

Guidelines for Forming a Refugee Sponsorship Committee⁶

Completing a refugee sponsorship application and resettling a refugee family requires a significant time commitment. To effectively manage this commitment, World Renew requires its sponsoring groups to organize a refugee sponsorship committee to oversee the different areas of the refugee sponsorship effort. We recommend that your main committee be made up of **a minimum of five members**. A well-staffed committee will usually have the following positions:

- Sponsorship Group Chair
- Treasurer / Finance Coordinator
- Team Leaders (of various subcommittees described below)

Various sub-committees can be set up to focus on specific areas of the sponsorship and resettlement (i.e. housing, transportation, education, fundraising, etc.).

In the early stages of committee formation, the members will discern together who is responsible for each task. Each committee member must be readily available to support the sponsorship effort for the full duration of the refugee sponsorship process.

Each subcommittee should also assign a team leader and several volunteers.

Below is a list of potential committee positions and sample tasks associated with each position.

Sponsorship Group Chair

- Oversee completion of (and act as signatory) for the initial sponsorship undertaking paperwork.
- Assist co-sponsors with completion of refugee applicants' paperwork, where applicable.
- Act as the main point of contact in communication with World Renew.
- Act as committee chairperson ensuring sponsorship goals and obligations are being met.
- Arrange for local training of sponsorship group as it relates to cross-cultural

⁶ Adapted from the SAH Association Guidebook www.sahassociation.com/guidebook

awareness, managing expectations, conflict resolution, code of ethics (see [APPENDIX](#)), working with vulnerable persons, etc.

- Draft 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 refugee(s) as an initial way of introduction. This is especially important for BVOR and JAS sponsorships.
- Ensure that someone is at the airport to meet the refugee(s) and take them to their new home.
- Provide immediate orientation after arrival. The refugee(s) 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.

Treasurer / Finance Coordinator

- Help with budget planning, setting up funds, managing disbursements to the refugee(s), and keeping track of donations
- Apply immediately for the Canada Child Benefit (CCB)
- Assist the refugee(s) in opening a bank account
- Help the refugee(s) with budgeting and understanding bill payments, rent and utilities, taxes, currency in Canada, etc.
- Explain the cost of long distance phone calls, using cellphones, phone cards, free VoIP options like Skype, Google talk, etc. NOTE: You need to clarify that vendors in shopping malls *do not* have their best interests at heart, and they should not assume “free phone” means they will not have pay for it through a monthly telephone bill.

Housing and Maintenance

- Secure temporary (if necessary) and permanent accommodations. Help with any repairs that may initially need to be performed, and assist with utility hookups.
- Review basic housing issues, including security/locks, maintenance requirements, appliances, garbage and recycling, sanitation, and the mailbox.
- Make sure the refugee(s) knows who to contact if they have a maintenance request.
- Review tenant rights and obligations with refugee(s).

Transportation

- Assist new arrivals with transportation needs: public transit, driver licenses, understanding Canadian taxi service, etc. For information on funds to help sponsored refugees get to their place of final destination, see **APPENDIX: “[The Transportation Loan](#).”**
- Provide bikes (if the refugee(s) would like to use them), along with helmets and locks and explain the rules of the road.
- Provide the refugee(s) with maps of their new neighbourhood, city, and country.

Furnishings and Clothing

- Arrange winter clothing for the refugee(s) upon arrival at the airport if the weather is cool.
- Bring car seats if needed.
- Prepare the new home so it is move-in ready. Stock the kitchen pantry with culturally appropriate staples, and furnish closets with clothing that is sensitive to both culture and seasonal weather.
- Arrange for furniture and other daily living necessities (kitchenware, toiletries etc.) before the arrival of the refugee(s).

Education

- Enroll refugee(s) in basic English language training. Acquisition of English language skills should have priority over job searching.
- Contact schools and the school social worker (if applicable). Enroll children in a local school and ensure that they receive the necessary academic assessments.
- Contact local library for extra academic support.
- Provide school supplies and school orientation. Explain to parents that they must contact the school if a child is absent.

Housekeeping and Social Needs

- Review basics 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/how to change the bag, etc. Explain the “why” to ensure complete understanding.

- Review home maintenance tasks such as how to use a plunger and change a light bulb, as well as any other things that might not be familiar.
- Help refugee(s) to find others in the community who are part of their cultural group.
- Find the library, playground, and recreation center and offer a neighbourhood orientation.
- Invite the refugee(s) to social gatherings and take them to a soccer game or other sporting event.

Health

- Apply immediately for provincial health coverage and cards.
- Apply immediately for Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) coverage.
- Ensure all vaccinations are complete.
- Assist in finding a family doctor, dentist, counselor, and any other professional needed for both physical and mental well-being.
- Explain the 911 emergency service, as well as the role of police in Canada.

Employment

- Apply immediately for social insurance numbers (SINs).
- Contact the local settlement agency for job readiness courses.
- Help those who are ready for employment to understand the job search process, interview process.
- Explain western attitudes about being on time and keeping appointments.
- Ensure that refugee(s) understand employee rights.

Fundraising and Community Support Liaisons

- Help raise awareness, seek out community donations, and organize fundraisers to support the sponsorship effort.

Communication and Interpretation

- Locate interpreters who speak both fluent English and the refugees' main language(s) and arrange for interpretive services.
- Help the other team members to maintain a commitment to not using the refugees' children as interpreters.
- Take pictures of team leaders and create an album with names to help the refugee(s) get to know their sponsors.
- Create a phone reference card with a list of numbers they may need.
- Print helpful picture prompts for both the other teams and the refugee(s) to keep as communication tools. Place the pictures in secure key rings or small books.