

Managing Expectations¹²

Expectations are perfectly normal. However, problems can arise when expectations about refugee sponsorship are not acknowledged, are unrealistic, or when those who hold them fail to adjust them accordingly.

Newcomers may have expectations about life in Canada – the ‘Canadian Dream’, employment, sending money home, bringing other family members to Canada, and learning English – to name just a few.

Sponsors may have expectations about how the sponsorship should be carried out, what the end results will be, their relationship/friendship with newcomers, and how newcomers will feel towards them. These are just a few examples.

It is the refugee sponsorship group’s responsibility to create a respectful environment that allows for the discussion and acknowledgment of expectations, as well as to manage both group and newcomer expectations and proactively work through differences.

Important Considerations

- How a sponsorship proceeds depends greatly on the individuals involved. No two sponsorships are the same and things do not always go as planned.
- Be mindful not to make assumptions. This is not easy!
- Remember that refugees were forced to flee their home country. Most leave behind family and friends. For this reason, arrival in Canada is often bittersweet and gratitude and happiness may not be demonstrated as sponsors might expect.
- Some refugees do not understand how private sponsorship works.
- A newcomer’s problems are not instantly solved upon arriving in Canada. While certain needs may be met, a new set of challenges arises.
- Explain freedom of religion. You can invite the newcomers to talk about their religion, but it should not be forced and sharing should be left up to them.
- Be mindful when inviting newcomers to religious spaces and events. Take their feelings into consideration.

¹² Adapted from http://auraforrefugees.org/docs/aurainfosheet_expectations.pdf

Conversations with Refugees

Clear, honest, and frequent communication is the key to creating an environment of realistic expectations. It is necessary to discuss expectations and responsibilities with the refugees soon after arrival so that everyone involved has the same understanding of who is responsible for what.

Prioritize information according to the refugees needs. Here are a few items to explain and discuss (this list is not exhaustive):

- Role of the sponsor group (availability, limits)
- Sponsor group members, i.e. how and why group was formed
- Finances and budgeting (see **APPENDIX: “[Tips for Promoting Financial Independence](#)”**)
- Housing: plans for temporary/permanent housing, furnishing, etc.
- Schooling: LINC/ESL, future education plans, additional support
- Employment: explain the sponsorship as a job and that their job is to learn English and they are being supported to do that job. No employment should come at the expense of English language learning.
- Canadian laws and customs, life in the new city/town, connections to resources
- What to do in case of emergency
- Phone and internet
- How to recycle
- Medical and dental needs, IFHP/provincial health plan (see **APPENDIX “[IFHP Dental Benefit Grid](#)”**)
- Rights and responsibilities of Permanent Residents
- When the sponsorship will end, financial self-reliance, and continued friendship
- Any questions and concerns newcomers may have
- Privacy, confidentiality, and open communication (see **APPENDIX: “[Confidentiality and Privacy](#)”**).

Power Imbalance

A power imbalance exists between the sponsoring group and the newcomer(s). Although it is normal, this imbalance can create a sense of obligation that can lead to

negative consequences, resentment, and conflict throughout the sponsorship. Strive to minimize the power difference by:

- Asking questions
- Carefully listening to answers
- Explaining things clearly, often in more than one way, and checking for understanding (not just “yes”)
- Making sure newcomers understand they have the right to make their own decisions
- If you are asking for consent to use names or photos in any communications pieces related to the sponsorship, please ensure that the sponsored refugee(s) you are working with are fully informed and understand what they are consenting to.