



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

GUIDE TO THE PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES PROGRAM



Canada

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This is not a legal document. For legal information, please refer to the *Immigration Act* and Regulations.



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INTRODUCTION

Each year, millions of people around the world are forced to flee their homes or their countries because of war, oppression or abuses of basic human rights. Often, these people are never able to return to their homes or countries. In keeping with its humanitarian tradition and international obligations, the Government of Canada provides assistance to thousands of displaced people every year. Canadian citizens and permanent residents can provide additional help through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. This guide explains the terms of the program, specifically, who may be sponsored, the obligations of the sponsor, and how to apply for sponsorship.

PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES PROGRAM

Who may be sponsored under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program?

Convention refugees seeking resettlement and people who are members of the Country of Asylum Class or the Source Country Class may be sponsored under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program.

A Convention refugee is any person 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,

- a) 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,
- b) 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 seeking resettlement is any person who:

- is a Convention refugee;
- is outside Canada;
- is seeking resettlement in Canada; and
- will be unable, within a reasonable period of time, to

- a) return to his or her country of nationality or habitual residence;
- b) integrate in the country of refuge or the country of first asylum or a neighbouring country; and
- c) find refuge in a country other than Canada.

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

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

A member of the Source Country Class is a person:

- who resides in his or her country of citizenship or habitual residence;
- who has been and continues to be seriously and personally affected by civil war or armed conflict;
- who has suffered serious deprivation of his or her right of freedom of expression, right of dissent or right to engage in trade union activity and who has been detained or imprisoned as a consequence;
- who fears persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion;
- for whom there is no possibility of finding an adequate solution to his or her situation within a reasonable period of time;
- who resides in a country that has been designated as a source country (the list of source countries, valid until June 30, 2000, includes Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Guatemala and Colombia); and
- who will be privately sponsored or assisted by the government, or who has adequate financial resources to support himself or herself and any dependants.

Who may not be sponsored under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program?

The following people do not qualify for private sponsorship:

- People who are already in Canada. If these people believe they meet the definition of a Convention refugee, they 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 who were refused, unless:
 - a) their circumstances have changed;
 - b) new information has come to light which was not presented in the previous application; or
 - c) Canadian laws affecting the case have changed (e.g., a previous application for Convention refugee status was refused before the implementation of the Source Country and the Country of Asylum classes).
- People who have been accepted as Convention refugees in another country and who have been allowed to live there permanently.
- People who may have fled persecution or civil war some time ago, but who can now return home safely or who are able to remain in the country where they are currently residing.
- People who have not demonstrated that they have the potential to successfully resettle in Canada.
- People who are eligible for sponsorship under the Family Class (e.g., spouses, dependent children, parents) unless they meet the definition of a Convention refugee seeking resettlement, a member of the Country of Asylum Class or a member of the Source Country Class.

Who may submit a private sponsorship?

Only the following groups may submit a private sponsorship:

1. Sponsorship agreement holders and their constituent groups: Sponsorship agreement holders (SAHs) are incorporated organizations that have signed a formal agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Constituent groups are groups of people (e.g., parishes, congregations) who are members of, or affiliated with, an SAH. Constituent groups must have their sponsorship application approved by the SAH before submitting it to a Citizenship and Immigration Centre.

If your incorporated organization is interested in becoming an SAH, it should write to the Director, Resettlement Division, Refugees Branch, 365 Laurier Avenue West, 17th Floor,

Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1. Your organization will need to provide audited financial statements and proof of incorporation.

If you are part of a group that would like to become affiliated with an SAH, contact the SAH directly.

2. Groups of five: Any group of five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents, who are 19 years of age or older and who live in the community where the refugees are expected to settle, can sponsor refugees. A corporation that is not an SAH may sponsor refugees by establishing a group of five representatives.

How does a sponsor get matched with a refugee?

Sponsoring groups may ask the Government of Canada to refer a refugee applicant for their consideration. This is called a Canada-referred sponsorship. The Matching Centre assembles and coordinates an inventory of refugees who are available for private sponsorship in consultation with visa offices. It will refer a name to the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre after receiving a request for a Canada-referred sponsorship. The sponsoring group has about three weeks, depending on the refugee's circumstances, to decide if it wants to sponsor the person in question. The sponsoring group may also submit the name of a refugee or a refugee family it would like to sponsor. It may have obtained this name from a friend, from the relative of a member of the organization, from an overseas contact or elsewhere. This is called a named sponsorship.

What are the requirements for sponsorship under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program?

A sponsor must:

- be a sponsorship agreement holder, a constituent group of a sponsorship agreement holder, or a member of a group of five;
- sign a sponsorship agreement (called an undertaking) promising to support the sponsored refugee for 12 months from the date of the refugee's arrival in Canada or until the refugee becomes self-sufficient, whichever comes first (in cases where an immigration officer determines that a refugee will need more time to resettle in Canada, the sponsoring group may be asked to sponsor for a period of up to 24 months, a request it has the option of refusing);
- submit a settlement plan that outlines the settlement and financial arrangements in place to support the sponsored refugee; and
- reside in the community of destination.

Groups of five must also provide information on the financial resources available to them for the 12-month period prior to submitting a sponsorship application.

What are the responsibilities of the sponsoring group?

Sponsoring groups must agree to support the sponsored refugees by meeting their settlement needs for the duration of the sponsorship. Some examples of settlement needs are:

- providing for the cost of food, rent and telephone installation, and other everyday living expenses;
- providing clothing, furniture and other household goods;
- locating interpreters;
- selecting a family physician and dentist;
- applying for health-care coverage;
- enrolling children in schools or adults in language training;
- assisting refugees in meeting people with similar personal interests;
- providing orientation with regard to banking services, transportation, etc.; and
- helping the refugee find employment when appropriate.

How does a sponsoring group determine how much financial support will be required?

The sponsorship application kits provide details on how much financial support will be needed to meet the sponsorship obligations. However, groups often have questions about the following:

Medical coverage: In most provinces, applicants for health coverage must meet eligibility requirements. The Interim Federal Health (IFH) Program provides coverage of health services for the period between the refugees' arrival in Canada and their eligibility for provincial health coverage. After the privately sponsored refugees have become eligible for provincial coverage, they may still be eligible for additional limited coverage under the IFH Program. Information on the IFH Program can be found in Appendix B.

Canada child tax benefit: Parents with children under 18 must meet certain eligibility requirements to 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, contact your nearest tax services office, visit the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency Web site (<http://www.cra-adrc/benefits/menu-e.html>) or call toll-free at 1 (800) 387-1193.

Use of trust accounts: Some groups establish trust accounts for the funds collected, raised or donated for the settlement of the sponsored refugees. Citizenship and Immigration Canada neither promotes nor objects to the use of trust accounts. However, groups should use caution in ensuring that the funds in the account 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. The account should require the signature of at least two group members to make withdrawals.

Becoming a registered charity: The advantages and disadvantages of a group becoming a registered charity are outlined in *Registering a Charity for Income Tax Purposes*. This booklet is available from the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), Charities Division, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0L5, or the CCRA Web site (<http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/>), or by calling:

English: 1 (613) 954-0410, or toll-free 1 (800) 267-2384

Bilingual: 1 (613) 954-6215, or toll-free 1 (888) 892-5667

Will the sponsor be required to pay any extra costs?

In exceptional cases, the sponsor may be asked to pay a portion or all of the refugee's medical examination and transportation costs. This might occur when the sponsored refugee is unable to demonstrate the ability to repay a loan.

How does a group begin the process for sponsoring a refugee?

Sponsoring groups must obtain the appropriate Citizenship and Immigration Canada application kit, either the "Refugee Sponsorship Kit: Sponsorship Agreement Holders and Constituent Groups" or the "Refugee Sponsorship Kit: Groups of Five." The kits may be ordered from a CIC Call Centre or downloaded from the CIC Web site (see Appendix A for telephone numbers and Web address). If a group determines it is eligible to sponsor and it wants to submit an application, the application should be sent to the local Citizenship and Immigration Centre. Details are provided in the kit.

How is the application processed?

1. Citizenship and Immigration Centre: The local Citizenship and Immigration Centre (CIC) is the contact point for groups with regard to processing and settlement issues related to private group sponsorships. Upon receipt of a sponsorship application, the CIC will:
 - review the application (undertaking) to ensure that it is complete and that it 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;
 - forward a copy of the undertaking to the visa office responsible for the area where the refugee lives if the sponsoring group has the name of a refugee or refugee family;
 - forward the undertaking to the Matching Centre if the sponsoring group has requested a Canada-referred sponsorship;
 - notify the sponsoring group of the date the refugee will arrive in Canada after being processed abroad;
 - provide the sponsoring group with the names of agencies that provide immigrant support services;
 - review the refugee's eligibility for the Interim Federal Health Program; and
 - monitor the sponsoring group after the refugee has arrived.
2. Canadian visa office: The Canadian visa office processes applications for permanent residence made by refugees. It works closely with international service providers who deal with refugees around the world, and it also maintains contact with local Citizenship and Immigration centres. The visa office will:
 - review the refugee or refugee family's Application for Permanent Residence (IMM-0008);
 - prescreen the application to determine if the refugee is a Convention refugee seeking resettlement, a member of the Country of Asylum Class or a member of the Source Country Class;
 - conduct interviews with applicants who meet the prescreening criteria (for Canada-referred sponsorships, an e-mail is sent to the Matching Centre, who will add the refugee's name to the inventory until a sponsor is found);
 - assess whether or not the applicant will successfully resettle in Canada;
 - issue medical examination instructions, conduct criminal and security checks and review the results to determine if the applicant is admissible to Canada;

- advise the local CIC of decisions related to the application (if the application is refused, the visa office will inform the applicant of the reasons in writing and send a copy to the sponsoring group);
- review loan applications for transportation costs;
- issue immigrant visas if the application is accepted;
- make travel arrangements for the refugee in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM);
- provide the refugee with orientation and information in collaboration with the IOM when circumstances permit; and
- advise the Matching Centre of the date the refugee or the refugee family will arrive in Canada.

What are the refugee's responsibilities?

1. Application and admissibility requirements: Refugee applicants must submit an Application for Permanent Residence in Canada (IMM-0008) to the visa office responsible for the area in which they live. The visa office will mail instructions for a medical examination and conduct criminal and security checks to ensure that the applicants are admissible in Canada. If the application for permanent residence is accepted and if there is a sponsoring group, an immigrant visa will be issued.
2. Medical costs and costs of travel to Canada: The refugee applicant is responsible for the payment of medical and travel costs for himself or herself and all dependent family members. The following are three loan options available to refugees who are unable to cover these costs on their own:
 - Transportation loan: to cover transportation costs up to and including arrival in Canada.
 - Admissibility loan: to cover the costs of medical services necessary to establish admissibility in Canada.
 - Assistance loan: to cover the costs of finding employment for refugees who have been admitted to Canada.

For more information on loans, consult the CIC Web site (see Appendix A for address).

When will the refugee arrive?

Named refugee: Processing times will depend on where the refugee lives and the complexity of the case. Generally, it will take from 6 to 18 months.

Canada-referred refugee: These refugees, who have already been interviewed by an immigration officer overseas, usually arrive 4 to 12 months after a sponsorship is approved.

ADDITIONAL PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Note: These private sponsorship opportunities are only available to sponsorship agreement holders and their constituent groups. Groups of five are not eligible for these programs.

Joint Assistance Sponsorship

The Joint Assistance Sponsorship enables sponsorship agreement holders and their constituent groups to participate, with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in the resettlement of special needs refugees in Canada. In order to resettle successfully, these refugees will require more than a 12-month sponsorship. Consequently, a Joint Assistance Sponsorship is valid for 24 months.

Under the Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program, Citizenship and Immigration Canada will provide financial assistance to cover the cost of food, shelter, clothing and essential household goods. The sponsor's role will be to provide orientation, significant settlement assistance and emotional support.

In order to be eligible for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship, the refugee:

- must be a Convention refugee seeking resettlement, or a member of the Source Country or Country of Asylum Class;
- must be able to demonstrate a potential for successful resettlement in Canada; and
- must be expected to have a longer or more difficult resettlement period because of:
 - a) emotional problems resulting from the refugee experience (this may include trauma, torture, threats of physical harm or emotional duress, human rights violations in a country of asylum, or long-term stay in a refugee camp, which could make adjustment to new surroundings, freedoms and responsibilities difficult);

- b) a physical or mental disability, which could require either short- or long-term treatment; or
- c) an unusual family situation (examples include families with large numbers of children, single-parent families with several young children, or families consisting of only siblings where one or more have assumed parental responsibilities).

Women at Risk Program

Under the Women at Risk Program, private sponsorship may be arranged for refugee women who are disadvantaged when it comes to resettlement opportunities because they need extra support and assistance. Often, these women come from cultures where they may have been denied education and employment opportunities, or they do not benefit from the protection of a family. In many cases, they will need the 24 months to ensure that they can resettle successfully in Canada.

In order to be considered for the Women at Risk Program, applicants must be:

- Convention refugees seeking resettlement, or members of the Source Country or Country of Asylum Class; and
- women without the normal protection of a family unit who find themselves in precarious situations where the local authorities cannot ensure their safety. This includes women who are experiencing significant difficulties, such as harassment by local authorities or by members of their own communities. Some women may need immediate protection while others are in permanently unstable circumstances that allow for no other remedy.

In most cases, women eligible under the Women at Risk Program will require a Joint Assistance Sponsorship as outlined above. There may be situations, however, where the person is eligible under the program but does not qualify for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship. This may be because the refugee is likely to resettle successfully in Canada on her own because of her education, work experience, skills, or knowledge of either of Canada's official languages, or because there is no evidence of emotional problems due to the refugee experience.

APPENDIX A

CIC CALL CENTRE AND WEB SITE

CIC Call Centre Numbers

If you are in the local calling area of:

- Montréal, call (514) 496-1010
- Toronto, call (416) 973-4444
- Vancouver, call (604) 666-2171

From anywhere else in Canada, call (toll-free): 1 (888) 242-2100.

CIC Web Site

The Citizenship and Immigration Canada Web site may be found at <http://www.cic.gc.ca>.

APPENDIX B

INTERIM FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAM

The Interim Federal Health (IFH) Program is designed to provide temporary medical coverage for certain immigrants in need of assistance during their settlement period in Canada prior to their eligibility for provincial health-care coverage.

Privately sponsored Convention refugees and members of the Humanitarian Designated Classes who are accepted for resettlement in Canada are eligible for the IFH Program. 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 the country.

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

Benefits

Coverage under the IFH Program is limited to:

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

For further information on the services covered by the IFH Program, consult the CIC Web site at <http://www.cic.gc.ca> and click on “Publications,” then “Manuals and Operational Memoranda,” and then “Inland Processing Operational Memoranda 1998.” The full details of the IFH Program are described in IP 98-16.