



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

Guide to the *Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program*



Canada 

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Guide to the *Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program*



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This is not a legal document. For legal information, please refer to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and Regulations, which can be accessed through www.cic.gc.ca.

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1. Introduction

EACH YEAR, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD ARE forced to flee their homeland to escape persecution, war or severe human rights abuses. Often, these people are permanently displaced and are never able to return home. In keeping with its humanitarian tradition and international obligations, the Government of Canada provides assistance to thousands of such displaced persons every year through its Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) program.

Canadian citizens and permanent residents are able to provide additional opportunities for refugees living abroad to find protection and build a new life in Canada through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program. This guide explains how the private sponsorship program works, who may be sponsored, the obligations involved and the application process.



2. Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program

2.1 Who may be sponsored?

THE PSR PROGRAM IS STRICTLY FOR SPONSORING REFUGEES. THE IMMIGRATION and Refugee Protection Regulations describe three classes of persons who may qualify as refugees for Canada's refugee and humanitarian resettlement program. The classes are the Convention Refugees Abroad Class, the Country of Asylum Class and the Source Country Class.

A Convention refugee is any person who, by reason of a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion,

- is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or, by reason of that fear, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country; or,
- not having a country of nationality, is outside the country of his or her former habitual residence and is unable or, by reason of that fear, unwilling to return to that country.

A Convention Refugee Abroad is any person who:

- is a Convention refugee;
- is outside Canada;
- is seeking resettlement in Canada;
- does not have a prospect of another durable solution, within a reasonable period of time, that is:
 - cannot return to his or her country of nationality or habitual residence;
 - cannot integrate in the country of refuge or the country of first asylum; and
 - does not have another offer of resettlement from a country other than Canada;
- will be privately sponsored or assisted by the government or has adequate financial resources to support himself or herself and any dependants.

A member of the Country of Asylum Class is a person:

- who is outside his or her country of citizenship or habitual residence;
- who has been, and continues to be, seriously and personally affected by civil war or armed conflict or who has suffered massive violations of human rights;
- for whom there is no possibility of finding an adequate solution to his or her situation within a reasonable period of time; and
- who will be privately sponsored or who has adequate financial resources to support himself or herself and any dependants.

A member of the Source Country Class is a person:

- who resides in his or her country of citizenship or habitual residence;
- who has been and continues to be seriously and personally affected by civil war or armed conflict;
- who has suffered serious deprivation of his or her right of freedom of expression, right of dissent or right to engage in trade union activity and who has been detained or imprisoned as a consequence;
- who fears persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion;
- for whom there is no possibility of finding an adequate solution to his or her situation within a reasonable period of time;
- who resides in a country that has been designated as a source country (refer to Schedule 2 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations); and
- who will be privately sponsored or assisted by the government or who has adequate financial resources to support himself or herself and any dependants.

An officer at a Canadian visa office overseas makes the final decision on whether someone fits one of these definitions and is, therefore, eligible for resettlement. The eligibility decision is based on an interview with the applicant, supporting documentation submitted by the applicant and sponsoring group and additional information available to the officer (such as country condition updates).

To be accepted for resettlement in Canada, the refugee must also pass medical and security checks, which are normally conducted overseas. In addition, refugees will be assessed on their ability to establish successfully in Canada. In making this assessment, the visa officer will consider whether the refugee has relatives or a sponsor in Canada, the ability to speak or learn to speak English or French, the potential for employment and resourcefulness. When a family unit is applying, the settlement potential of all family members is assessed as a single determination. Refugees deemed by the visa officer to be in urgent need of protection or in vulnerable circumstances are not assessed on their ability to establish.

2.2 Who may not be sponsored?

The following persons do not qualify for private sponsorship:

- People already in Canada. Such persons seeking Canada's protection as refugees should contact their local Citizenship and Immigration Centre for information on how to make a refugee claim.
- People who were the subject of a previous sponsorship application and were refused, unless
 - their circumstances have changed;
 - new information, which was not presented in the previous application, has come to light; or
 - Canadian laws affecting the case have changed.
- People deemed to be Convention refugees by another country and allowed to live there permanently.
- People who fled persecution or civil war some time ago but can now integrate into the country where they are residing or can return home safely.

2.3 Who may submit a private sponsorship?

The following groups may submit a private sponsorship:

Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) are incorporated organizations that have signed a formal sponsorship agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Most current SAHs are religious organizations, ethnocultural groups or other humanitarian organizations. SAHs, which may be local, regional or national, assume overall responsibility for the management of sponsorships under their agreement. Organizations entering into a sponsorship agreement with CIC generally submit several refugee sponsorships a year.

Constituent Groups: An SAH can authorize Constituent Groups (CGs) to sponsor under its agreement and provide support to the refugees. Each SAH sets its own criteria for recognizing CGs. CGs are based in the sponsored refugee's expected community of settlement and must have their sponsorship application and settlement plan approved by their SAH before the undertaking is submitted to a Citizenship and Immigration Centre.

Groups of Five (G5) are five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents, who are at least 18 years of age, live in the expected community of settlement and have collectively arranged for the sponsorship of a refugee living abroad. The five individuals act as guarantors that the necessary support will be provided for the full duration of the sponsorship. The group's local Citizenship and Immigration Centre assesses members' individual contributions to the sponsorship, both financial and non-financial, collectively, before the sponsorship is approved. The group's financial commitment must be up to the levels established in the Sponsorship Cost Table (included in the G5 application kit).

Community Sponsors: Any organization (for-profit/not-for-profit, incorporated/non-incorporated) located in the community where the refugees are expected to settle can make an organizational commitment to sponsor. Unlike SAHs and their CGs, Community Sponsors are limited to submitting two sponsorship undertakings a year and must undergo financial and settlement plan assessments by their local Citizenship and Immigration Centre each time they wish to sponsor. Like G5s, Community Sponsors must demonstrate that the organization is willing and able to commit funds toward the sponsorship in line with the levels established in the Sponsorship Cost Table (included in the Community Sponsors application kit).

An SAH, a CG or a Community Sponsor has the option of formalizing a partnership with an outside party to divide the delivery of settlement assistance and support. Partnerships may be formed with individuals (e.g., a family member of the sponsored refugee living in Canada) or other organizations. The partner—cosponsor—is expected to sign the sponsorship undertaking and assume all responsibilities that were agreed in the settlement plan.

2.4 Who may not submit a private sponsorship?

The following persons and groups are ineligible to participate in the sponsorship of refugees:

- Persons and groups liable for a sponsorship undertaking that remains in default.
- Persons convicted in Canada of the offence of murder or an offence set out in Schedule I or II of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, regardless of whether the offence was prosecuted by indictment, and a period of five years has not elapsed since the completion of the sentence imposed under the *Criminal Code of Canada*.
- Persons convicted of an offence outside Canada that, if committed in Canada, would constitute an offence referred to above, if a period of five years has not elapsed since the completion of the sentence imposed under a foreign law.
- Persons subject to a removal order.
- Persons subject to revocation proceedings under the *Citizenship Act*.
- Persons detained in any penitentiary, jail, reformatory or prison.
- Persons in default of court-ordered support payments.

2.5 How is a sponsoring group formed?

Sponsorship Agreement Holders: To become an SAH, interested organizations must submit a completed application form and all required documentation (articles of incorporation, audited financial statements, etc.) to Director, Resettlement Division, Refugees Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 365 Laurier Avenue West, 17th Floor, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1. The application to become an SAH can be requested by writing to the address above.

SAHs must be incorporated organizations. Generally, new SAH applicants have extensive sponsorship experience and expect to sponsor more than two refugee cases each year. Applicant organizations must have personnel and finances available to ensure the settlement needs of the sponsored refugees are in place before their arrival.

Constituent Groups are usually members of the organization holding the sponsorship agreement. However, each SAH sets its own criteria for recognizing CGs. Interested parties should contact an SAH directly to inquire about sponsoring under its auspices. The application guide for SAHs and their CGs (IMM 5413) and related application documents can be found at the Web address below.

Groups of Five are at least five individuals who are eligible to sponsor and willing to contribute to the requirements of sponsorship. Each group member must complete a personal financial profile form and the group must collectively complete a settlement plan and financial assessment. The application guide for G5s (IMM 5414) and related application documents can be found at the Web address below.

A Community Sponsor is an organization that decides to participate in refugee sponsorship and submits the required documents, including statements demonstrating the ability to meet the financial obligations, to a local Citizenship and Immigration Centre. The application guide for Community Sponsors (IMM 5513) and related application documents can be found at the Web address below.

Cosponsor: Interested individuals should contact an SAH, a CG or a Community Sponsor in their area to inquire about partnering in the private sponsorship of a refugee. Each SAH, CG or Community Sponsor has its own procedures for screening and approving a cosponsor and for establishing the division of responsibilities in the settlement plan. The decision to accept an individual or organization as a cosponsor is the choice of the SAH, CG or Community Sponsor who submits the undertaking.

The sponsorship kits, as well as the IMM 6000, overseas application kit, which the refugee must complete, can be obtained at www.cic.gc.ca/english/applications/index.htm.

2.6 What are the responsibilities of the sponsoring group?

Sponsoring groups agree to provide the refugees with care, lodging, settlement assistance and support for the duration of the sponsorship period. Normally, this is 12 months starting from the refugee's arrival in Canada or until the refugee becomes self-sufficient, whichever comes first. In exceptional circumstances, the visa officer may determine that the refugee requires more time to become established in Canada and will ask the sponsoring group to extend the sponsorship period to a maximum of 36 months. The sponsoring group has the option of refusing the request for an extension of the sponsorship period but risks having the case refused as a result.

Private sponsors normally support the sponsored refugees by:

- providing the cost of food, rent and household utilities and other day-to-day living expenses;
- providing clothing, furniture and other household goods;
- locating interpreters;
- selecting a family physician and dentist;
- assisting with applying for provincial health-care coverage and the Interim Federal Health Program;
- enrolling children in school and adults in language training;
- introducing newcomers to people with similar personal interests;
- providing orientation with regard to banking services, transportation, etc.; and
- helping in the search for employment.

2.7 How much financial support will be required?

The sponsorship application kits provide details of how much financial support is likely to be needed to meet the sponsorship obligations and advice on how to determine whether a group has sufficient funds. Although the cost of living varies from centre to centre across the country, the Sponsorship Cost Table and the In-Kind Deduction Table included in the sponsorship kits can help to estimate the annual settlement cost for sponsoring a refugee or refugee family. One rule of thumb is that sponsors are expected to provide a level of support equal to that of the prevailing rates for social assistance in the expected community of settlement.

The sponsoring group may establish a trust fund for the sponsorship, but may not accept or require payment of funds from a refugee for submitting a sponsorship.

The financial support of sponsors is given on the basis of need. Refugees are expected to contribute to their own settlement costs from funds they bring to Canada or earn during their sponsorship period.

Since sponsorship is meant to lead to self-sufficiency, sponsoring groups are encouraged to help refugees find employment, but cannot force them to accept any job offered. Sponsors are, however, permitted to adjust their financial support downward if a refugee refuses to take a reasonable job offer. Finding employment within the sponsorship period is not always realistic so the sponsoring group is advised not to count on employment income when securing funds for the sponsorship in advance.

2.8 Are there any extra costs?

Refugees are usually given a loan from the Government of Canada to pay for their medical examinations overseas and their transportation to Canada. In cases where the visa office has concerns about a refugee's ability to repay a loan, the sponsoring group may be asked to pay a portion of or all these costs. Examples may be sponsorships for elderly persons who are unlikely to enter the labour market or sponsorships of unaccompanied minor children.

Payment for transportation and other costs from the contributions fund is reserved for certain cases within the Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) component (see Additional Sponsorship Opportunities) where a visa officer is of the opinion that the refugee would be unable to repay the loan.

2.9 How is a sponsoring group matched with a refugee?

There are two ways in which a sponsoring group can be matched with a refugee.

1) Sponsor-referred: The sponsoring group puts forward the name of a refugee or refugee family it is interested in sponsoring. The group may have obtained the referral from an overseas contact, a friend, the relative of a member of the organization, or elsewhere. SAHs/CGs, G5s and Community Sponsors submit the sponsorship application on behalf of the sponsor-referred refugee to their local Citizenship and Immigration Centre, using the sponsorship kit designated for their particular group type.

A group that would like to refer a refugee applicant for sponsorship should:

- consider whether or not the person is likely to be eligible for the private sponsorship program. (See "Who may be sponsored?" and "Who may not be sponsored?") Ineligible applicants will be refused with no right of appeal;
- determine whether the person has relatives in Canada. In most cases, refugees should be resettled in their relative's community;
- note that it is not possible to sponsor only one member of a family unit. The sponsorship undertaking should name all immediate and dependent family members, whether they are accompanying the principal applicant to Canada or may follow later under the provisions of the One Year Window. De facto dependants should also be included in the sponsorship, but should be named on a separate undertaking, as described on the following page.

2) Visa office-referred: The Matching Centre at CIC national headquarters in Ottawa administers an inventory of “visa office-referred” cases that have already been selected but require a private sponsorship before a permanent resident visa can be issued. Sponsoring groups may request profiles of refugee cases from CIC. The sponsoring group is given approximately three weeks to decide whether to proceed with the sponsorship or consider other profiles. Visa office-referred cases are normally ready to travel to Canada within four to 12 months of being matched with a sponsor. However, delays do occur in some “travel-ready” cases because of problems in arranging exit permits, travel documents, etc. Once the sponsorship is signed, the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre works with the Matching Centre and the visa office to provide the sponsor with more accurate information regarding departure and arrival dates.

Sponsoring groups can request a visa office-referred case by completing form IMM 5496 (Request for a Refugee Profile). SAHs can view profiles of visa office-referred cases listed on-line at www.cic.gc.ca/ref-protection/jas_pac/index.htm.

2.10 What is a de facto dependant?

A de facto dependant is a person considered by the refugee family to be an integral member of the family unit, but who does not meet the definition of family member. For example, an elderly aunt who has always lived with the principal applicant may be a de facto dependant. Such individuals should be included in the sponsorship.

To be considered as a member of the family unit, such individuals must satisfy the visa officer that they are dependent on the family unit in which membership is claimed. The dependency may be emotional or economic and will often be a combination of the two. Such people would normally, but not exclusively, live with the principal applicant as members of the same household. Persons who form part of the family unit will be examined sympathetically in keeping with efforts to keep family units together.

Sponsors must submit a separate sponsorship undertaking for de facto dependants. They should, however, identify the name and date of birth of the principal applicant in the “Multiple Undertakings” section of the undertaking to ensure that de facto dependants and the rest of the family unit are processed concurrently.

De facto dependants must also complete separate applications. In addition, Schedule 2 of the overseas refugee application kit (IMM 6000) includes a section in which the principal applicant is asked to identify the de facto dependants who are co-applying.

For visa office-referred cases and cases where the sponsor did not list de facto dependants identified by the principal applicant, visa officers will contact local CIC offices to ensure that sponsoring groups are prepared to assume responsibility for the settlement of the de facto dependants with the rest of the family unit.

Examples of persons who may qualify as de facto dependants:

- An unmarried adult daughter in cultures where it is normal for an unmarried adult daughter to remain dependent until she marries.
- A widowed sister or sister-in-law in a culture where it is normal for the applicant to take on responsibility for her care and sustenance when she has no other means of support.
- Nieces and nephews whose parents have been killed or are missing. In the case of nieces and nephews, sponsors must take into consideration the best interests of the child and ensure that there are no disputes with respect to custody or guardianship.
- Parents of any age living with the principal applicant and without other children with whom they could reside, or without means of support other than the principal applicant.
- Elderly relatives who have lived with the principal applicant for a substantial period or who are solely or for the most part dependent on the applicant for care, shelter, etc.

Examples of persons who should NOT be found to be de facto dependants:

- A married sister living with the applicant, who has a husband residing in another known location, unless it is demonstrated to the visa officer that the sister cannot rely on her husband for support.
- A married daughter and her husband living with the principal applicant, unless they can demonstrate to the visa officer that they are completely dependent on the principal applicant for financial support.
- An elderly parent, who normally lives with the principal applicant, but who may reside with other children from time to time.
- A person who has been taking care of the principal applicant's children and living in the household for an extended period, but who is not without family of his or her own.

2.11 What is a non-accompanying family member?

Non-accompanying family members are family members (spouses and dependent children) of the principal applicant who have been separated from the family unit and left behind for reasons beyond their control. (De facto dependants cannot be identified as non-accompanying family members.)

If separated family members submit an application for permanent residence to a visa office within one year of the principal applicant's arrival in Canada, they will be processed on an expedited basis as part of the same application. In order to qualify, the principal applicant must identify the non-accompanying family member on the IMM 0008 application before departing for Canada. If the application is submitted after the one-year period has expired, the family member will not benefit from the provisions of the One Year Window of Opportunity.

Sponsoring groups should include separated family members on the undertaking and should also ensure that the principal applicant identifies them on the IMM 0008 application as non-accompanying family members.

When a non-accompanying family member is located, the sponsor or family member in Canada should notify the local CIC office, so that it may inform the visa office. To expedite processing, sponsors may send the IMM 6000 application to the family members abroad and advise them to indicate on their application (by checking the appropriate box at the top of page one of Schedule 2) that they are applying under the "One Year Window" program.

2.12 Sponsorship of non-accompanying family members

In cases where the non-accompanying family member was included on the original undertaking of the principal applicant, the visa office will confirm through the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre that the support of the sponsor is still available. The period of sponsorship provided to the non-accompanying family member will be the same as that provided to the rest of the family and will begin when the family member arrives in Canada. If the sponsor no longer has adequate financial means or is otherwise unable or unwilling to fulfil the sponsorship commitment, and the principal applicant cannot support the non-accompanying family member, the application is likely to be refused unless another sponsor can be found.

Where a non-accompanying family member is not included on the original undertaking but is included on the principal applicant's IMM 0008, the visa office will contact the sponsor before processing the principal applicant and accompanying family members to ensure that the sponsorship is extended to the non-accompanying family member listed on the IMM 0008. If the sponsor agrees, the undertaking will be revised at the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre and the application will proceed as normal. If the sponsor does not consent to including the non-accompanying family member, the entire application may be refused, if no valid reason for the denial of sponsorship is presented.

2.13 How does a group begin the sponsorship process?

Once a sponsoring group has been formed, the group must obtain the appropriate CIC application kit. It may be ordered from the Call Centre or downloaded from the CIC Web site. (See Appendix A for the telephone number and Web addresses.) Once completed, the undertaking and other relevant documents should be sent to the Citizenship and Immigration Centre serving the group's area.

The sponsorship kits include:

- program information and instructions on completing the forms;
- the undertaking to sponsor;
- a settlement plan that outlines the settlement and financial arrangements in place to support the sponsored refugee;

- financial assessment forms for Groups of Five and Community Sponsors; and
- a document checklist.

2.14 How is the application processed?

Citizenship and Immigration Centre: The local Citizenship and Immigration Centre is the contact point for groups with regard to processing and settlement issues related to private group sponsorships. Upon receipt of a sponsorship application, the Centre will:

- review the sponsorship undertaking to ensure that it is complete and meets the eligibility requirements;
- acknowledge receipt of the undertaking to the sponsoring group;
- inform the sponsoring group of any decisions or issues related to the application;
- (for sponsor-referred cases) forward a copy of the approved undertaking to the visa office responsible for the area where the refugee lives as well as to the Matching Centre;
- (for visa office-referred cases) forward the completed Request for a Refugee Profile to the Matching Centre;
- (for visa office-referred cases) acquire a refugee profile from the Matching Centre and forward to the sponsor for consideration;
- (for visa office-referred cases) notify the Matching Centre of the successful match with a sponsor;
- provide the sponsoring group with processing updates;
- notify the sponsoring group of the refugee's date and place of arrival in Canada when a Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT) is received from the Matching Centre;
- provide the sponsoring group with the names of agencies offering immigrant support services;
- register the refugees for the Interim Federal Health Program; and
- monitor the settlement of the refugees after arrival.

Canadian visa office: Canadian visa offices process applications for permanent residence submitted by refugees living abroad. The visa offices work closely with international service providers who deal with refugees around the world and also maintain contact with local Citizenship and Immigration Centres. The visa office will:

- review the application for permanent residence and prescreen for basic eligibility requirements;
- provide the sponsor and local Citizenship and Immigration Centre with updates at the time of the two processing benchmark stages (see 2.16);
- conduct an interview to determine if the applicant is a member of the Convention Refugees Abroad Class, Country of Asylum Class or Source Country Class;
- assess the applicant's ability to establish in Canada;

- initiate medical, criminal and security checks and review the results to ensure the applicant is admissible to Canada;
- (for visa office-referred sponsorships) send an e-mail to the Matching Centre so that the refugee's name can be added to the sponsorship inventory;
- review loan applications for transportation costs;
- issue a permanent resident visa when a positive final decision is made;
- make travel arrangements for the refugee in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration;
- provide the refugee with orientation and travel information in collaboration with international service providers; and
- advise the Matching Centre of the date and place that the refugees will arrive in Canada.

2.15 The IMM 6000 application kit

Refugee applicants are required to complete all relevant application forms contained in the IMM 6000 kit (Application for Permanent Residence in Canada: Convention Refugees Abroad and Humanitarian-Protected Persons Abroad). The IMM 6000 includes the IMM 0008, Schedule 1, Schedule 2, and the Authorization to Release Information forms. Applicants are also expected to gather all supporting documentation required for their application. (Refer to the checklist in Appendix A of the IMM 6000.)

The IMM 6000 may be obtained by contacting the Call Centre or downloading it from the Web site (www.cic.gc.ca/english/applications/conref.html). Only after a visa office abroad has received the completed application forms is an interview with the applicant arranged.

For sponsor-referred cases, there are three methods by which a refugee may be sent the Application for Permanent Residence in Canada. It is up to the sponsoring group to choose the most suitable method for the situation. The three options are:

- 1) After the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre has approved the sponsorship undertaking and sent a copy to the visa office, the visa office sends an IMM 6000 kit to the refugee applicant. He or she completes it and returns it to the visa office, along with all supporting documents and photographs.
- 2) The sponsoring groups send the IMM 6000 kit and a copy of the approved sponsorship undertaking to the refugee applicant, who submits the completed application, supporting documents, photographs and copy of the sponsorship undertaking to the visa office. Although this is an extra step for sponsors, it can reduce processing times when a sponsor is able to communicate directly with an applicant.

- 3) The sponsoring groups send the IMM 6000 kit to the refugees they wish to sponsor. The refugee applicant completes it and returns it to the sponsor, along with supporting documents and photographs. The sponsor ensures that the kit has been completely filled out before submitting the IMM 6000 forms, supporting documents, photographs and the sponsorship undertaking form to the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre at the same time. Again, this is an extra step for the sponsors, but has the advantage of reducing the processing time overseas as well as providing sponsors with an opportunity to review the content and completeness of the refugee's application before it is submitted.

Note: The sponsorship undertaking form includes a checkbox where sponsoring groups must indicate which IMM 6000 distribution option was chosen.

Supporting Information: Sponsoring groups may also provide additional information to the visa office in support of the applicant's need for protection. Information provided should generally be non-personal and written by reputable organizations or individuals who are aware of the current situation in the country the applicant is fleeing or now residing in.

Examples of information that can help the visa officer in making a determination on the applicant's need for protection include written accounts from individuals who have fled similar situations, recent media reports on the persecution of the applicant's ethnic group, and reports of government legislation affecting the status of refugees in countries of asylum. Supporting information must be directly relevant to the refugee's need for protection. Sponsoring groups should not submit documentation that is too general or information that is easily accessible by the visa office or in any way extraneous to the refugee's situation.

Personal information about the applicant should only be submitted when the sponsoring group is certain it will not contradict the applicant's story and damage his or her credibility.

Sponsoring groups are further encouraged to include their settlement plan (or a summary of the plan) for refugees who might be considered difficult to settle. This is intended to inform the visa office that the sponsoring group is prepared to cope with any special needs the refugees may have.

The submission of supporting information is optional and designed to help sponsors show why the person is in need of resettlement and the arrangements in Canada to help the refugee settle.

2.16 How can I obtain information on my sponsorship?

Undertaking Stage: The first communication sponsors can expect to receive from CIC is the decision on the sponsorship undertaking. Sponsors should receive notice within 30 days indicating whether their application to sponsor has been approved or refused. If the processing of the sponsorship application is expected to take longer than 30 days, the Citizenship and Immigration Centre will send a letter to the sponsor acknowledging receipt of the application and indicating the approximate time before a decision will be made.

Overseas Application Stage: Visa offices are required to send updates to sponsors at two benchmark stages of processing the overseas application:

1. when the completed overseas application is received at the visa office (the update will also include an approximate date for the selection interview); and
2. when the selection decision has been made (if positive, the update will also include the average time to departure).

Sponsors can also use e-CAS, an on-line automated status update service, to obtain processing information on the cases they have sponsored. This service can be accessed at www.cic.gc.ca/english/e-services/index.html.

2.17 What are the refugee's responsibilities?

Application and admissibility requirements: Refugees must complete the application forms contained in the IMM 6000 and gather all supporting documentation before sending the entire package back to either the visa office (options 1 and 2—see 2.15) or the sponsoring group (option 3). They must provide accurate and complete information about their refugee claim and their circumstances in their country of asylum during their interview. If selected at the interview stage, the refugees must visit a designated medical practitioner to receive medical clearance. The visa office will provide applicants with instructions for the medical examination. The refugee applicants must also pass criminality and security checks, and may be required to produce supplemental documentation to finalize these checks.

Medical costs and costs of travel to Canada: Refugee applicants are responsible for the medical and travel costs for themselves and all dependent family members. Two loan options are available to refugees who are unable to cover these costs at the time of application:

1. transportation loan: to cover transportation costs up to and including arrival in Canada; and
2. admissibility loan: to cover the costs of overseas medical services.

Settlement responsibilities: The newcomers are expected to make every effort to become self-sufficient as soon as possible after their arrival. This includes taking advantage of language classes and other settlement services, and actively seeking employment.

2.18 When will the refugee arrive?

Visa office-referred cases: These refugees, who have already been interviewed by an immigration officer overseas, usually arrive four to 12 months after a sponsorship is approved. Refugees who are ready to travel at the time of sponsorship may arrive earlier.

Sponsor-referred cases: Processing times will depend on where the refugee lives and the complexity of the case. The approval letter from the local CIC office should indicate the average processing time at the visa office dealing with the case.

The sponsoring group will generally receive a notification of arrival 10 days before the refugee arrives in Canada.

2.19 Other useful information

Medical coverage: In most provinces, applicants for health coverage must meet certain eligibility requirements. The Interim Federal Health (IFH) Program provides coverage of health services for the period between the refugees' arrival in Canada and their eligibility for provincial health coverage. After becoming eligible for provincial coverage, privately sponsored refugees are still eligible for additional limited coverage under the IFH Program, including dental and vision care and the costs of prescription drugs. Information on the IFH Program can be found in Appendix B.

Canada child tax benefit: Most resettled refugee parents with children under the age of 18 qualify for a monthly payment to help them with the cost of raising their children. For more information, or to obtain the application form for this benefit, applicants should contact the nearest tax services office, visit the Canada Revenue Agency Web site (www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits/menu-e.html) or call 1 800 387-1193 toll-free.

Trust accounts: Some groups establish trust accounts for the funds collected, raised or donated for the settlement of sponsored refugees. CIC neither promotes nor objects to the use of trust accounts. However, groups should use caution in ensuring that the funds in the account and all interest accrued are used only for the direct settlement costs of the refugees for whom the funds were collected. Groups must be able to account for all expenditures. To ensure this, the account can be registered in the name of the sponsoring group with a note specifying that the money is in trust for the sponsored refugee. For withdrawals, the account should require the signature of at least two group members.

Permanent resident card: Any new permanent resident to Canada will be issued a permanent resident card. These cards are valid for five years. The newly arrived refugee will usually be asked to provide a mailing address in Canada at the port of entry.

A refugee who is not able to provide an address will be given an IMM 5456 (Address Notification—Permanent Resident Card). This form must be completed and faxed back to the PR Card Processing Centre at 1 (902) 564-7317.

Applicants can also submit their address to the Department in two other ways:

- 1) by calling the PR Card Processing Centre at 1 800 255-4541(toll-free); or
- 2) by using the On-Line Address Update service at www.cic.gc.ca/english/e-services.

To avoid a \$50 processing fee, the refugee's permanent address in Canada must be provided to CIC within 180 days after entering Canada.

Secondary Migration

It may happen that, at some point during the sponsorship period, the refugee decides to move out of the host community. This is referred to as "secondary migration". If this happens to a group sponsoring under an SAH, the group is advised to discuss the situation with the SAH. Whatever the case, sponsors are encouraged to maintain open lines of communication with both the refugee and the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre, especially when problems arise.

Scenarios

- If the refugee is able to support himself or herself in the new community for the remainder of the sponsorship period, the sponsoring group has no further obligations.
- If the sponsoring group is willing to maintain the sponsorship from a distance, the group should notify the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre of the relocation and continue the sponsorship.
- If the sponsoring group wishes to transfer the sponsorship to another group in the new community or if the group is not willing or able to continue providing material assistance to the refugee in the new location, the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre must be contacted immediately. (Note: Normally, the SAH makes the contact.)

In a transfer of sponsorship, the new group signs a sponsorship undertaking for the remainder of the sponsorship period. The new undertaking cancels the first. The original group is no longer considered the sponsor. Where the sponsor has decided that it will not or cannot continue to support the refugee in the new community, the sponsorship is in danger of breakdown. In this case, the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre, the sponsoring group (including the SAH, if applicable) and the refugee will meet to try to resolve the sponsorship breakdown and, if applicable, to ascertain responsibility. The three-way meeting will also address the ongoing needs of the refugee for the remainder of the sponsorship period and the capacity of the sponsor to support the refugee under the circumstances. Where there is no agreement on who is ultimately responsible for the breakdown, the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre makes the final determination. If the sponsor is found responsible, the group must continue to support the refugee in the new community. If it is not held responsible, it is released from all further obligation.

It is important to remember that, unless the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre issues a formal notice of sponsorship breakdown, which effectively cancels the sponsorship undertaking, sponsored refugees are not entitled to obtain income support through provincial or municipal social assistance programs or the Resettlement Assistance Program during the sponsorship period (normally 12 months). Furthermore, sponsoring groups may, under certain circumstances, be liable for reimbursing the government concerned for income support issued to refugees under the group's sponsorship. For more information on sponsorship breakdown, please consult Chapter 3 of CIC's in-Canada processing manual (IP3) or the Sponsorship Agreement, both of which are available on-line.



3. Additional Sponsorship Opportunities

3.1 Joint Assistance Sponsorship

JOINT ASSISTANCE SPONSORSHIP (JAS) IS A PROGRAM THAT ENABLES SAHs AND their CGs to partner with CIC in the resettlement of refugees who are identified as having special needs. Often these refugees require more than the standard 12 months of government-funded income support to establish successfully in Canada. Consequently, JAS cases are matched with a private sponsor in addition to receiving income support from the Resettlement Assistance Program. Under the JAS program, government assistance and private sponsorship are offered for up to 24 months. In exceptional cases, the private sponsorship component can be extended up to 36 months.

The division of responsibilities is such that CIC provides financial assistance to cover the cost of food, shelter, clothing and essential household goods, while the sponsor provides orientation, significant settlement assistance and emotional support.

In order to be eligible for a JAS, the refugee:

- must be a member of the Convention Refugees Abroad Class, the Source Country Class or the Country of Asylum Class;
- must have a greater need of settlement assistance than other applicants because of personal circumstances, including:
 - a large number of family members or unusual family configurations;
 - trauma resulting from violence or torture;
 - medical disabilities; and
 - the effects of systemic discrimination.

JAS cases do not require the same financial capacity of sponsoring groups as regular private sponsorship cases, but these cases often require considerable dedication in terms of time and effort in helping the newcomers get established. Sponsors interested in JAS sponsorship should be aware that their community must be able to offer the services demanded by the applicant's special needs for it to be considered a suitable destination.

JAS profiles on the Web site: To assist sponsors in selecting cases, the visa offices refer the JAS cases to the Matching Centre. Profiles of these cases are then placed on a secure Web site that is accessible to SAHs and local Citizenship and Immigration Centres. These refugees have already been interviewed and determined to be eligible for Canada's resettlement program. The

majority of these cases are ready to depart for Canada within months of a sponsorship undertaking being made on their behalf.

To sponsor a JAS case, a sponsoring group should complete a Request for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship Refugee Profile (IMM 5504) and submit it to the SAH. The SAH will check the secure Web site for suitable profiles and provide them to the group for consideration. The sponsor may request a more detailed profile from the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre when the group is interested in a particular case. A sponsoring group wishing to sponsor a JAS case must complete an Undertaking/Application for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship (IMM 1324) and submit it to the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre with an approval letter from the SAH. (New SAHs must also include their settlement plan.)

If no suitable JAS profile is found on the Web site, the sponsor or SAH should send the Request for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship Refugee Profile to the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre. From there, it will be forwarded to the Matching Centre and added to its inventory until a suitable match is made. One of the functions of the Matching Centre is to assemble and coordinate an inventory of refugee profile requests from sponsoring groups. When the Matching Centre locates a possible match, it will refer the refugee's case profile to the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre for transmission to the SAH and the sponsoring group that submitted the profile request. The SAH and sponsor should review the profile and notify the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre as soon as possible whether it will undertake the sponsorship. While the profile is being reviewed, it will remain on the secure Web site until the sponsoring group has made its decision. If other local Citizenship and Immigration Centres express interest in a profile on behalf of another sponsoring group, the profile information will be provided, but the fact that another group is also reviewing the case will be noted. In all cases, local Citizenship and Immigration Centres should consult the Matching Centre before signing any JAS undertakings to ensure that the profile is still available.

Making contact with the refugee: Once a group has been accepted to sponsor a refugee under the JAS (or visa office-referred) program, it is suggested that, where possible, the sponsoring group should establish contact with the refugee prior to his or her arrival in Canada. Establishing early communication helps both refugee and sponsor to understand what they can expect from each other. The first correspondence should introduce the group and explain its role in welcoming the refugee to Canada. The profile of the refugee will indicate the level of English or French the individual understands. Correspondence may need to be translated before being sent to the refugee.

Note: Groups of Five and Community Sponsors are not eligible to participate in Joint Assistance Sponsorships.

3.2 Women at Risk Program

The Women at Risk (AWR) program is for women without the normal protection of a family unit who find themselves in precarious situations where the local authorities cannot ensure their safety. This includes women who are experiencing significant difficulties, such as harassment by local authorities or members of their own communities.

Some women may need immediate protection while others are in permanently unstable circumstances that allow for no other remedy. The persecution or harassment they are experiencing may be solely gender-based. While applicants must qualify as Convention Refugees Abroad or members of the Country of Asylum or Source Country classes, they may not fully meet the requirement to demonstrate an ability to establish themselves in Canada in the short or medium term.

AWR cases are considered to be either in “urgent need of protection” or “vulnerable” and are exempt from the regulatory requirement to establish successfully.

In most cases, women eligible under the Women at Risk program will require a Joint Assistance Sponsorship as outlined above. There may be situations, however, where the person is eligible under the program but does not qualify for a JAS.

3.3 Urgent Protection Program

The Urgent Protection Program (UPP) was developed to ensure that Canada is able to respond to requests by referral organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to provide urgent protection for refugees. Members of the Convention Refugees Abroad or Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad classes who qualify for resettlement and are in need of urgent protection because of immediate threats to life, liberty or physical well-being are resettled on the expedited basis required by their particular circumstances. Where there is no other way to guarantee the security of the person concerned, resettlement is the best and often the only protection response.

The UNHCR or another recognized referral organization will refer UPP cases to Canadian visa offices abroad. Thereafter, a decision to resettle the refugee is made within 24 hours. CIC tries to ensure that these cases are en route to Canada within three to five days of referral to the mission or, given local challenges, as soon as possible. Where CIC is unable to provide immediate protection, the referral organization is notified so that resettlement to another country may be considered.

Refugees who are eligible may include, but are not limited to:

- those who are under threat of refoulement, expulsion, prolonged arbitrary detention or extra-judicial execution; or
- those who are facing a real, direct threat to their physical safety, which could result in their being killed or subjected to abduction, rape, sexual abuse, violence or torture.

UPP cases are designated as government-assisted refugees and some may be identified as JAS cases. Where urgent protection cases require a sponsor, but one has not been identified before their departure, the refugees will be sent to reception centres in Montréal, Quebec (Quebec cases only), Winnipeg, Manitoba, St. John's, Newfoundland, or Regina, Saskatchewan. They will remain in the reception centres for counselling and orientation while waiting to be matched with a private sponsoring group. When a sponsor is identified, they will be sent to their final destination. If the refugee is matched with a sponsor prior to departure for Canada, the refugee will go directly to the sponsor's community. If refugees have family in Canada, efforts will be made to ensure that they are sent to their family's community.

3.4 Blended Sponsorships

Occasionally, the Department will introduce a special program where it will enter into partnerships with sponsors on blended initiatives. Under such initiatives, financial responsibilities for resettling refugees are shared between CIC and the sponsoring group, with the sponsor providing settlement assistance and support (as in regular private sponsorship cases). The purpose of blended initiatives is to support and augment the existing private sponsorship program by sharing the costs of resettlement with sponsors who may not otherwise be in a position to submit an undertaking. Blended initiatives are distinct from the JAS program and, in the past, have been directed at particular groups or sponsors for limited periods. Traditionally, only SAHs and their CGs have been eligible to participate in blended sponsorships.



Appendix A: CIC Call Centre and Web Site

CIC Call Centre

From anywhere in Canada, call toll-free 1 888 242-2100.

CIC Web Site

The Citizenship and Immigration Canada main Web site: www.cic.gc.ca.



Appendix B: Interim Federal Health Program

THE INTERIM FEDERAL HEALTH (IFH) PROGRAM IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE temporary medical coverage for certain immigrants in need of assistance during their settlement period in Canada prior to their eligibility for provincial health-care coverage.

Privately sponsored refugees who are accepted for resettlement in Canada are eligible for the IFH program. The IFH program is not meant to replace provincial health plans or provide the same extent of coverage. Privately sponsored refugees are eligible for full benefits under the IFH program until coverage under their provincial health plan begins. Depending on the province of destination, the waiting period for provincial health-care coverage can be as much as 90 days after the refugee has arrived in the province. Once provincial coverage has started, refugees are still eligible for partial benefits under the IFH program for up to 12 months from the time of their arrival in Canada.

Privately sponsored refugees are advised to contact their local CIC office to apply for IFH coverage.

Refugees who are able to pay for their own health-care services or who are covered by a private health-care plan are not eligible for IFH coverage.

Benefits

Coverage under the IFH program is limited to:

- essential health services for the prevention and treatment of serious medical and dental conditions (including immunizations and other vital preventative medical care);
- essential prescription medications;
- contraceptive, prenatal and obstetrical care; and
- the immigration medical examination (only for individuals who are unable to pay for it).

For further information on the services covered by the IFH program, consult the IP-3 manual on the CIC Web site.