

# A Guide To Refugee Sponsorship For Vancouver Island

*You and I -*

*We meet as strangers, each carrying a mystery  
within us. I cannot say who you are.*

*I may never know you completely.*

*But I trust that you are a person in your own  
right, possessed of a beauty and value that are  
the Earth's richest treasures.*

*So I make this promise to you:*

*I will impose no identities upon you: but will  
invite you to become yourself  
without shame or fear.*

*I will hold open a space for you in the world and  
allow your right to fill it with an authentic  
vocation and purpose. For as long as your search  
takes, you have my loyalty.*

*- Author Unknown*



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## **I. WHO ARE THE REFUGEES?**

### **Fleeing Persecution.**

Throughout history, groups of people have been persecuted by stronger groups. Many have left their original homes for new and unknown lands, fleeing their home country and seeking protection in a foreign country. Refugees are persons whose lives have been seriously affected by war, oppression, persecution and abuses of basic human rights.

There are other reasons why people leave their homes. Some people are displaced due to environmental disasters. Others are migrant workers who work outside their homelands. These people are migrants but are not considered refugees.

### **What Do Refugees Need?**

The answer is very simple; they need what everybody needs. Their physical safety is the main concern. Often, because they had to leave everything behind, they need material aid. Specifically, they need:

- international protection - so that they can live without fear of:
  - attack, of persecution or imprisonment
  - being returned forcibly from where they came
  - being separated from their loved ones.
- basic physical needs - food, water, sanitation - shelter and blankets, clothing and cooking utensils
- medicines and medical care
- access to work to support themselves and their families
- to education,
- to the social services
- travel documents
- a chance to take responsibility for their own lives
- love, companionship, emotional support, acceptance
- family, community, cultural ties
- hope.

Refugees have a right to justice and the recognition of their human dignity.

## II. THE WORLD'S RESPONSE TO REFUGEES

### The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

These articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights define the rights of refugees:

Article 1	Equality of all people
Article 2	Right of all to fair and equal treatment
Article 3	Right to life
Article 4	Right to freedom from slavery
Article 5	Right to freedom from torture
Article 9	Right to freedom
Article 14	Right to political asylum
Article 19	Right to freedom of opinion
Article 28	Right to protection of rights.

In particular, Article 14 states:

- *Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.*

### United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is the United Nations' agency responsible for refugees. The mandate of the UNHCR is to provide international protection to refugees and to help find permanent solutions for them. The United Nations Convention related to the Status of Refugees defines refugees as

**"persons who, by reason of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, are outside their country of nationality or former habitual residence and are unable or, by reason of such fear, are unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country."**

Persons who fit this definition are called Convention refugees. UNHCR's mandate also extends to those persons fleeing war and war-related conditions, whose state is unwilling or unable to protect them.

By mid-2015 there were 19.5 million people classified as refugees by the UNHCR. The majority - approximately eighty percent - are women and children.

## **Durable Solutions**

For refugees, there are three permanent or durable solutions:

### **Voluntary Repatriation**

Repatriation should happen only when the situation in the home country has changed in a lasting and meaningful way and the refugees can return safely.

### **Local Integration.**

A refugee is locally integrated in the country where they sought refuge if - they can move around that country freely, they are allowed to earn a living, their children are allowed to attend school, there is no threat of forcible return to country of origin, etc..

### **Resettlement to a Third Country.**

Resettlement is geared to the special needs of refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or fundamental human rights are at risk in the country where they sought refuge. For some refugees, Canada and other countries like us, is considered their only solution.

## **Resettlement**

- may be necessary to ensure the security of refugees who are threatened with forced return to their country of origin or those whose physical safety is seriously threatened in the country where they have sought sanctuary.
- is used for survivors of torture and violence, the disabled and other injured or severely traumatized refugees who are in need of special treatment unavailable in their country of refuge. Resettlement is appropriate for refugees without local integration prospects.
- is often the only way to reunite families who, through no fault of their own, find themselves divided by borders or by entire continents.

The High Commissioner asks countries like Canada to resettle these refugees.



### **III. CANADA'S RESPONSE TO REFUGEES**

#### **Human Rights Advocacy**

The Government of Canada supports efforts to bring respect for the rights of all persons. Through statements of concern, political pressure and funding of human rights education, the Government tries to prevent the abuses that cause people to flee their homelands.

#### **Overseas Aid to Refugees**

Canada aids refugees throughout the world by funding UNHCR programs and by contributing to non-governmental organizations which work with refugees overseas.

Asylum Seekers (also known as Refugee Claimants):

Many refugees flee directly to Canada to ask for protection under the Geneva Convention. Visitors may find it unsafe to return home. These persons may make a claim for Convention Refugee status, and that claim is processed through the Immigration and Refugee Board.

#### **Resettlement from Abroad**

The 1976 Immigration Act, a milestone in Canada's response to refugees, established refugees as a class distinct from immigrants. The Boat People crisis of the late 70s and early 80s mobilized Canadians to respond by resettling refugees in Canada through private sponsorship. Through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, over 180,000 refugees who would not have otherwise been able to come to Canada were resettled between 1979 and 2002.

Canada is one of the few countries in the world that annually offers resettlement places to thousands of government-assisted refugees (GAR). Groups across Canada have become important partners by offering sponsorships over and above the government numbers.

Private sponsorship does not rely on public resources, but rather taps the energy and funds of faith communities, ethnic groups, families and other benevolent associations.

Private sponsors offer personalized local support that the government is not able to provide.

In 1986, the Canadian people received the Nansen award in recognition of our service to refugees. Our humanitarian efforts should be a source of pride for all Canadians.

## **IV. RESETTLEMENT TO CANADA**

### **Eligibility**

Canada defines three classes of persons who may be eligible for resettlement.

#### **Convention Refugees Abroad**

A person who is a Convention refugee and who is seeking admission to Canada for the purpose of resettling in Canada.

#### **Members of the Country of Asylum Class.**

Those selected under this class must be outside their country of citizenship or habitual residence and are seriously and personally affected by civil war or armed conflict.

#### **Members of the Source Country Class.**

Those selected under this class must be in their country of citizenship or habitual residence. It includes those seriously affected by civil war or armed conflict. It also includes people who have suffered serious deprivation of their civil rights and have been detained or imprisoned as a consequence. At the time of printing, this class applied to: Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Sierra Leone, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

### **Admissibility**

#### **Successful Establishment**

A person must also be able to successfully settle and become independent in Canada.

The visa officer will consider factors such as:

- What are the education, work experience, and skills of the applicant?
- What is the applicant's age? How adaptable, motivated, and resourceful is the applicant?
- How many dependents accompany the applicant, and what are their ages and skills?
- Does the applicant have any funds with which to support himself/herself?
- What support (sponsors, family members) does the family have in the community of resettlement?

However, visa officers balance the refugees' protection needs very carefully against the ability to become independent.

#### **Medical**

Refugees and all dependents must complete a medical exam to determine whether they have a medical condition that presents a danger to Canadian public health or safety. Applicants with a condition considered a danger to public health or safety are inadmissible to Canada. If any member of a family is found to be inadmissible, the entire family is inadmissible.

## **Security and Criminality**

Refugees and all their dependents, including dependents 18 years and over who are not coming to Canada with the principal applicant, will be subject to security and criminality checks.

Refugees selected from abroad enter Canada as Permanent Residents (Landed Immigrants).

## **Resettlement Programs**

Sponsored refugees may enter Canada through three sponsorship programs: government, private and joint assistance.

### **Government Assistance**

Most refugees selected overseas enter Canada under the government program. Each year, the Canadian government sets targets and priorities for refugees from different areas of the world.

### **Private Sponsorship**

Canadian citizens and permanent residents and non-governmental associations, such as church, union and community groups, can resettle refugees beyond the government allocation. Private sponsors assume responsibility for reception, basic financial support and settlement assistance during the refugee's first year in Canada. Responsibilities can vary greatly, depending on the characteristics of the refugee family, the community resources available, the number people in the sponsoring group, and emotional support the refugees may need and accept.

### **Joint Assistance**

Some refugees require special assistance because of age, family size, medical problems or lack of education. The Joint Assistance is used for refugees who need more than the usual support, such as an unskilled woman with three children or a person with an extensive medical problem.

Only groups holding an Agreement for the Sponsorship of Refugees with the federal government can participate in the Joint Assistance Initiative. Other groups who wish to participate should approach a Sponsorship Agreement Holder.

In a Joint Assistance sponsorship, the Canadian government provides basic financial support and the private sponsors provide the refugees' settlement needs. In some situations, agreement from the provincial government is necessary before the refugee can be admitted. Indeed, a province may agree to be a third party to a sponsorship by contributing special services.

### **Other Programs**

There are also a few refugees who enter Canada as Self-Sponsored Refugees or through a special measures program allowing for the sponsorship by relatives of refugees outside the family class.

## **Who May Sponsor?**

### **Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH)**

The SAH is a corporation which holds a Sponsorship Agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). On Vancouver Island, the Roman Catholic Diocese and Anglican Diocese have Sponsorship Agreements. Nationally, the Mennonites, United Church of Canada, Christian Reformed Church, Canadian Baptist Federation and Lutherans, among others, have Sponsorship Agreements.

### **Constituent Groups**

A SAH may authorize Constituent Groups to sponsor under its agreement. Each SAH sets its own criteria for recognizing constituent groups. Constituent Groups are based in the refugee's expected community of settlement and must have their sponsorship application and settlement plan approved by their SAH.

### **Groups of Five**

Groups of five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents, who are at least 18 years of age, and live in the expected community of settlement. The five individuals are guarantors that the necessary support will be provided for the duration of the sponsorship. The local Canada Immigration Centre assesses members' contributions to the sponsorship, both financial and non-financial, before the sponsorship is approved.

### **Community Sponsors**

Any organization located in the community where the refugees are expected to settle can make an organizational commitment to sponsor. Unlike the three groups mentioned above, community sponsors are limited to two sponsorships per year and must undergo financial and settlement plan assessments by their local Citizenship and Immigration Centre each time they wish to sponsor.

### **Co-Sponsors**

A SAH, Constituent Group or 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 co-sponsor is expected to sign the sponsorship undertaking and assume all responsibilities agreed in the settlement plan.

## **V. THE SPONSORSHIP**

### **The Sponsor's Role**

Sponsorship is:

- learning to walk together ... partnership
- warm ... personal ... human

A sponsor is

- a friend ... an enabler.....an advocate

A sponsor provides

- basic physical needs, shelter and home furnishings, food and clothing, bus passes
- respect ... care ... compassion
- a new community
- an introduction to Canada and Canadian values
- an introduction to social services, especially those provided by settlement and multicultural agencies

The sponsor's role is to reach out in friendship and to help newcomers become financially self-sufficient, emotionally secure, and culturally adjusted. The sponsors agree to provide most of their needs, from financial support to community orientation and friendship. The sponsors also advocate on behalf of the newcomer for fair treatment without discrimination.

### **Deciding to Sponsor and Preparing Your Organization**

Within a parish, a sponsorship should be undertaken only with the financial and personal support of the congregation, even if only a few people are directly involved. Follow a clear, definite process in raising the issue and making a decision with your organization.

Form a small group of interested people. Because sponsorship involves large commitments of time and money, it is wise to gather sufficient information before making a decision.

Raise your concern with the appropriate committee in the organization - the outreach, mission or social concerns committee.

Invite someone to speak about sponsorship. Invite refugees tell their stories. Discuss conditions in refugee producing countries. If you are in a faith community, use resources from your religious organization and explore relevant scriptural reflections.

Visit the local Settlement Agencies (see appendix 1). Ask about their services and the languages for which they can provide translators.

Circulate a questionnaire in your organization to determine interest. A sample questionnaire is on the next page.

Ask the diocesan refugee committee for the profiles of refugees needing sponsorship. Choose the person or family who best suits your group's ability to help.

Work out a possible budget, and your fundraising strategy.

Read this book!!

Prepare a general settlement plan.

Hold a parish meeting (or put your proposal before the parish council), present your plans, and get their approval through a VOTE.

*The people of Sodom only became haughty on account of their bounty. They said since gold and silver flows from our land what need have we of travelers? We do not require visitors since they only come to diminish our substance. And so they issued a proclamation barring access from their city to all who were poor. This brought about the destruction of Sodom.*

*From the Rabbinical Tradition*

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROSPECTIVE SPONSORS

Yes      No

1. Would you like our organization to become active in refugee work?
2. Which of the following would you like to see our organization do?
  - (a) Educational series on refugee issues or cultural sensitivity training.
  - (b) Provide friendship families for refugees.
  - (c) Provide volunteers for refugees already here to find housing, take people to appointments etc.
  - (d) Provide full sponsorship for refugees.
3. If you wish us to sponsor a refugee, what would you be willing to do?
  - (a) Serve on committee
  - (b) Contribute financially
  - (c) Provide housing
  - (d) Look for employment
  - (e) Provide employment
  - (f) provide orientation support
    - driving for appointments
    - showing public transportation
    - getting Social Insurance Number, Provincial Health Coverage, etc.
  - (g) Provide friendship
4. Other comments?

## **Preparing the Budget**

The first question is "How much will it cost?" While it is impossible to be exact, the following information should help you estimate. The largest variables are housing and employment.

Sponsors must plan to provide basic needs for an entire year. Sponsors are legally responsible for meeting the welfare rates used by the Ministry of Social Services and Housing. Contact the ministry to get the current figures; they differ for every town. Plan to spend 10 percent more, as B.C.'s actual costs for shelter and other living expenses are higher than welfare cheques can cover. If you provide more money than this, many people lose the motivation to find work and support themselves; less money brings hardship and resentment.

Sponsors are not responsible for debts incurred or for long distance phone bills. Basic needs such as rent, food, clothing and transportation are all that is required. You should also be prepared to provide dental care and, perhaps, psychological counseling.

Once your sponsoring group has set an overall budget, break it down item by item. On the following pages you will find recent figures for British Columbia and a sample budget sheet for projecting costs. As the year progresses - particularly if the newcomers begin earning income - you should review and revise your budget with them.

Learning to manage a household budget is an important step to independence. The sponsor's role is advisor and counselor; newcomers need the freedom to make their own financial decisions. If the family is not accustomed to dealing with money and budgets, a gradual process of giving living allowance weekly at first, then bi-weekly, then monthly will help them to learn to budget.

## **Raising the Money**

Your group needs a plan for raising the necessary money. Some groups will take the money directly from the parish budget, other groups will raise the funds through individual pledges or donations, while others will hold bake sales and rummage sales. However you do it, you need to have a definite and realistic plan, and you need to have your plan approved by the parish (or parish council) - usually through a vote.

It is always better to raise more than you expect to need (you might want to add 10% to your total), then you will have the confidence that you can cover emergencies and extras. It is better to have money left over, than to be worrying about paying the last few months' rent.

Occasionally, someone in the parish can provide free accommodation in their own home or reduced rent in property which they own.

Many groups have a shower for the newcomers before the arrival. Members of the group bring presents of, cooking pots, vases, linens, basic tools, calendars, maps, stationary, etc. This not only helps to furnish the apartment but makes it more personal for the members of the group.

## **What the government provides**

**Settlement Services** The newcomers are eligible for all government funded settlement services. These include settlement counseling, English classes and job counseling. Settlement Agencies are listed in Appendix 1.

**Interim Federal Health Plan** This plan provides access to emergency health services while the newcomers are en route to Canada and after arrival until they qualify for provincial health care coverage.

**Provincial Health Care** British Columbia enrolls privately sponsored refugees after a 90 day waiting period.

**Canada Child Tax Benefit** The Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) is a non-taxable amount paid monthly to help eligible families with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age.

**Provincial Benefits for Low-Income Families** The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) administers the BC Family Bonus. There is no need to apply separately to qualify for this program. The CRA will use the information from your Canada Child Benefits application to determine your eligibility for these programs.

**Immigrant Loans Program** Loans are available to those refugees and their families who show a need for the loan and who are able to repay it. There are four loan options available.

**Admissibility Loan:** a loan to cover costs for the medical services necessary to establish medical admissibility to Canada. The loan can be used to pay the medical costs of people applying for landing for themselves and their dependents.

**Assistance Loan:** a loan to cover living expenses and the costs of accessing employment. An assistance loan can cover expenses such as deposits for rent or for telephone or utility hookups. It may also cover the costs of purchasing tools for employment purposes, and examination fees required to establish work credentials and secure employment in Canada.

**Transportation Loan:** a loan to help people obtain transportation for themselves or their dependents to their place of final destination in Canada. It can also help pay for living expenses during the journey. It covers costs such as airfare, airport taxes, overland transportation in Canada and overnight accommodation where necessary. Anyone 18 years of age and over who is seeking landing for themselves or for their dependents can apply for a transportation loan. Applicants may include Canadian citizens, immigrants, permanent residents, Convention refugees or members of designated classes.

The loan is the responsibility of the newcomer although occasionally the sponsor wishes to pay. The loan is interest free for a time depending on the size of the loan. Interest is charged after the grace period. In exceptional cases, your group may be asked to cover some these costs if the newcomer is judged unable to repay the loans.

## Supporting the Newcomer's Overseas Relatives

Sponsors frequently face the issue of support for family members still outside Canada. Refugees invariably send funds to their families. They carry a tremendous burden of responsibility and guilt, caring for those still in their home country - particularly as our living standard is so much higher than their home countries. However, sending money often makes it hard for them to meet their financial obligations here.

Unfortunately, there are no clear-cut answers. It may help you, as the sponsor, to talk about it soon after their arrival. Different sponsors feel differently about it. Some groups forbid sending money; other groups allow it if the newcomer is working; yet others budget some money to send back.

## Estimating the Total Budget

Below are the monthly Social Assistance rates for 2009. Shelter includes rent and utilities. Support includes all other family expenses (food, clothing, etc.).

We recommended that you budget 10 per cent higher than these minimums.

	Shelter	Support	Family Bonus	Total
Single Person	375	235	n/a	610
Single Parent Family				
One Child	570	375	123	1,068
Two Children	660	375	247	1,282
Three Children	700	375	370	1,445
Two Parent Family				
One Child	660	401	123	1,184
Two Children	700	401	247	1,348
Three Children	750	401	370	1,521

Social Assistance provides additional funds for bus passes, Christmas, school start-up, nutritional supplements, eye exams, physiotherapy, etc...

## BUDGET WORKSHEET

Rent <i>Try to set up newcomers at a rent they can afford when your sponsorship ends.</i>	\$	/month
Utilities <i>Include electricity, gas, oil and water.</i>	\$	/month
Food <i>Help newcomers to learn to comparison shop and buy in bulk.</i>	\$	/month
Transportation <i>Consider buying bus passes for all newcomers.</i>	\$	/month
Clothes <i>Show newcomers how to get to second-hand clothing stores.</i>	\$	/month
Telephone and Home Supplies <i>Decide whether to fund long distance calls. Include laundry and cleaning supplies.</i>	\$	/month
Furniture <i>Use donations and second-hand shops.</i>	\$	/month
Discretionary money <i>Allow for recreation, pocket money, dues, loans, alcohol, cigarettes.</i>	\$	/month
Health <i>Allow for dental costs, medicine and glasses not covered by the medical services plan.</i>	\$	/month
Toiletries and hygiene	\$	/month
Education and reading <i>Include school trips and day care.</i>	\$	/month
Reserve Backup <i>Allow 5 percent for unforeseen expenses</i>	\$	/month
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>/month</b>

## **Completing and Submitting the Immigration Forms**

Working with your diocesan refugee coordinator, obtain and complete the appropriate immigration sponsorship application form. Make copies of it for your organization and any groups working with you. Return the original to the diocesan refugee coordinator who will obtain diocesan approval and submit it to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada will notify you when the refugees arrive. You must then notify any other groups or parishes working with you.

On rare occasions, Canada admits refugees quickly without the complete overseas processing. This is done by a Minister's Permit. For example, Canada granted hundreds of Minister's permits during the war in El Salvador to get church workers and social workers out of the country quickly. Children to be adopted may also enter Canada this way if the adoption cannot happen overseas.

Most of the refugees who are selected abroad will qualify for loans from the Federal Government to cover the costs of transportation, medical examinations, and the Right of Landing Fee. If, for any reason, the sponsors are told that they are responsible for the transportation or other costs, you should contact the diocesan refugee coordinator who can help clarify the situation.

If, however, you intend to pay the transportation costs because you wish to pay them, then you may either book the flight through IOM and they will help with transfers at different airports along the way or you can book the flight yourself. You may get a better price if you book the flight yourself. It is wise to look into both options.



## **Learning about Immigrants, Refugees, and Settlement**

### **IMMIGRANTS**

#### **Cultural Differences**

Today's immigrants come from cultures very different than the early European settlers to Canada and these different cultures mean very different ways of living.

A newcomer may spend too much time drinking coffee with friends from home and not enough time studying English. Yet that person's culture may value hospitality higher than education.

A sponsor may wish to support an accountant while he acquires his Canadian credentials. However, his priority is to send money home, so he takes a cleaning job.

In some cultures, the extended family - whether in Canada or abroad - can help with marital problems. A man may respond to instructions from his parents more easily than demands by Canadian authorities.

Despite being warned, a newcomer may continue to have noisy parties and then be evicted from her apartment.

Many newcomers face significant cultural differences regarding the family; gender roles, family violence, women's rights, child-rearing practices, marriage, separation and divorce. These differences can produce confusion, anger and serious conflict.

The sponsor must respect the newcomers' values and customs, while helping them understand and adapt to Canada's norms.

#### **Integration**

Both sponsors and newcomers need realistic expectations. Most newcomers learn enough English in their first year to manage on their own, but a good command of our language often takes a decade. Some newcomers find work after a few months; others take a full decade to find suitable employment. For those illiterate in their own language, reading and writing English may prove impossible.

The first few months are usually pleasant with many new skills to learn, such as turning on a water tap or attending school for the first time. But then many become discouraged. The enormous work of learning a new language and new skills becomes a reality. They realize the permanence of their situation - the fact that nothing will be like home again.

The most difficult moments occur six months to one year after arrival. Challenges to emotional well-being include the language barrier, family separation, loneliness, unemployment or under-employment, social class changes (if they were privileged in their home country), and difficulty coping with gloomy west-coast winters.

## **REFUGEES**

Immigrants chose to leave their home and are free to return; they often return for vacations, national holidays or family weddings.

Refugees were forced to leave and may not return. When a refugee is chosen for resettlement - usually after years of waiting - there is joy and anticipation. Yet it is tempered by sadness at the loss of family, friends, language and familiar countryside. There is always a loneliness for mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters; always a sadness around holidays.

Many have endured persecution, war and the death of loved ones. Some have been tortured in their country and witnessed friends and family killed, often by government officials, army or the police. They may feel guilty for surviving.

Many African and South Asian women, including girls as young as eight years old, have been scarred by rape. They often have physical and psychological problems that last for years. Ironically, the woman's own cultural group often blames her and considers her unmarriageable; or if already married, as bringing shame on her husband. Many women in this situation consider suicide the only honourable way out. Rape victims need to re-establish self-confidence. They benefit from counseling and the support of women of their own language and culture, although many prefer to hide this experience from people of their own culture.

Some have never experienced normal family relations - one locally sponsored woman spent age 8 to 18 as an orphan in a refugee camp. Because of this, she lacked interpersonal skills and good coping mechanisms.

They may be suspicious and mistrustful, withholding even trivial information from their sponsors or asking several different people to help them with the same task. Others experience nightmares and flashbacks. They worry about events at home and whether their friends and family are safe.

For torture survivors, a visit to the doctor can be frightening. It reminds them of their horrific experience, as they feel that they do not have control over their own bodies. A sympathetic doctor who explains the procedures can reduce the tension.

If you want to help traumatized people, realize that establishing trust takes time. You can help by respectfully listening to a refugee's story, thus validating their feelings. Then turn their thoughts to the future.

## **Relationship between the Newcomers and the Sponsor**

Just as there are phases in the integration of the newcomer, there can be phases in their relationship with the sponsor.

### **Phase 1: The Romance**

The relationship between sponsor and newcomer has been compared to a marriage. When they first arrive, there is the romance. Bonding takes place between the newcomers and the support group. This initial bonding between the two parties is crucial.

### **Phase 2: The Honeymoon**

In the second stage - the honeymoon - each party thinks the other is wonderful and can do no wrong. Newcomers frequently say: "You are our Canadian parents. No one has ever loved us this much before." The newcomers generally are pleased with what is being done for them, and the support group is willing to do anything and everything for the newcomers. The length of this phase is unpredictable, but usually lasts three to six months.

### **Phase 3: Disillusionment**

By the sixth month, but possibly earlier, the newcomers and sponsor often enter a period of disillusionment. Many newcomers become depressed and want to return home. After six months, life takes on a routine. Often the newcomers begin to see gaps in the help they receive and to compare themselves to other sponsored refugees. The culture shock and the newness wear off, English classes end, and they face the tough realities of making a living, often in settings where they experience prejudice and racism.

Disillusion sets in for both parties. Often, the sponsor's "fire" to help burns low after six months. This is often when both sponsors and newcomers begin to recognize each other's human failings. On the one hand, newcomers may think the sponsors are not doing enough or are being too domineering. On the other hand, you may think the newcomers are lacking initiative or are too demanding in their requests.

### **Phase 4: The Marriage**

Newcomers and sponsors usually enter a final stage, a steady relationship analogous to marriage, after the sixth month. This phase is characterized by each party showing the other more trust, allowing more independence and beginning to relate more as friends. Some discomfort for the other party may be a healthy sign of movement toward self-sufficiency.

Open and frequent communication enhances the movement to financial independence and long-lasting friendship.

## **The Support Group**

Once a parish has decided to sponsor, a smaller support group is formed. Success in the sponsorship depends on the care taken in selecting and training the support group.

The support group needs persons

- who can show love and concern,
- to whom the newcomers can turn in times of sadness,
- with whom they can share happiness and joy,
- who can help them become part of their new community.

The support group should have a chairperson who will call meetings and be the contact person for the diocesan refugee coordinator. Regular meetings allow everyone to discuss problems and find solutions.

The support group needs a good organizer who can make lists, set up a weekly appointment log, keep track of appointments and other bureaucratic interactions with the newcomers.

The group needs a Primary Contact Person. This person is usually a retired teacher, nurse, social worker, etc. The wealth of people skill gained from a lifetime of working with all kinds of people is invaluable.

One person should be responsible for accompanying the newcomers to medical appointments, another for looking after educational needs and maintaining contact with the schools, another for helping to find household furnishings and clothing, another for help in finding work, and so on.

The support group needs persons to be available at all times, during regular working hours, evenings, and weekends.

Realistically evaluate how much time and energy will likely be required - especially in the first four to six weeks - and if they are able to manage this workload.

Plan a series of classes to learn about the political and social realities of the refugee's country of origin. Learn about psychological aspects of migration and the trauma of war, loss of family members, prison, rape, etc.

A course in pastoral counseling - largely for listening skills - is almost mandatory for the members of the support group. Contact a hospital, long term care facility or lay counseling centre to arrange a course.

Establish a relationship with a settlement worker who speaks the newcomers' language. Ask this person about cross-cultural communication, English classes, employment classes, and youth groups. These are professionals and, quite often, the newcomer will form a strong bond with a settlement worker who speaks his language. Settlement workers can guide the support group and the newcomers through various problems. Ask the settlement worker to attend occasionally at meetings of the support group.

## **Boundaries and Balance**

The most difficult - and the most important - part of the relationship is defining the boundaries.

Members of the support group should not be too close, micro-managing the newcomer's affairs. She knows how to diaper her baby and make her tea. On the other hand, if you are too distant you will not know that a child is being abused or that a teenager is selling drugs. You must keep the balance between being too controlling and too polite, between being too close and too distant.

Depending on their culture, some newcomers welcome, even expect drop-in visits, while others want a phone call first.

Do not support the newcomers either too well or too poorly. Supporting them above the level which they can maintain on their own will lead to frustration after the sponsorship period. Supporting below the local Social Assistance is disrespectful and prevents friendship and trust from developing. The recommended 10% above welfare allows the newcomers dignity, while also providing them with the incentive to find employment.

At the beginning, the newcomers need help getting oriented, enrolling in language classes, etc. But the amount of attention should slowly taper off. This goes both ways - sometimes sponsors want too much interaction with the newcomer - other times, it is the newcomer who wants too much from the sponsor. The support group should slowly evolve from helpers to friends.

Each newcomer is different, just as each Canadian is different. Each person brings her own strengths and special needs to the experience of becoming a new Canadian. Problems crop up whenever the expectations of the newcomer and the sponsors differ. Therefore, talk about expectations with the newcomer.

Respect yourself

- Make a time commitment that is realistic for you and that you can easily follow.
- Learn to say "NO" without feeling ashamed or guilty.
- Do not allow the newcomers to invade your time and space more than you wish.

Respect the newcomers

- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not invade the newcomer's time and space more than they wish.

## **Secondary Migration**

Occasionally newcomers want to leave for another location within Canada before they become self-supporting. What are your obligations? What are their rights? What should you do?

They may wish (or insist) on moving to Montreal, Halifax or Calgary. You have no obligation to send them wherever they think the grass is greener or where they have friends or distant relatives. You have set a budget and gathered funds or pledges and should not be expected to raise additional funds to satisfy someone's whim.

Sometimes though, after arrival a newcomer will discover a mother or a brother in another city in Canada and may wish to move there. You should talk to everyone involved - discuss how the move can be financed, and how much support the people will need in their new location. At no time, should you have to pay more for their support elsewhere than you had intended to pay to keep them locally.

If you agree to the move, then you are obligated morally and legally to support them. If they move without your consent, then do not support them. If Social Assistance or Immigration contacts you, say that you are willing and able to support them in your locality and should they return (at their own expense or welfare's) you will support them for the time remaining in the sponsorship.

Occasionally, your family will not even arrive in your locality. They may get off the airplane in Toronto or Montreal. They may have money to support themselves; they may have friends or relatives that you did not know about. It is very disappointing to be waiting at the airport and they do not arrive. You may never hear from them. If you do hear from them, do not agree to support them in another locality.

### **Sponsor-Newcomer Agreement**

Because there is often much misunderstanding in the financial area, a sponsor-newcomer agreement will clarify that the sponsor's role is to help the newcomers become independent. It states when and how much you expect the newcomers to start contributing to their own support.

It states that sponsors are not responsible for any debts incurred by the newcomers. If the newcomers write bad cheques or make long distance calls, they will eventually have to pay these debts.

You may wish to prepare an agreement which includes more than the financial aspects. It could include agreements by the newcomers to:

- 1) live in the city or area where the sponsor resides for as long as the sponsor is supporting them,
- 2) make all efforts to learn English,
- 3) reveal to the sponsors the amount of money which they brought with them to Canada,
- 4) accept reasonable employment which may be offered or arranged - whether or not it is in their intended occupation,

While this may seem harsh and unnecessary, it will dispel many illusions and prevent many future problems. Have the agreement translated into the language of the newcomers.

## **Long Distance Phone Bills**

Quite often a newcomer will make many long distance calls, accumulating a very large bill. If the sponsor pays this, the next month's bill will be even larger and the practice will continue until a crisis is reached. It is better to avoid the problem at the outset.

The best advice is - put the phone in the name of the sponsoring group and put a restriction on it from the very beginning so that long distance calls cannot be made from that number. With cell phones, this has become more complicated.

## **Used Furniture and Clothing**

Many newcomers are quite happy to accept used furniture; the occasional family is not. As long as the quality and condition of the used furniture are acceptable, do not buy new furniture. Government-assisted refugees get new furniture, but the quality is often quite poor and the good used furniture provided by private sponsors is usually more substantial.

Some newcomers will not be accustomed to used clothing (but many will have had nothing else). If this is a severe problem, allow them to purchase a small amount of new clothing. Explain that it is very common for us to buy used clothing and that we consider bargain hunting to be fun and not a sign of poverty.



**SAMPLE AGREEMENT**

The sponsor will financially assist \_\_\_\_\_, hereafter known as the newcomers, for sponsorship period or until they become self-sufficient, whichever comes first.

When the newcomers begin work, the sponsor will decrease financial support by an amount agreed upon by the sponsor and the newcomers. The newcomers will make every effort to learn English and to find work. The newcomers realize that their first job in Canada may be an entry level, low-paying job.

The sponsor will pay a maximum per month for the following:

Rent	\$ _____
Utilities	\$ _____
Food	\$ _____
Transportation	\$ _____
Clothes	\$ _____
Telephone	\$ _____
Home Supplies	\$ _____
Furniture	\$ _____
Discretionary money	\$ _____
Health	\$ _____
Toiletries & hygiene	\$ _____
Education & reading	\$ _____
Reserve backup	\$ _____
<b>MONTHLY TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

The newcomers will pay for any credit card or other debts they incur. The sponsor will not be held liable for any debts taken on by the newcomer. The newcomers will pay for any long *distance telephone charges from their own savings (or from whatever the sponsor decides to set aside).*

The sponsoring committee and the newcomers will meet every three months to review the budget and expenses.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Preparing for the Arrival**

### **Culturally Sensitive Interpreters**

Before the newcomers arrive, meet the people who will interpret for them. Choose them carefully. Sometimes your words may be accurately translated, but your caring tone of voice could become an order. Sponsoring groups in cities will have more flexibility in choosing interpreters than groups in small towns. A city such as Victoria has many professionally trained interpreters; in smaller towns you may not find professional interpreters.

The ideal cultural interpreter goes beyond word for word interpretation and is culturally sensitive. The interpreter reproduces the meaning word for word, yet makes sure both parties understand the context of what is said. She may take time to explain the cultural context of each party's comments, and may ask for permission to explain what is said or asked. The interpreter may also explain to either party what is culturally appropriate behaviour.

Avoid selecting an interpreter from an ethnic group which is in conflict with the newcomers' ethnic group, or one who speaks the same language but comes from a widely different class; consider the implications of having a male or female interpreter.

### **Housing**

The family which you are sponsoring will need a place to live. Usually this means renting an apartment or sometimes a house depending on the family and your community. If the apartment is not ready when they arrive, they may need temporary accommodation.

#### **Temporary Housing**

When the newcomers first arrive, they may need temporary accommodation, either because they arrive midmonth or because you were notified only very shortly before the arrival.

If the newcomers do not speak English, they may be frightened to be in a hotel/motel and may feel safer with a family. If the family does stay in a hotel/motel, check out the hotel first as some inexpensive hotels are frequented by rowdies.

#### **Permanent Housing**

Provide for the family at a level which they will be able to maintain after the sponsorship period is over. To do this, find out what the local Social Service rates are for housing and utilities for a family like this.

It may be possible to pay a slightly higher rent during the sponsorship period and then arrange for them to move into subsidized housing. In British Columbia, government subsidized housing is available after one year of residence in the province and after the formal sponsorship period is over, but must be applied for many months in advance.

## **Preparing Basic Needs**

When your group agrees to sponsor a refugee or a refugee family, you agree to provide all their basic needs, including food, household furnishings, clothing, medicine, dentist and incidental expenditures. Private sponsorship is expected to go beyond what government sponsorship would provide.

If possible, prepare the newcomers' apartment for them with basic supplies before they move in, including donated furniture and linens. One essential item is a file box for documents and mail. Let the newcomer make choices for themselves, when possible, for any furnishings that need to be purchased.

There should be enough food for a couple days. It is best to have food which is familiar to them. Fresh fruit and juice are always welcome.

For safety, cover all electrical outlets with plastic safety caps; show the parents how to remove them when they arrive. Before their arrival, stock the home with basic food items that will be familiar to the newcomers. What we think of as staples may not be staples in other cultures.

If your newcomers are not familiar with electricity, hot running water, electric stoves, etc. they should stay with a family of their own culture or a Canadian family for a few days. If this is not possible, have someone stay with them in the apartment until they are comfortable using the appliances.

When the newcomers get their own apartment, they should be provided with

- basic furniture - beds, dressers, sofas, lamps, dining table and chairs
- basic kitchenware - pots and pans, dishes, cutlery, glasses, water kettle, mixing bowls, cooking utensils, kitchen towels and dishcloths
- basic linens - blankets, sheets, pillowcases and towels
- ironing board and cover, and iron
- basic food supply - flour, sugar, salt, spices, coffee, etc
- cleaning supplies and laundry soap

When the newcomers first arrive, they should be given enough clothing in good condition to attend school or work. In addition, they should have winter outerwear. They should be allowed to choose their clothing but need to understand that there is a limit on the amount to be spent. While many people have no objection to used clothing, occasionally - because of upbringing or culture - a person may not accept used clothing, in this case inexpensive but new clothing should be provided.

## **The First Two Weeks**

### **THE ARRIVAL**

Meet newcomers at the airport or the border. It is best if only one or two members of the support group go to the airport. Ask the interpreter to accompany you. If you have arranged for a family to accommodate them for a night or two, invite a member of that family to the airport. No media, no photos, no big signs!!!

A person from a rural background may never have been on an airplane before; she might not have used the toilet nor had anything to drink or eat on the airplane. Ask if she needs to use the washroom. Ask if she needs something to drink; bring water or fruit juice with you. Think ahead - do you need to bring warm coats? Do you need baby clothes?

#### **Settlement Workers**

These professionals are marvelous and invaluable. Most have vast experience; they know what newcomers need, where misunderstandings occur, etc. Involve them from the very beginning.

Ask the counselor if she could help your group do an initial assessment, by examining their immigration papers, and by inquiring about the newcomers' health, education and employment background, their concerns for family members left behind, their expectations and their fears.

#### **Toilets and Bathrooms**

Toilet usage varies in different parts of the world. Explain how to use a toilet, a urinal and where to put toilet paper. In many countries, the paper is not flushed down the toilet because the sewage cannot handle it. In some countries there are no seats; people stand instead, many try to stand on toilet seats here. Many immigrants are accustomed to bathrooms with a drain in the floor, so explain that they must not spill water on the bathroom floor. Women may need sanitary napkins.

#### **Emergency services**

On the very first day, explain the use of sirens and what they mean. If they've been in a refugee camp, they may think sirens mean an air raid.

#### **Fireworks**

If the arrival occurs shortly before Canada Day or Halloween, explain that the fireworks are for celebrating and are not guns and bombs.

## **ORIENTATION**

When they are ready to move into their own apartment, the support group should begin orienting them to their new community. Each newcomer will have different needs, depending on his background. A person - perhaps a settlement worker - who is fluent in both English and the newcomers' language can insure that the newcomers understand. Many newcomers will answer yes when asked if they understand - when, in fact, little is understood. To ascertain if the newcomer has understood something, ask him to explain it back to you.

### **Child safety**

Explain all hazards in the house. Hot water can burn children. The electric stove is easy to start and leave on accidentally. Electricity and water don't mix.

Many newcomers may come from simpler rural societies where there are always relatives close by; where there is less danger from electrical appliances or high-rise apartment buildings, where no one steals children. Because of these things, they are accustomed to leaving their children under a young child's supervision; this is both dangerous and illegal in Canada. Small children should never be locked inside an apartment when the adult leaves - even for a few moments.

### **Telephone**

Explain how to use the telephone and long distance charges. Show them how to find and use public phones. Explain when to use 911. Give the newcomers have a list of persons they can phone for help, advice and friendship. Put these names and numbers by their phone. Explain about cell phones and long distance charges on them.

### **Keys and Locks**

Explain that the apartment should be locked when no one is home. Their name and address should not be on the keychain - if the keys are lost, this would allow strangers access to their apartment.

### **Newcomers' Guide**

The B.C. government produces the Newcomers' Guide to Resources and Services in British Columbia. This excellent resource answers most of the questions newcomers ask after they arrive. To order a copy, go to [http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service\\_providers/pdf/2009\\_newcomers\\_guide\\_english\\_web.pdf](http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/service_providers/pdf/2009_newcomers_guide_english_web.pdf)

### **Town tour**

Take the newcomers on short tours of the community. Show them the Canada Employment Centre, Canada Immigration, multicultural centres, settlement agencies, their own ethnic group's centre, post office, nearby shopping centres, and schools for both children and adults. Point out police and fire departments and hospitals.

## **Food Shopping**

Introduce them to stores that carry food from their own country as well as larger grocery stores that carry fresh vegetables and meat. Let them make their own choice; they may not like brown bread or brown rice. Note: people who have been deprived of food may initially over-buy and over-eat. Show them how to comparison-shop and how to buy fruits and vegetables in season, pointing out the relative costs of familiar but imported fruits. Show how to buy in bulk, though this may be difficult if the newcomers have to carry their groceries. Help them learn to read labels and expiry dates on containers.

## **Laundry**

Explain how to use our weird and wonderful laundry equipment. Ensure that they have the correct change for the machines. Explain that ONLY laundry detergent can be used in the washer. Explain that they must never remove someone else's laundry from the machines - especially mid-cycle!!!

## **Mail**

Explain the kinds of mail that newcomers should expect, showing how to sort junk mail from important mail. Make sure the newcomer has somewhere to store immigration papers and other documents, receipts and information for filling out tax forms. Help setting up a filing system for documents. If the newcomers don't read English, appoint someone to go through their collected mail once a week.

## **An Interpreter**

An interpreter should help newcomers in their interviews with social workers or other professionals. The interpreter should:

- treat both parties respectfully;
- be honest in sharing what is actually said by both client and professional;
- elaborate to explain what is happening to both parties;
- steer the professional away from culturally inappropriate actions;
- challenge discriminatory comments (e.g., "all refugees live on welfare");
- advise the newcomer of rights and possible actions to take.

Most often, a settlement worker will serve as your interpreter.

## **Social Insurance Number**

Within the first week, take the newcomers to the local Service Canada Centre (see appendix 1) to obtain a Social Insurance Number. Alternately, phone 1-800-206-7218

## **Canada Child Tax Benefit**

The Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) is a non-taxable amount paid monthly to help eligible families with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age. Information can be found at: [http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/cctb/fq\\_qlfyng-eng.html#q6](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/cctb/fq_qlfyng-eng.html#q6)

To apply for the CCTB, complete Form RC66, Canada Child Benefits Application. You will also have to complete the schedule RC66SCH, Status in Canada/Statement of Income. Mail the completed forms to:

Surrey Tax Centre  
9755 King George Highway  
Surrey, BC V3T 5E1

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) administers the BC Family Bonus. There is no need to apply separately to qualify under this program. The CRA will use the information from your Canada Child Benefits application to determine your eligibility for these programs. The Child Tax Benefit can only be received for children in Canada.

## **Medical Coverage**

### **Interim Federal Health Program**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada administers the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP). Resettled refugees and their in-Canada dependants are eligible for benefits under the IFHP until they become eligible for provincial health plan coverage.

Register newcomers for IFH at your local Canada Immigration Centre (see appendix). Privately sponsored refugees are eligible under this program, but must apply.

Under the Resettlement Assistance Program, resettled refugees with provincial health coverage are provided with supplemental IFHP coverage for one year from the date of entry to Canada. Supplemental coverage includes emergency dental, vision and pharmaceutical care. This coverage can be extended up to 24 months for recipients identified with special needs. For more information on the IFHP, see the website of FAS Benefit Administrators Ltd. The guidelines are specific, and must be followed exactly.

The IFH Program is not meant to replace provincial health plans, nor does it 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. In British Columbia, the waiting period for provincial health-care coverage can be as much as 90 days after the newcomer has arrived in the province. Once provincial coverage has started, refugees are eligible for partial benefits under the IFH Program up to 12 months from the time of arrival in the country (24 months for Joint Assistance Sponsorships). For more information, see appendix 2.



## **Health Insurance BC**

The newcomers must be enrolled in our provincial medical plan, Health Insurance BC. For information and forms, visit their website at: [www.hibc.gov.bc.ca](http://www.hibc.gov.bc.ca). Forms may also be obtained, completed and left at Canada Service Centres (Appendix 1). Processing takes approximately two months and coverage starts approximately 3 months after arrival.

Make doctor and dentist appointments as soon as possible. Unless their English is excellent, an interpreter should accompany them. Many women require a woman doctor, and persons who have been tortured may fear medical staff. At medical appointments, a support group member or the interpreter should record any advice or medication prescribed.

A newcomer's country of origin may have different philosophies of health and medical service. In developing countries, western-style medical care often is available in urban areas and affordable by only a few. Poor people often go to the doctor only when very ill and to a hospital as a last resort.

Some cultures place a higher emphasis on spiritual or psychological healing than western medicine, which mostly limits itself to biological healing. Therefore provide information and access to medical care, but respect the newcomer's traditional understanding of healing.

## **Welcoming Celebration**

After a few days, plan a small celebration for the newcomers and the support group. Ask the newcomers if they wish to prepare a meal for their new friends. Explain that you will take them to a store that has food from their homeland and that you will pay for the food for the dinner. Sometimes, the newcomers may be too traumatized or may just be overwhelmed by this whole experience and the celebration should be postponed awhile.

The celebration is a good time to present small gifts like appointment books, a dictionary which translates their language into English and maps. Some groups present each newcomer with a nice NEW gift - a nice serving dish, a watch, or backpacks for school.

## **Transportation**

Obtain bus passes and show the newcomers how to get around on their own. This is very important! They will have a much greater sense of independence and well-being when they learn to get around by themselves.

Some newcomers are illiterate and will need to learn read numbers and a little English before they can take the bus or use a map. Fortunately, on Vancouver Island, our cities are small and most services can be accessed by walking. Arrange for newcomers with little or no English to live within walking distance of schools and stores.



## **Schools**

One member of the support group should enroll the children in school. Introduce yourself to the children's teachers and principal. Our schools have SWIS, Settlement Workers in the Schools. Maintain regular contact with the teachers, the principal and the settlement worker and leave your name and phone number with all of them.

Small children adapt quickly and seem to learn English almost overnight. Teenagers have a more difficult time and may need encouragement to graduate from high school.

Ask the high school if there an age limit for attending the school. Is the local high school appropriate for the teenagers or would adult education suit them better?

## **Youth Groups**

Settlement agencies have many activities for immigrant youth, from homework clubs to movie nights. These are very, very valuable for immigrant youth. They meet others like themselves, make friends and talk about their experiences.

## **English classes**

English classes are most meaningful when newcomers have English-speaking friends with whom they want to communicate. So enroll the newcomers in ESL (English as a Second Language) classes and provide opportunities to help them make friends.

## **Banking**

Explain our banking system, open an account with the newcomer and let them practice filling out withdrawal and deposit slips and paying bills. Demonstrate how to use ATM and explain about extra charges. You may need to explain why we keep money in the bank rather than in the house.

## **Police**

Depending upon the circumstances that caused them to leave their country, the newcomers may distrust all forms of authority, particularly the police. Explain the two roles of the police in Canada: law enforcement and protecting people. Tell them that the police will help them in emergencies. Consider arranging a personal introduction for the newcomers to the police, to alleviate their concerns.

## **Shopping**

Show the newcomers the inexpensive places to shop: Salvation Army, Goodwill, St. Vincent de Paul, Value Village, Women in Need.

## **Religion**

Religious philosophies underpin most social and cultural practices worldwide. Whether an individual was actively engaged in religious practice in their homeland or not, for most, it is central to their identity. Religious beliefs and traditions may be among the few elements of their heritage that newcomers have not lost.

Respect the religious beliefs (or their absence) of those you sponsor. Ask if they wish to attend a religious organization. Give the newcomers an opportunity to attend the service or faith of their choice, and help them make the initial contact.

Invite the newcomers to attend a service or other function at your parish, so that they may see the group who sponsored them and who supports them. Make it clear that they are not expected to attend your church, but will always be welcomed there.

## **Maintaining Cultural Ties**

Newcomers need friendships with people of their own culture. This reduces the trauma of relocation and speaking a foreign language.

In their home country, their extended family and home community provided identity and emotional support. Without these, newcomers may feel cut adrift. Here local cultural community support helps them maintain their sense of identity and emotional well-being.

It is best if a person retains his cultural identity, while adapting to our new culture. In the United States, people found that Vietnamese who were dispersed became more depressed and committed suicide more than those who remained in touch with their own culture.

However, some newcomers find themselves exploited by countrymen who take advantage of their inexperience. The settlement workers can provide advice to the newcomers on this type of problem.

## **LISTEN**

Listen to what the newcomers want to do and what their priorities are.

Clearly, there is a lot to cover in orientation. No one can absorb all this new information in just one week, so spread the orientation over a month. You may wish to keep another log for orientation. Make sure that each item in this section is dealt with at least once; some areas, like banking should be repeated.

## **The First Few Months: Family Issues**

### **Trauma**

Traumatized children may act out in school or may withdraw into themselves. They may have nightmares or wet the bed. They may stop their emotional developmental. Children need someone to talk to about their experiences, yet sometimes parents cannot bear to listen.

These children benefit tremendously from extra attention through youth programs or SWIS, Settlement Workers in the Schools. Sometimes, the youth worker at your parish can help. Sometimes they need professional help.

Help the children get to know Canadian children of the same age.

### **Parental Authority**

Families will continue to speak their own language at home. The parents are more skilled than their children in their native language. The children quickly become more skilled in English. Speaking their native language helps the parents maintain their authority and teach their values and culture.

Except in emergencies, children should not act as interpreters for their parents. This lessens parental authority, and children may not have the words or ideas which the parent is trying to express.

Adolescents can be very conflicted. Part of their identity comes from their parents and their parents' culture. However, they pick up our new culture quickly and are very influenced by peers. They often argue with their parents over clothing, curfews, dating and arranged marriages. These are difficult situations. The children wish to integrate faster than their parents think wise, but the parents need to be supported in their authority.

Children feel unsupported if they see their parents as incompetent and unable to cope, and afterwards do not treat parents as respectfully. Children - especially adolescents - do best when their parents are firm, confident and give structure, and yet are compassionate and willing to listen.

### **Canadian Norms and Problems**

Explain Canadian norms about children. Children must attend school and children under 12 years must have adult supervision in the home at all times. Disciplinary practices may be very different in the two cultures. Ignorance of what is acceptable in Canada could have unfortunate legal and social consequences.

Explain the dangers of drug trafficking and other social problems in Canada.

## **Sensitive Information**

Communicating sensitive information can be tricky. One sponsor found they needed to convey culturally sensitive information within a few days of the newcomers' arrival. The interpreter, however, felt uncomfortable verbalizing the information.

The sponsor resolved the situation by having this information translated, in a check-list format along with information the family already knew like this "It is not okay to hit your children or wife in this culture. Your children could be taken away, and the police could be involved."

The interpreter then read and discussed all the items on the sheet with the family, explaining that this was part of the sponsor's normal process. This avoided the embarrassment of dealing with the sensitive issue separately.

Family planning must be addressed. Some newcomers may be knowledgeable and practice it; others may not. If your group is not comfortable discussing this issue, ask the family's doctor to bring it up at the first medical checkup.

## **Changing Marital Dynamics**

Relations between men and women may be different in Canada than in the newcomers' home country where women may have enjoyed few legal rights. This change in the woman's status might put stress on their marriage.

Women often find employment before their husbands and the man's role as the provider is thus compromised.

If newcomers must deal with marital breakdown, separation or divorce, they will probably need support, information and help in getting appropriate counseling and legal resources. Their willingness to accept help may be affected by cultural conditioning, shame and fear of coping economically if their marriage dissolves.

## **Domestic Violence**

One in ten Canadian women has been battered; one in four has suffered sexual abuse from family or strangers. In Canada, domestic violence occurs in all classes and - is equally pervasive among newcomers. Tell newcomers that, in Canada, physical and sexual assault are crimes punishable by law.

Women and children have a right to safety and you must ensure the safety of women and children when violence occurs. Help women get information, counseling and skills so they can stop being controlled by their abusers. If you do not feel comfortable dealing with this issue, refer to your local women's shelter, crisis centre or Family and children's service office.

## **Employment**

Employment offers economic rewards and contributes to the well-being, a sense of dignity and independence.

Like you, the newcomer has pride and needs to become established and respected. Many husbands see themselves as the family head, so are willing to pick daffodils or take any job, just so their family sees them working.

It is often easier for a woman to find housekeeping work that pays twice as much as the janitorial work her husband may find. Ensure the family head feels the respect he felt in his homeland, not just what is warranted by what he does now.

How soon newcomers look for work will depend on each person's facility in English and their physical health:

- Some will seek work immediately, thank their sponsors for bringing them, and are independent.
- Some are illiterate in their own language, learn English very slowly, and take several years to be self-sufficient.
- Most are somewhere between these two extremes.

Sometimes, parents will hesitate to take ESL classes or look for work. They may be waiting to be certain that the children, especially adolescents - are adjusting well before they spend time outside the home.

If the newcomer works for a while and becomes self-supporting, but is then laid-off, the sponsor must resume financial support. Note, in this situation the newcomer may be eligible for Unemployment Insurance. Sponsored refugees do not qualify for welfare until after the formal sponsorship ends.

Former lace machine operators might train as hairdressers. Former teachers might train in Early Childhood Education and then work in day care centres for preschoolers. Most immigrants (but not all) find that they will be employed at a much lower level than in their homeland. Doctors become home care attendants, engineers become apartment managers.

## **Reviewing the Budget and Agreement**

After three months, when the newcomers are settled into a routine, arrange a formal meeting to review their budget and the terms of agreement with them. They need to start paying their own bills and working with a budget. Periodically, check to see how this is going and give advice.

Remind them that the sponsorship is for one year, but that the goal is for them to be independent by the end of the year. Ideally, they will be working toward independence once they have a job.

You may wish to ask a settlement worker to come for the third month session. The newcomers may feel freer to discuss any problems with the third party. Their role is to ease communication between your support group and the newcomers - not to break your bond.



## **Advocating for the Newcomers**

You can help newcomers through your facility with English, your knowledge of our systems and your willingness to persevere. You can prevent newcomers from being taken advantage of. As sponsor, you may need to serve as an advocate for the newcomers in securing their rights or in getting certain services.

If the newcomer has been working but is laid off for medical reasons, she may be eligible for worker's compensation. Collecting benefits require weekly visits and phone calls, and your Canadian advocacy can be a real advantage in working with the system.

There have been cases of companies that have not paid immigrant employees the amount owed to them. As sponsor, you should help them calculate their pay cheques, and then look at the cheques to see if they have been paid properly. If not, go with them to the supervisor and find out how to correct any errors. Further advocacy will be necessary if an employer will not address the errors.

## **Evaluating the Sponsorship**

Both the newcomer and the sponsor will find it helpful to evaluate the sponsorship after six months and again at the end of the year.

### **Six-Month Evaluation**

The six-month evaluation is only an informal meeting of the newcomers with your committee. If either has any particular problems, you may ask a settlement worker to meet with each individually before meeting together. That third person serves as an advocate both for the committee and the newcomers.

### **Final Evaluation**

On the following pages are two forms you can use as guides for final evaluations. Ideally, a third party should meet separately with both the newcomers and your committee to do these evaluations.

## **SAMPLE SPONSORSHIP EVALUATION - THE COMMITTEE**

1. What was your most positive experience over the past year?
  
2. How would you rank your performance?
  - Superior, exceeded goal
  
  - Excellent, met goal
  
  - Could benefit from further training
  
3. In what ways was your group challenged to grow?
  
4. How many people in your group were actively involved with the newcomer?  
  
In what ways were they involved?
  
5. What would you do differently a second time around?
  
6. Was the information you received in advance adequate?  
  
What else would have been helpful?
  
7. What additional support would have been helpful?
  
8. Would you be prepared to continue sponsoring?
  
9. What follow-up are you prepared to do with the newcomers?
  
10. Other Comments

## **SAMPLE SPONSORSHIP EVALUATION - THE NEWCOMERS**

1. Did you receive enough information when you first arrived?
2. How did the sponsoring group help you most in becoming settled in Canada?
3. What could have been improved and what recommendations would you make to the sponsoring group if it were to sponsor refugees again?
4. What was missed in helping you?
5. What further support would you personally like from the sponsoring group?
6. Can you suggest ways we could help other refugees?
7. Other comments

## **After the First Year - When the Sponsorship Ends**

After the formal sponsorship ends, it is up to your sponsoring group how they will continue. Ideally, members of your group will visit periodically with the newcomers and continue to be friends. The newcomers may also need your continued advocacy until they become familiar with Canada's systems.

The settlement process takes much longer than you might think - three generations. Newcomers to Canada never fully learn to think and act like Canadians and don't fully integrate. Their children, the second generation, normally maintain most of their parent's cultural traditions and still socialize mostly with their own cultural group. Not until the newcomer's grandchildren, the third generation, are on the scene will they fully feel, think and act like Canadians.

It is exciting to watch a person find himself and find some happiness after being a refugee. And it's satisfying to know you have been part of it.

## Appendix 1

### IMPORTANT ADDRESSES AND PHONE NUMBERS

#### **Anglican Refugee Ministry**

912 Vancouver St.  
Victoria, BC V8V 3V7  
Tel: 250-386-7781 fax: 250.386.4013 Toll Free 1.800.582.8627

#### **B. C. Medical Services Plan**

PO Box 9035 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E3  
Tel: 1-800-663-7100 Fax: 250-405-3595

#### **Campbell River and Area Multicultural and Immigrant Services Association**

#202 – 437 10th Avenue  
Campbell River, B.C. V9W 4E4  
Tel: 250 830-0171 Fax: 250 830-1010 E-mail: [info@crmisa.ca](mailto:info@crmisa.ca)

#### **Canada Immigration Centre, Victoria**

Room 377, 816 Government Street  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1W9  
Fax: 363-3669

#### **Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society**

285 Prideaux Street  
Nanaimo, B.C. V9R 2N2  
Tel: 250 753-6911 Fax: 250 753-4250 E-mail: [admin@cvims.org](mailto:admin@cvims.org)

#### **School District 68** SWIS (Settlement Workers in the Schools)

Tel: 250 754-5521

#### **Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society – Parksville Office**

197 Harrison Avenue  
Parksville, B.C.  
Tel: 250 586-1122 Fax: 250 586-1566 Please phone ahead to book an appointment  
E-mail: [parksville@cvims.org](mailto:parksville@cvims.org)

#### **Comox Valley Adult Literacy and Learning Society – Adult Learning Centre**

407 5th Street  
Courtenay, B.C. V9N 1J7  
Tel: 250 338-5583 E-mail: [smio@shaw.ca](mailto:smio@shaw.ca)

#### **Cowichan Valley Intercultural and Immigration Aid Society**

#101 – 255 Ingram Street  
Duncan, B.C. V96 1P3  
Tel: 250 748-3112 Fax: 250 748-1335



**Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria**

930 Balmoral Road  
Victoria, B.C. V8T 1A8  
Tel: 250 388-4728 Fax: 250 386-4395

**The Law Centre**

1221 Broad St.  
Victoria, BC V8W 2A4  
Telephone: 250 385-1221 Fax: 250 385-1226

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) at Catholic Crosscultural Services

55 Town Centre Court Suite 401  
Scarborough ON M1P 4X4  
Tel: 416-290-1700 ext.403; 1-877-290-1701 Fax: 416-290-1710  
website [www.rstp.ca](http://www.rstp.ca)

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

Branch Office for Canada  
280 Albert St., Suite 401  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G8  
Tel: 613-232-0909 general e-mail [canot@unhcr.org](mailto:canot@unhcr.org)  
Resettlement: Michael Casasola  
Assistant: Teresa Hadzic

**Victoria Transition House**

Tel: 250 385-6611

**Victoria Coalition for Survivors of Torture**

1611, Quadra Street  
Victoria, BC, Canada, V8W 2L5  
Website: [www.vcst.ca](http://www.vcst.ca) E-mail: [vcst.info@gmail.com](mailto:vcst.info@gmail.com)

**Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society**

3rd Floor – 637 Bay Street  
Victoria, B.C. V8T 5L2  
Tel: 250 361-9433 Fax: 250 361-1914 E-mail: [info@vires.bc.ca](mailto:info@vires.bc.ca)

**School District 61 SWIS - (Settlement Workers in the Schools)**

Tel: 250 475-4189



**Service Canada Centres**

**Monday - Friday**

**8:30 am - 4:00 pm**

Campbell River  
950 Alder Street , Suite 101  
Campbell River, British Columbia

Comox Valley  
130 19th Street  
Courtenay, British Columbia

Cowichan  
211 Jubilee Street  
Duncan, British Columbia

Nanaimo  
60 Front Street , Suite 201  
Nanaimo, British Columbia

Victoria  
595 Pandora Ave.  
Victoria, BC V8W 1N5



## Appendix 2

### Interim Federal Health Program

Citizenship and Immigration Canada administers the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP). Resettled refugees and their in-Canada dependants are eligible for benefits under the IFHP until they become eligible for provincial health plan coverage.

Register newcomers for IFH at your local Canada Immigration Centre (see appendix). Privately sponsored refugees are eligible under this program, but must apply.

Under the Resettlement Assistance Program, resettled refugees with provincial health coverage are provided with supplemental IFHP coverage for one year from the date of entry to Canada. Supplemental coverage includes emergency dental, vision and pharmaceutical care. This coverage can be extended up to 24 months for recipients identified with special needs. For more information on the IFHP, see the website of FAS Benefit Administrators Ltd. The guidelines are specific, and must be followed exactly.

The IFH Program is not meant to replace provincial health plans, nor does it 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 eligible for partial benefits under the IFH Program up to 12 months from the time of arrival in Canada (24 months for Joint Assistance Sponsorships). For more information, see appendix 2.

### SERVICES THAT ARE COVERED

- Essential services only for the treatment and prevention of serious medical and dental conditions (see Dental Care Regulations below).
- Contraception, prenatal and obstetrical care.
- Essential medications only, and they must be Compendium of Pharmaceutical Specialties (CPS) prescription drugs (lowest cost alternatives, listed on provincial drug formularies, or life-supporting drugs such as insulin or nitroglycerine).
- Provincial health-care plan fees and the fee codes (where applicable) must be supplied.  
Invoices must be submitted within six months of service.

### SERVICES COVERED ONLY WITH PRIOR APPROVAL

Requests for prior approval must be submitted by mail or fax to:

Manager, Interim Federal Health Program  
Citizenship and Immigration Canada 365 Laurier Avenue West, 14<sup>th</sup> floor  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1L1 Fax: 1-800-362-7456.

- Allergy testing/desensitization
- Cosmetic plastic surgery under special circumstances (e.g., severe disfigurement)
- Diagnostic services (surgical, laboratory or X-ray) when no significant medical short-



- term complications are foreseen
- Elective surgery (e.g., hernia repair, cholecystectomy, rhinoplasty, tympanoplasty)
  - Essential sports medicine and physiotherapy
  - Eyewear (if serious condition is present); prior approval and visual acuities needed for all patients
  - General assessments, counseling, psychotherapy
  - High-cost medications (e.g., Imitrex, Accutane, Interferon and Acyclovir)
  - High-cost procedures (e.g., transplants, lithotripsy)
  - Ongoing psychiatric therapy (after initial consultation)
  - Prosthetic or mechanical devices, including hearing devices and artificial eyes

Invoices and photocopies of original identity / IFH eligibility documents to be mailed by health-care providers only to: FAS Benefit Administrators Ltd., 9707-110 <sup>th</sup> Street, 9th Floor, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 3T4.

Information for health professionals only: 1-800-770-2998.

Further information for services providers including updates on benefits, eligibility documents, and claim submission forms can be found at the administrator's web site: [www.fasadmin.com](http://www.fasadmin.com).

## **SERVICES NOT COVERED BY THE INTERIM FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAM**

- No routine medical examinations (e.g., yearly physicals, eye examinations, pre-employment examinations) are covered by IFH.
- Service or medication provided solely at the patient's request
- Chiropractic services and acupuncture
- Infertility work-up and treatment
- Naturopathy or any other alternative medicine
- Non-emergency ambulance service / transportation
- Non-emergency dental services (see below)
- Over-the-counter medications (even if prescribed by a doctor)

### **Dental Care Regulations**

Only emergency dental services are covered by IFH. (Emergency services are defined as urgent procedures needed to alleviate pain, active infection, hemorrhage or the results of oral trauma.)

Maximum coverage during the patient's eligibility period is \$400 (the eligibility period must be supported by an IFH eligibility document bearing a photograph of the patient). A maximum of two teeth may be treated per visit.

### **THIS FUNDING IS INTENDED TO COVER ONLY THE FOLLOWING:**

- Emergency examinations (no more frequent than once every three months)
- Radiographs (no more than two intra-oral films per visit)
- Permanent fillings (composite, amalgam and stainless steel crowns only)



- Pulpal treatments (only opening and drainage on permanent teeth; only pulpotomies on primary teeth)
- *Periodontal services (limited only to emergency treatment of acute oral/gingival infections e.g., drainage of periodontal abscesses)*
- Extractions (uncomplicated tooth removal is allowed; complex extractions require pre-treatment radiograph submission and pre-authorization)
- Drug prescriptions (only those needed to treat the emergency condition)
- Flipper partial dentures (wire-reinforced if necessary) to replace anterior teeth and any strategic posterior teeth that happen to be missing at the same time in the same arch (please note that cast partial dentures will not be routinely covered)

