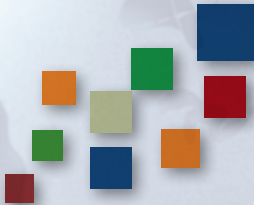




Citizenship and Immigration Canada  
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Citizenship and Immigration Canada

# Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program



Canada



# 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 and persons in refugee-like situations. Under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations*, there are two classes of persons who may qualify as refugees for Canada's refugee and humanitarian resettlement program. The classes are the Convention Refugees Abroad Class and the Country of Asylum 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.

An officer at a Canadian visa office overseas makes the final decision on whether someone meets one of these definitions and is, therefore, eligible for resettlement. The eligibility decision is normally 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, security and admissibility checks. 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 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:** A 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, who live in the expected community of settlement and who 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 individual contributions of group members to the sponsorship. The financial and non-financial aspects are considered collectively as well as the settlement plan before the sponsorship is approved. The group's financial commitment must meet the levels established in the Sponsorship Cost Table (included in the G5 application kit).

**Community Sponsors:** Any organization (for-profit or not-for-profit, incorporated or non-incorporated) located in the community where the refugees are expected to settle can make an organizational commitment to sponsor. The Department allows Community Sponsors to submit only two sponsorship undertakings a year and they 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).

A SAH, a CG or a Community Sponsor has the option of formalizing a partnership with an outside party to share in 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 to 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 a SAH, interested organizations must submit a completed application form and all required documentation (articles of incorporation, audited financial statements, etc.) to Director, Integration and Resettlement Program Delivery, Integration Program Management Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 360 Laurier Avenue West, 9th Floor, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1. The application to become a 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 a 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 end of this section.

**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 end of this section.

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 end of this section.

**Cosponsor:** Interested individuals should contact a 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 (there are separate applications for SAH/CGs, Groups of Five and Community Sponsors) as well as the IMM 6000 (overseas application kit), which the refugee must complete, can be obtained at [www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/private.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/private.asp).



## 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.

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 Program as described in section 2.10. The sponsoring group is obliged to provide support to all family members listed on the undertaking, regardless of the timing of their arrival in Canada. The sponsor is responsible for supporting the non-accompanying family members under the same terms as in the original settlement plan, unless the principal refugee applicant is now self-sufficient and able to provide adequately for his or her family members. De facto dependants should also be included in the sponsorship, but should be named on a separate undertaking as described in section 2.11.

## 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 possible so the sponsoring group is advised not to count on employment income when securing funds for the sponsorship.

## 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 match made between a sponsoring group and a refugee?

There are two ways to achieve a match between a sponsoring group and 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. Sponsorship Agreement Holders/Constituent Groups, Groups of Five 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 (e.g., SAH/CG, Group of Five or Community Sponsor).

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 Section 2.1 [“Who may be sponsored?”](#) and Section 2.2 [“Who may not be sponsored?”](#)) Ineligible applicants will be refused;
- determine whether the person has relatives or friends in Canada. In most cases, refugees should be resettled in their relative’s community.

**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 one to four 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, as well as any particular settlement needs that might exist in transit and in the first few weeks after the refugees have arrived in Canada.

Sponsoring groups can request a visa office-referred case by completing form IMM 5496 (Request for a Refugee Profile) and submitting it to their local Citizenship and Immigration Centre. SAHs can view profiles of visa office-referred cases online at [www.cic.gc.ca/jas-pac/index\\_e.aspx](http://www.cic.gc.ca/jas-pac/index_e.aspx).

## 2.10 What is a non-accompanying family member and the One Year Window of Opportunity?

Non-accompanying family members are spouses and dependent children of the principal applicant who have been separated from the family unit. De facto dependants (see definition below) 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. Family members who are not identified on the IMM 0008 application will not be eligible for the One Year Window of Opportunity or for sponsorship under the Family Class at a later date.

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, the family member in Canada can send the IMM 6000 application to the family members abroad and advise them to complete the application forms and gather supporting documents. They need to indicate on their application (by checking the appropriate box at the top of page 1 of Schedule 2) that they are applying under the "One Year Window" program.



## 2.11 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. 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 be refugees in their own right and meet all statutory requirements. Where the de facto dependant does not qualify as a refugee in their own right, they may be eligible for humanitarian and compassionate consideration. Persons who form part of the family unit will be examined while keeping in mind that it is most important to keep family units together.

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.

De facto dependants are **not** eligible under the One Year Window of Opportunity (OYW) as they do not meet the definition of family member described above.

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. To the extent possible, sponsors should work with appropriate authorities to try to avoid any 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 or who are solely or for the most part dependent on the applicant for care, shelter, etc.

Examples of persons who may not qualify as 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 (more than six months), but who is not without family of his or her own.



## 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 application will likely be refused.



## 2.13 How does a group begin the sponsorship process?

Once a sponsoring group has been formed, it must obtain the appropriate CIC application kit which may be ordered from the Call Centre or downloaded from the CIC website. (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 area where the group is based.

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 information on processing and settlement issues pertaining 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 the approved undertaking and the completed application for permanent residence (if applicable) to the visa office responsible for the area where the refugee lives; also send a copy of the approved undertaking 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;
- notify the sponsor and local Citizenship and Immigration Centre when the visa office receives the completed IMM 0008 application and when a selection decision has been made (see 2.16);
- conduct an interview to determine if the applicant is a member of the Convention Refugees Abroad Class or Country of Asylum 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 [VOR] sponsorships) send a completed VOR referral form I to the Matching Centre so that the profile can be added to the online refugee profile directory;
- issue a loan for transportation and medical 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 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 website ([www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/conref.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/conref.asp)). 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. To expedite processing, CIC encourages sponsors to select the third option. The three options are:

Option 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. This process can often be time-consuming if applications are incomplete. Delays result if the visa office needs to contact the applicant to request missing information.

Option 2: The sponsoring groups send the IMM 6000 kit and a copy of the approved sponsorship undertaking to the refugee applicant, who submits the 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 because the sponsor is able to communicate directly with the applicant and assist them in obtaining and completing the forms, and collecting the supporting documents.

Option 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 forms have been completely filled and no required information is missing 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. This option 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 in which they are now residing.

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 persecution of persons with similar attributes, 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 are encouraged to complete the "Sponsorship Rationale" section of the undertaking form. While optional, this section provides sponsors the opportunity to explain why the principal refugee applicant is being referred for protection; why resettlement is the only durable solution available to them; and why Canada is the most logical choice as a destination. This section can assist sponsors in screening their applications so that they can determine, to the best of their knowledge, whether the applicant meets one of the refugee definitions. The final decision on whether an applicant is both eligible and admissible rests with the visa officer.

Sponsoring groups are further encouraged to include their settlement plan for refugees who they feel may 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 is designed to help sponsors show why the person is in need of resettlement and what arrangements have been made 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 working days of CIC receiving the sponsorship application 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 negative, the refusal reasons will be provided; if positive, the update will include the average time to departure).

Sponsors can also use e-CAS, an online 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.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/e-services/index.asp).

## 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 (DMP) to receive medical clearance. The visa office will provide applicants with instructions for the medical examination. The refugee applicants will also undergo and 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 in Canada. 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 are usually travel-ready by the time a match has been made with a private sponsorship group in Canada, and usually arrive within one to four months after the local CIC has approved the sponsorship.

**Sponsor-referred cases:** Considerable time can pass between the time an application is made and the time the refugees arrive in Canada. The selection process for these refugees can fluctuate with the volume of applications received at the visa offices. Processing times in each visa office for the last 12 months are available online at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/international/11-ref-private.asp>. Sponsors are encouraged to consult this link regularly to help them plan for the arrival of sponsored refugees.

The sponsoring group will generally receive a notification of arrival 10 days before the refugee is scheduled to arrive in Canada.

## 2.19 Other useful information

**Medical coverage:** Depending on the province of destination, the waiting period for provincial health-care coverage can be as much as 90 days. The Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) 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 IFHP, including dental and vision care and the costs of prescription drugs. Information on the IFHP 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 website](#) 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 (PR) card. These cards are valid for five years. Upon arrival in Canada, the newly arrived refugee will usually be asked to provide a mailing address in Canada to which the PR card will be sent.

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 Call Centre at 1-888-242-2100 (toll-free); or
2. by using the [Online Address Update](#) service.

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**

Sponsors are encouraged to maintain open lines of communication with both the refugee and the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre throughout the sponsorship period.

It may happen that, at some point during the sponsorship period, the refugee decides to move out of the sponsor's community. This is referred to as "secondary migration." If this happens to a group sponsoring under a SAH, the group is advised to discuss the situation with the SAH.





## 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 replaces the first and 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 responsible, then it is released from all further obligations.

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 online.

# 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 and in addition, receive 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 or the Country of Asylum Class;
- must have a greater need of settlement assistance than other Government-Assisted Refugees because of exceptional resettlement needs such as one or more of the following:
  - physical or mental disability which could require treatment in Canada;
  - unusual family configuration such as single-parent families with several young children or families consisting only of siblings, one or more of whom has assumed parental responsibilities;
  - separated minors;
  - elderly persons; or
  - other special needs identified by the visa office.

JAS cases do not require the same financial capacity of sponsoring groups as regular private sponsorship cases, but they 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 required by the applicant's special needs for it to be considered a suitable destination.





Only SAHs and their CGs are eligible to participate in JAS sponsorships. Groups of Five and Community Sponsors are not eligible to be sponsors of JAS cases.

**JAS profiles on the website:** 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 website 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 (travel ready) 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 website 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 website, 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 the inventory until a suitable match is made. One of the functions of the Matching Centre is to manage 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 website 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 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.

## 3.2 Women at Risk Program

The Women at Risk (AWR) program is for women who do not have the normal protection of a family unit and 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 class, they may not fully meet the requirement to demonstrate an ability to establish themselves in Canada in the short or medium term.

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

In many 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.

Women at risk should be counselled that it will not be possible in the future to sponsor a previously undeclared spouse under the Family Class program. Undeclared spouses will also not be eligible for resettlement under the One Year Window of Opportunity (see section 2.10).



### 3.3 Urgent Protection Program

The Urgent Protection Program (UPP) was developed to enable Canada to respond to requests by referral organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to provide rapid resettlement for refugees in urgent need of protection. 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 a Canadian visa office abroad. Thereafter, a decision to resettle the refugee is made within 24–48 hours. CIC tries to ensure that these cases are en route to Canada within three to five days of referral to the visa office 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.

For privately sponsored refugees who are in urgent need of protection, the applicant must present themselves to the UNHCR for an assessment. It is the mandate of the UNHCR or other designated referral agency to provide protection in the country of refuge. Should the UNHCR find the applicant to be in need of urgent protection, they will advise the visa office who will proceed as above.

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 cities with reception centres and where a sponsor is likely to be found. 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.

# Appendix A

## CIC Call Centre and Website

### CIC Call Centre

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

### CIC Website

The Citizenship and Immigration Canada main website: [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca).

# Appendix B

## Interim Federal Health Program

The Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) is designed to provide temporary medical coverage for certain immigrants in need of assistance. Eligible services include basic coverage—treatments normally covered by provincial or territorial health insurance plans—plus supplemental coverage—health benefits such as drugs, dental and vision care similar to those provided by provincial or territorial social assistance plans. The IFHP serves approximately 125,000 beneficiaries through a network of over 18,000 registered health-care providers across Canada. Health-care providers are reimbursed directly for services rendered to eligible clients.

Refugees who are accepted for resettlement in Canada, whether government-assisted or privately sponsored, are eligible for full benefits under the IFHP until coverage under their provincial health plan begins. Depending on the province of destination, the waiting period for basic 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 supplemental benefits under the IFHP while they are covered by a private sponsorship or accessing benefits under the Resettlement Assistance Program, usually for one year from the time of their arrival in Canada.





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 IFHP coverage.

Eligibility for IFHP for refugees is documented on the Interim Federal Health Certificate, a computer-generated form which includes security features and a stamped photograph. It is usually issued on arrival at the port of entry, but may also be applied for after arrival. To apply for or extend IFHP coverage, visit the CIC website at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/ifh.asp> to download the form and instructions. You may also call the CIC Call Centre at 1-888-242-2100 and request that the forms be sent by mail. Then, mail the completed form to your local Citizenship and Immigration Centre identified in the instructions. To ensure your coverage remains current, send in your application four weeks before your coverage is due to expire.

## List of what is covered by the IFHP (subject to prescribed limits)

### Basic Coverage

#### Medical Services

- Doctor visits
- Standard immunizations
- Prenatal and obstetrical care
- Lab tests and x-rays

#### Hospital Services

- Medical and Surgical Care, including:
  - Anaesthesia
  - Psychiatric care
  - Dialysis
  - Blood transfusion
  - Chemotherapy
  - Radiotherapy
  - Diagnostic imaging (i.e., magnetic resonance imaging, computer tomography scans and ultrasounds)



## Supplemental Coverage

### Vision Care

- One pair of eyewear (glasses and/or lenses every two years)
- One vision test per year

### Dental Care

- Emergency examinations
- X-rays
- Extractions
- Certain fillings (requires pre-approval)
- Anaesthesia
- Dentures (requires pre-approval)

### Pharmaceuticals

- Essential prescription medications

### Community-Based Services

- Nursing visits
- Home care visits (requires pre-approval)
- Long-term care facilities (requires pre-approval)

### Other Services

- Emergency ambulance service
- Post-arrival health assessment for resettled refugees
- Occupational therapy (requires pre-approval)
- Physiotherapy (requires pre-approval)
- Speech therapy (requires pre-approval)
- Oxygen therapy and respiratory aids (requires pre-approval)
- Hearing aids (requires pre-approval)
- Mobility aids (requires pre-approval)
- Orthotics and prosthetics (requires pre-approval)
- Pressure garments and continence aids
- Ostomy and surgical supplies



## Examples of what is not covered by the IFHP

### Medical Services

- Acupuncture
- Cosmetic procedures
- Chiropractic treatment
- Plastic surgery for aesthetic purposes
- Condoms
- Homeopathic and naturopathic treatment
- Non-medical male circumcisions
- Podiatry
- Third-party medical reports/services
- Medical advice by telephone or other means of telecommunications
- Renewal of prescriptions by pharmacists
- Medical legal reports
- Massage therapy
- Fertility treatments
- Reversal of sterilization procedures

### Dental Care

- Orthodontics
- Root planing
- Root canal
- Cosmetic services
- Crowns
- Veneers
- Implants