

CHAPTER 2:

Who can Sponsor?



▶ SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT HOLDERS & CONSTITUENT GROUPS.....SECTION 1



▶ COMMUNITY SPONSORS.....SECTION 2



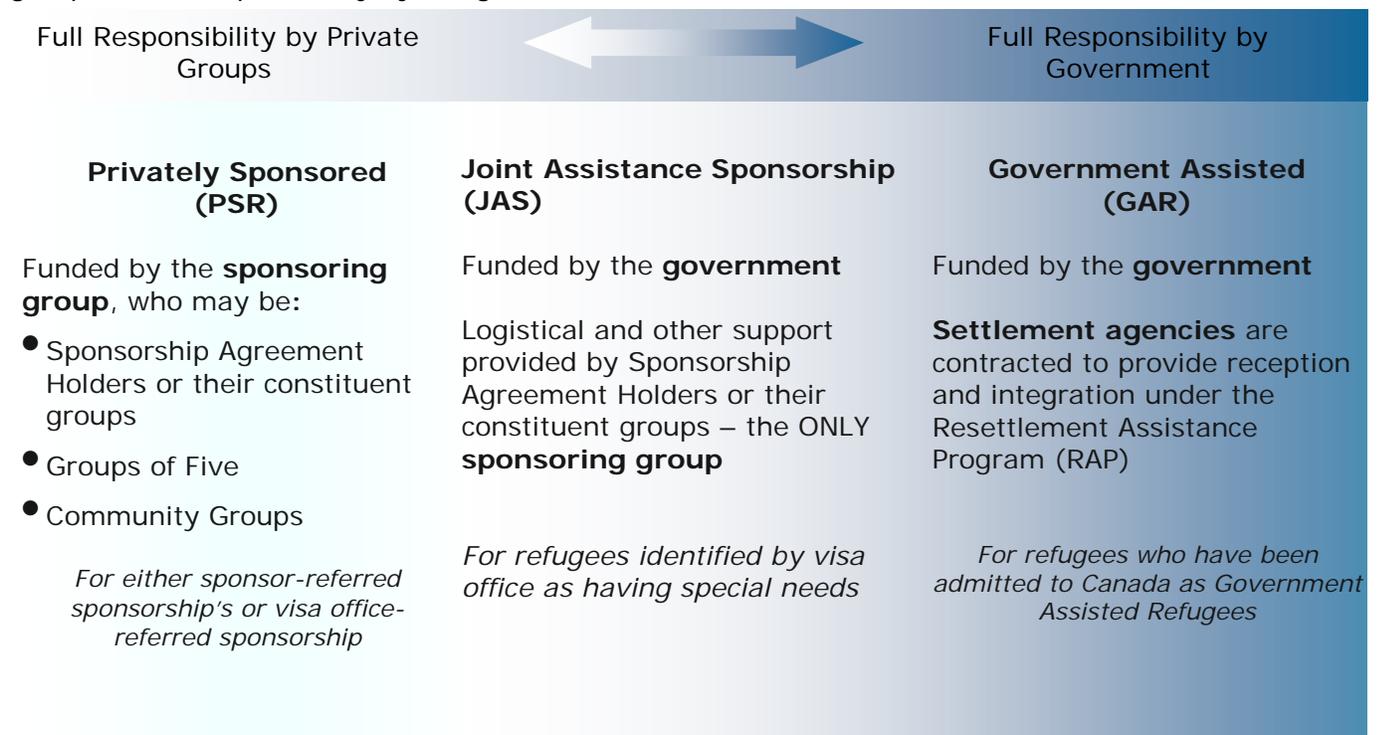
▶ GROUPS OF FIVE.....SECTION 3

What is Sponsorship?

The Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program uniquely allows citizens to sponsor refugees from outside of Canada. What does sponsorship of refugees mean, who can sponsor a refugee and what are the obligations of a sponsor?

Sponsorship is a commitment to ensure that sponsored refugees have the necessary support to integrate into life in Canada. This is a legal commitment. Sponsors commit to providing basic financial support (e.g. for lodging and food) and care for the sponsored refugee for up to 12 months or until the sponsored refugee becomes self-sufficient, whichever comes first. In exceptional circumstances, the length of the sponsorship may be up to 36 months. Sponsorship is a three-way partnership between sponsors, the Government of Canada, and the refugees themselves. The sponsor commits to give the support by signing an 'undertaking'.

Sponsorship can be best seen as a range, extending from full responsibility by private groups to full responsibility by the government.



Who are Sponsors?

Sponsoring refugees is a group commitment. A sponsor can be a group, a corporation or an unincorporated organization or association, or any combination of them.

All sections of this chapter are available online at www.rstp.ca.

It is important that sponsoring groups have a sufficient number of individuals to provide the refugee with support upon arrival. Sponsoring groups in Canada may include:

- ▶ **Sponsorship Agreement Holders** and their **Constituent Groups**
- ▶ **Community Sponsorship**
- ▶ **Groups of Five**

Sponsors may use co-sponsors to help them support the sponsored refugee.

Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) and Constituent Groups (CGs)

A Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) is an organization that has signed a Sponsorship Agreement with the Government of Canada, as represented by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. A SAH can sponsor refugees itself or can work with Constituent Groups (CGs) that may sponsor refugees under the SAH's agreement. SAHs assume overall responsibility and liability for the management of sponsorships under their agreement. More detail on SAHs and CGs is available in Section 1 of this chapter.

Community Sponsors

An organization, association or corporation that meets the criteria for community sponsorship, has the ability to submit two sponsorship undertakings per year. They must undergo financial and settlement plan assessments by the Centralized Processing Office in Winnipeg (CPO-W) each time they wish to sponsor. More information on Community Sponsors is available in Section 2 of this chapter.

Groups of Five (G-5)

Any group of five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents who meet the criteria can also sponsor refugees. A group is defined in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations as "five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents, each of whom is at least 18 years of age, who are acting together for the purpose of sponsoring a Convention refugee or a person in similar circumstances". In G-5 sponsorships the individuals act as guarantors that the necessary support will be provided for the full duration of the sponsorship. More information on Groups of Five is available in Section 3 of this chapter.

Forming the Sponsoring Group

The sponsoring process begins with the formation of a sponsoring group.

While each sponsoring group has the same basic obligations towards the sponsored refugees, the composition of sponsoring groups can vary widely. You may already be part of an organized group or you may have come together solely for the purpose of sponsoring one particular refugee family.



Regardless of the type of sponsoring group you are in, the sponsorship process will be the same.

Taking into account both the application process and the sponsorship period, it is safe to assume that sponsoring group members will work together intensively for an extended period of time. Many people will eventually play a role in the settlement of the refugees, but one of the first steps is deciding who will be part of the sponsorship group and who will take on the official responsibility of signing the undertaking/application to sponsor.

Sponsoring groups may decide to partner with a co-sponsor and share the sponsorship responsibilities.

Partners to a Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a partnership between sponsors, the Government of Canada and refugees. It is also possible for SAHs and/or Community Sponsors to formally partner with an individual (e.g.: a relative of sponsored refugees living in Canada) or another organization to raise funds and carry out settlement duties. Such a partner is called a *cosponsor*.

Cosponsor individuals

If you are sponsoring a refugee who has relatives or friends in your community, it is important to decide how those individuals will be involved in the sponsorship. Has the relative or friend made a commitment to provide sponsorship support? If this is the case, consider making the individual a member of your sponsoring group, or asking him or her to formally partner with your group by signing the undertaking as a cosponsor (if eligible). Whether or not they are formally recognized as partners, the relatives or family members who are contributing financial support or settlement assistance should be included in the settlement planning process.

Cosponsors must provide details of all previous sponsorship commitments, including family class sponsorship obligations to CIC. Reviewing these obligations with a prospective cosponsor can help your group assess the level of support the individual can realistically be expected to provide. There is no obligation to formally recognize individuals contributing to the sponsorship as cosponsors. When an individual cosponsor signs the undertaking they officially commit themselves to sharing responsibility for the sponsorship. However, all parties are held **jointly and severally liable** for the sponsorship. Therefore, at the end of the day it is the official sponsoring group - a SAH or Community Sponsor or Group of Five - that must be ready to assume responsibility if the cosponsor is unable to provide the support promised.

Cosponsor organization

You can also include an organization as a formal partner in the sponsorship. Many sponsoring groups effectively combine the efforts of several different organizations. Formally recognizing a cosponsoring organization is an official indication of shared responsibility. However, the ultimate liability rests with the official sponsoring group whether a SAH, Community Sponsor, or Group of Five that submits the sponsorship.

Sponsoring Group Responsibilities

Sponsors provide ongoing friendship and emotional support.

When signing a Sponsorship Undertaking, a sponsor assumes the following responsibilities with respect to the refugee family:

- ▶ Reception:
 - Meet the refugee upon arrival at the airport and welcome them in the community; provide orientation to life in Canada
- ▶ Lodging:
 - Provide suitable accommodation, basic furniture, and other household essentials
- ▶ Care:
 - Provide food, clothing, local transportation costs and other basic necessities of life
- ▶ Settlement assistance and support by helping refugees
 - complete required forms including health insurance, social insurance, and child tax benefits;
 - open a bank account;
 - learn English or French (e.g.: get into an ESL/LINC or FSL/CLINC class);
 - understand the rights and responsibilities of permanent residents;
 - find employment;
 - access resources (e.g.: community support groups, settlement services);
 - register children in school and guide them in dealings with the school system;
 - locate a family physician and dentist; and
 - become independent.

The support begins on the date the sponsored refugee arrives in Canada. The sponsorship continues for a period of one year (can be longer in special cases) or until the refugee becomes self-supporting.

Sponsoring groups are not responsible for repaying any immigration pre-arrival fees (such as transportation fees and the cost of medical examinations). The payment of these fees is the responsibility of the refugee applicant, who may be provided with a loan by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to cover these costs. Sponsors are also not responsible for any liabilities arising from the refugee applicant's misconduct.

Who Cannot Sponsor?

When forming your group, be aware that some people are not eligible to participate in a sponsorship. They include:

- ▶ Persons convicted of serious criminal acts, if five years have not lapsed since the end of the sentence;
- ▶ Persons in default of court-ordered support payments; and
- ▶ Removable and incarcerated persons or persons subject to citizenship revocation proceedings.

Each person who signs the Sponsorship Undertaking must also sign a [Sponsor Assessment Form](#), which details the circumstances that exclude an individual from participating in a sponsorship. This includes the representative of the sponsoring group as well as any

cosponsors who have officially partnered with the sponsoring group. For Groups of Five each individual member will be required to sign and submit one. SAHs will not be required to submit a signed Sponsor Assessment Form with each Sponsorship Undertaking as the signing authority for the SAH will already have a signed Sponsor Assessment Form on file with National Headquarters of CIC.

It is important to be aware that privately sponsored refugees can be quite vulnerable and your group will have considerable power over their lives after their arrival. Your group needs to be aware of the potential for abuse of this power. Section K of the Sponsorship Undertaking outlines the Declaration by the Sponsoring Group which all parties must sign. Part of this declaration states that *"to the best of my ability, I will not knowingly or deliberately allow any individual to participate in the group's settlement activities who may be considered a threat to the safety and security of the refugee(s)"*. All individuals signing the undertaking have to also agree to this statement on behalf of the group.

The Sponsor Assessment Form can be found online at:
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/kits/forms/IMM5492E.PDF>