Colombia: Application requirements and processing times for obtaining citizen identity documents; the government department that issues them; whether the applicant must apply in person within Colombia; (whether a male applicant's military record is considered)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

There are three types of citizen identity documents in Colombia. The National Vital Statistics Registry (Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil) is responsible for issuing the birth certificate (*registro civil de nacimiento*) for children from birth to 7 years of age; the identity card (*tarjeta de identidad*) for minors from 7 to 18 years of age; and the citizenship card (*cédula de ciudadanía*) for adults aged 18 years and older (Colombia [n.d.h](#)).

Colombian parents can register a child by presenting themselves with the child at a Registry office or other authorized office (including some notary, police and magistrate offices) in the municipality where the birth took place (Colombia [n.d.i](#)). Registration can also be done at a Colombian consular office abroad (*ibid.*). If the parents are unable to go to an authorized office in the municipality of birth, there are provisions for registration by mail (*ibid.*). The parents need to present either the certificate of live birth provided by the hospital or a sworn declaration of two adult witnesses attesting to the birth, which may be done at the Registry office (*ibid.*), and proof of blood type and Rh factor of the child (Colombia 8 Nov. 2007). A child over the age of one month can also be registered with a baptism certificate (Colombia [n.d.i](#)). The birth certificate is prepared on site, and the process includes taking the plantar print of the child for children under the age of one (Colombia 8 Nov. 2007). A third party can register the child with a sworn declaration of two witnesses (Colombia [n.d.d](#); Colombia [n.d.i](#)). There are no costs associated with registering a child (Colombia [n.d.j](#)). One copy of the birth certificate is given to the parents immediately, while a second copy is sent to the National Vital Statistics Registry (Colombia 8 Nov. 2007).

Colombians can apply for an identity card (*tarjeta de identidad*) at local Registry offices in the country if they provide the child's birth certificate, submit one 2.5 by 3cm colour photograph, and know the blood type and Rh factor (Colombia [n.d.f](#)). The card can also be requested at consular offices abroad (Colombia 8 Nov. 2007) by bringing the birth certificate, a recent passport-size colour photograph on a white background with the subject facing the camera and a photocopy of a document showing the blood type and Rh factor (Colombia [n.d.d](#)). There are no costs associated with the first identity card (*ibid.*). Processing times are three months for requests made in Colombia, and six to twelve months for requests made at a consulate (Colombia 8 Nov. 2007).

Since 2000, the Registry has been issuing a new type of citizenship card (*cédula de ciudadanía*) that replaces two earlier versions of the card (Colombia [n.d.c](#)) that are valid only until 31 December 2009 (Colombia [n.d.e](#)). All Colombian citizens will have to hold the new citizenship card by 1 January 2010 (Colombia [n.d.c](#)). In an 8 November 2007 interview with the Research Directorate, the Consul at the Embassy of the Republic of Colombia in Ottawa stated that this change has not had a notable effect on the requirements and processing times involved in obtaining identity documents from Colombian authorities (Colombia 8 Nov. 2007).

In order to obtain a citizenship card for the first time, Colombian citizens must be 18 years old (Colombia

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must know their blood type and Rh factor and must provide their birth certificate or identity card along with three colour photographs (Colombia n.d.a). Photographs should be 4 by 5cm with the subject facing the camera; the background should be white or, for people without hair or with very light-coloured hair, light blue, and subjects should have dark-coloured clothes (ibid.). The Colombian embassy in Ottawa indicates on its website that a photocopy of a document showing blood type and Rh factor is required and that in some cases, proof of address in Colombia may be requested (Colombia n.d.d). The consular office will collect fingerprints and will request full names of both parents of the applicant (ibid.). Requests for a first citizenship card or first duplicate (*duplicado*) are free (Colombia n.d.b) and the processing time is six months for requests made in Colombia, and six to twelve months for requests made at a consulate (Colombia 8 Nov. 2007). Male applicants do not have to present their military record (*libreta militar*) when requesting a citizenship card (ibid.).

Citizens who currently hold an older version of the citizenship card (brown or white) must request an upgrade to the new version (yellow with hologram) before January 2010 at their local Registry office (Colombia n.d.c). Colombian citizens living abroad can request the new citizenship card in person at a Colombian consular office (Colombia n.d.e). In case of loss or theft of a citizenship card, Colombian citizens can request a duplicate (*duplicado*) of their card in person at a local Registry office or a Colombian consular office abroad (Colombia n.d.b). For both requests for duplicates and for citizenship card upgrades, Colombian citizens must go in person to a local Registry office or consulate abroad, provide blood type and Rh factor information and three colour photographs with the same characteristics described above (Colombia n.d.c; Colombia n.d.b; Colombia n.d.e). When available, the former citizenship card or the card number is required (Colombia n.d.b; Colombia n.d.c; Colombia n.d.d; Colombia n.d.e). Where the proper machines are available, the photograph can be taken on site (Colombia n.d.b; Colombia n.d.c). According to the website of the Colombian embassy in Ottawa, applicants requesting duplicates at a consulate abroad must submit either their former citizenship card, valid passport showing the citizenship card number or a birth certificate, as well as a photocopy of a document showing the blood type and Rh factor (Colombia n.d.d).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection.

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