

OVERVIEW OF SPONSORSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

as compiled by RSTP

Refugee sponsorship entails a number of moral, financial and legal responsibilities in relation to the refugees sponsored, Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and other parties. Broadly speaking, the responsibilities of a sponsoring group can be categorized into two areas:

- responsibilities that should be carried out before the arrival of refugees and
- responsibilities that should be implemented after the arrival of refugees.

Each of these areas requires the sponsoring group to carry out a set of actions or activities that result in positive sponsorship outcomes and experiences. Below are the main duties under these broad categories.

PRE-ARRIVAL DUTIES

Sponsoring groups are expected to carry out the following duties in relation to refugees they are sponsoring and IRCC:

Pre-screening Refugee Sponsorship Inquiries

To avoid rejection and raising false hopes and to save precious time and resources of IRCC and the group, sponsoring groups have a duty to pre-screen refugee sponsorship inquiries. Sponsors should only submit cases that meet the legal requirements of the Private Sponsorship of Refugee Sponsorship Program.

Submitting Fully & Correctly Completed Refugee Sponsorship Applications

To avoid return of an application and save precious time and resource, SAHs and their Constituent Groups are expected to properly and fully complete all sponsorship applications forms and include all required documents before submitting the application to ROC-O. Please contact your SAH office for tips and advice prior to completing any sponsorship forms.

Maintaining Contact with Refugee Applicants and Updating Them

Being in contact with the refugee applicant throughout the process allows sponsors to share information and updates with them. It also enables the sponsoring group and refugee applicant to get to know one another before arrival in Canada. There may be opportunity to help the refugee(s) improve their English or to learn about their settlement community before arrival. Contact your SAH if you hear of something that the visa office and/or ROC-O should be made aware of (i.e.: an opportunity for settlement to another country).

Updating IRCC About any Changes in Family Composition

To ensure that the family unit remains intact, sponsors need to update and ensure that refugee applicants inform the visa office and ROC-O about any changes in the family composition of the

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applicant. Failure to declare changes such as a new baby or spouse on time can result in permanent separation of families.

Ensuring Refugees are Aware of their Interview and Appear for the Interview

When a sponsoring group becomes aware of the interview date, it should notify the refugee applicant as soon as possible and verify that the applicant is aware of the interview date, place and other details about the interview. The group should not assume that the refugee applicant will be informed of the interview day.

To avoid a “no show” at the time of the interview, sponsors may need to make phone calls, send emails, letters, fax or other communication through relatives, family, NGOs, UNHCR or other bodies to ensure that the refugee applicants are aware of the interview and come prepared.

Preparing Refugees for an Interview

Assisting the refugee applicant with preparing for the interview is an important task that sponsoring group should help with. The Team Lead is required to take the RSTP webinar on “Preparing for the Visa Office Interview” and to speak to your SAH representative to adequately prepare the sponsored family for this interview.

If possible, doing practice interviews through phone or Skype or other means of communication will go a long way to assist the refugees prepare for the interview especially if there are no language barriers or if interpreters are available to help. If that is not possible, sending an interview instruction guide such as RSTP’s Guide for Preparation to an Interview, which is translated into the most popular refugee languages, will assist refugees to prepare for the interview.

Working Jointly with Refugee Applicants to Avoid any Delay or Complication in the Sponsorship Process

The sponsoring group should work with the refugee applicant to ensure that the sponsorship process goes smoothly. This may include attending to email and letters communication that are sent by the visa post or ROC-O such as requests to submit additional document or update the completed forms or redoing the applications forms.

Updating IRCC with any Changes in the Financial or Other Conditions of the Sponsoring Group

If there are any changes in the financial, human resources or other aspects of the sponsoring group which will negatively impact the capacity of the group to carry out its sponsorship responsibilities, the group should let IRCC know. Ideally, the group would recruit new

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volunteers and reconstitute its resettlement committee or fund-raise to collect the required financial resources that will enable it to continue with the sponsorship process. If this is not possible, the group should let IRCC know and perhaps withdraw the submitted sponsorship application.

Reception

Meet the refugee upon arrival at the airport and welcome them in the community; provide orientation to the new neighbourhood and life in Canada.

POST-ARRIVAL DUTIES

The sponsoring group has a set of responsibilities related to meeting the basic settlement needs of sponsored refugees upon their arrival in Canada. These duties are:

Lodging

Provide suitable accommodation, basic furniture, and other household essentials.

Care

Provide food, clothing, local transportation costs and other basic necessities of life.

Settlement Assistance & Support

- If there was no permanent address for the newcomer family at arrival, update IRCC's online "My Application" platform with Canadian address upon arrival to ensure that PR cards are mailed to the correct address (within 180 days of arrival);
- Assist in the completion of required forms including health insurance, social insurance, child tax benefits registrations, etc.;
- Assist in opening a bank account;
- Facilitate access to English or French language classes;
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of permanent residents;
- Facilitate access to employment;
- Facilitate access to community support groups, settlement services, and other resources in the community;
- Register children in school and facilitate access to the school system;
- Assist in accessing a family physician and dentist; and
- Support empowerment and independence.

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Monitoring

Constituent Groups are required to complete four (4) monitoring reports during the sponsorship year. The SAH is “responsible for monitoring its CGs or Co-sponsors and the refugees listed on their individual Sponsorship Undertakings. The purpose of the monitoring will be to provide support to the sponsor and the refugee in meeting respective commitments and responsibilities.”¹ As a SAH, we will depend on these monitoring reports and personal phone calls or meetings with both the sponsorship group and the newcomer family to ensure settlement responsibilities are being met, and independence is being fostered.

Should issues or problems arise post-arrival that could negatively impact settlement, it is the obligation of the CG to inform the SAH Representative as soon as possible so that together we can inform one another of the issues and explore potential solutions. As a SAH, CG, and newcomers, we will work cooperatively to resolve the situation before it becomes a sponsorship breakdown.

¹ SAH Agreement 2019, signed by AGC & IRCC