

Associated Gospel Churches of Canada

How to Structure a Sponsorship Committee

This is a template which may be used to discuss and assign various roles within your group. It is a guide, so do not form your committee/group to align with the template, rather transform the template to your committee/group. You can build in additional areas of care as needed.

This document is intended to provide you with a sample overview of the types of roles you may want to assign to your committee members. Each sponsoring group must function with **a minimum of five committee members** who will oversee and be honorably committed to the full year of sponsorship undertaking. They will discern together who is responsible for each task and be readily available to jointly support the refugee family at any hour of the day, regardless of obtaining additional volunteer helpers. For a detailed description of settlement responsibilities and tasks, please refer to the AGC's Settlement Handbook.

A well-staffed committee usually has a Sponsorship Group Representative, treasurer, and a team leader (with optional sub-committee) representing each task area involved in resettlement: housing, transportation, furnishings and clothing, homemaking, education, medical, employment, and finance. (You could also include a fundraiser and interpreter if you wish).

Each subcommittee formed should have team leader and as many volunteers as that lead would like to work with. You may want to encourage people to sign up for more than one committee if they like, however the team lead positions should not normally be tasked to lead more than one committee.

SPONSORSHIP GROUP REPRESENTATIVE (aka CG REPRESENTATIVE)

- Oversees completion of and is signatory for the initial sponsorship undertaking paperwork
- Assists co-sponsors with completion of refugee applicants paperwork (where applicable)
- Main point of contact in communication with the AGC's Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) representative.
- Acts as committee chair person ensuring sponsorship timeline goals and obligations are being met.
- Arranges for local training of sponsorship group as it relates to cross-cultural awareness, managing expectations, conflict resolution, code of ethics, working with vulnerable persons etc.
- Drafts a welcome letter with a picture of the sponsoring group members, map of location in Canada, and a brief description of the area and climate to send to the family as an initial way of introduction. This is especially important for BVOR and JAS sponsorships.
- Ensures that someone is at the airport to meet the family and take them to their new home.
- Immediately provide some orientation. The family may have little knowledge of where they are, who has sponsored them, what tomorrow will hold, and how to ask for help or express concerns.
- Applies for permanent resident cards. These are free within 180 days of arrival.
- Responsible for ensuring there is daily contact with the family and completion of settlement tasks: this responsibility could be delegated to seven individuals, where each is assigned to be

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“on” for a specific day of the week.

TREASURER

- Helps with budget planning, setting up funds, managing disbursements and keeps track of donations.

HOUSING and MAINTENANCE (Three names min. and contact info if operating as a sub-committee)

- Secures permanent accommodations and helps with any repairs that may initially need to be performed and assist with utility hookups.
- Goes over basic housing issues, including security/locks, maintenance requirements, appliances, garbage and recycling, sanitation, and the mailbox.
- Makes sure the family knows who to contact if they have a maintenance request.
- Educates tenants regarding both rights and obligations.

TRANSPORTATION (Three names min. and contact info if operating as a sub-committee)

- To assist new arrivals with transportation needs, i.e.: vehicles, driver licenses, bus routes, understanding Canadian taxi service, etc.
- If the family would like to use them: provide bikes, helmets, locks, and rules of the road.
- Also provide the family with maps of their neighborhood and city, and new country.

FURNISHINGS AND CLOTHING (Five names min. and contact info if operating as a sub-committee)

- Bring winter clothing for the family to the airport if the weather is cool the day of arrival. Also bring car seats if needed.
- Have the new home ready to be lived in. The kitchen pantry stocked with staples, and clothes closets should be furnished in a way that is sensitive to both culture and seasonal weather.
- Also, to provide furniture and implements of daily living before the arrival of the family.

EDUCATION (Two names and contact info if operating as a sub-committee)

- Enroll every family member in basic English language training to ensure each person has the ability to functionally communicate in English at the end of their first year in Canada. This needs to have priority over job searching.
- The family breadwinner may also need basic skill training in a specific job area.
- Children will need to be enrolled in a local school and given academic assessments. Contact schools and local library for extra academic support. Contact the school social worker.
- Provide school supplies and school orientation for newcomers. Explain to parents that they must contact the school if a child is absent.

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HOMEMAKING AND SOCIAL NEEDS (Five names min. and contact info if operating as a sub-committee)

- The day of arrival order a meal from a culturally appropriate restaurant and deliver it to the family.
- If necessary, teach basic needs such as what goes in the toilet and what goes in the diaper pail, keeping the shower curtain inside the tub during showers to prevent spills, how to use a vacuum cleaner and when and how to change the bag, etc. Explain the “why” to ensure complete understanding.
- If necessary, teach simple home maintenance such as how to use a plunger and change a light bulb.
- Teach the family how to shop without bargaining: buy in bulk, comparison shop, cook in season foods, clean, and use appliances etc.
- Teach safety about burns, cleaning agents, and electricity if needed.
- Help family to find others in the community who speak their same language.
- Find library, playground, and rec. center. Find out about subsidies.
- Invite the family to social gatherings and take them to a soccer game or other sporting event.

MEDICAL AND MOBILITY (Two names and contact info if operating as a sub-committee)

- Apply immediately for provincial health coverage and cards.
- Apply immediately for interim federal health plan (IFP)
- Ensure all vaccinations are complete.
- Help find a family doctor, dentist, counselor, or any other professional needed for both physical and mental well-being.
- Educate new comers about the 911 service. Help them understand that the police in Canada are peace keepers.
- Teach that they can see their doctor without any cost, explain the difference between a doctor’s office services and the emergency room, and that medication must be kept out of reach of children.

EMPLOYMENT (three names and contact info if operating as a sub-committee)

- Apply immediately for social insurance numbers.
- Contact the local settlement agency for job readiness courses.
- This team will help those who are ready for employment to understand the job search process, interview process, and find a job.
- Explain western attitudes about being on time and keeping appointments.
- Ensure that individuals understand employee rights.

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FINANCE (Two names min. and contact info if operating as a sub-committee)

- Apply immediately for child tax benefit (CCTB)
- Open a bank account and teach how to track balances, use ATM, meeting their branch manager.
- Help the family to understand budgeting, bill payments, rent and utilities, taxes, currency in Canada etc.
- Explains the cost of long distance phone calls, using cell phones, phone cards, free Voip options like Skype, Google talk etc.

ADDITIONAL SUBCOMMITTEES

Note: these are not always needed, but could be helpful if there are enough people to share the work:

- **FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT LIASONS (Two names min. and contact info.) -**
This committee could merge with the finance team if desired to help raise awareness, seek out community donations, and organize fundraisers.
- **COMMUNICATION AND INTERPRETATION (Three names min. and contact info.) –**
 - Interpreters speak both fluent English and another language and are available to provide interpretive services.
 - Help the other team members to maintain a commitment to not using children as interpreters.
 - Take pictures of other team leaders and create an album with names to help the family get to know their sponsors.
 - Create a phone reference card with a list of numbers they may need.
 - Print helpful picture prompts for both other teams and the family to keep as communication tools. These could be secured to key rings or put into small books.
- **OTHER -** People can sign up for providing rides to various appointments, free childcare etc.