

RAP & the BVOR Program

Questions & Answers

Q. What is RAP and how does it relate to the BVOR Program?

- A.** The Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) is a contribution program through which the Government of Canada provides assistance for resettled refugees to establish themselves in their new home. The program has two main components: income support and a range of immediate essential services.

Refugees sponsored through the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program receive income support through RAP, administered by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), for 6 months of their 12 month sponsorship period, or until they become self-sufficient. The remaining costs, including start-up and additional expenses as required, are covered by the sponsoring group.

Q. Which RAP income support benefits do refugees receive?

- A.** Refugees sponsored through the BVOR Program are eligible for the following income support benefits:

- ✓ Food and incidentals
- ✓ Basic shelter
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Maternity dietary allowance (if applicable)

They are **not** eligible for start-up payments, the National Housing Supplement, or RAP services. For example, interpretation, funded by the RAP program, is considered part of RAP services and therefore not provided to sponsored refugees. In general, the need for interpreters is considered part of the regular services which sponsors should be providing as part of their settlement plans. It is important to note that sponsored refugees are entitled to all settlement services available to permanent residents, which may include some interpretation. Sponsors are encouraged to connect with settlement agencies pre- and post-arrival.

Q. How can sponsored refugees access RAP income support?

- A.** Once the local IRCC office receives a copy of the Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT), indicating the refugees' arrival date, a RAP officer will email the sponsor to make arrangements for registering the sponsored refugees for RAP. Depending on the location of the sponsor, an in-person intake interview may be conducted or the necessary documents may be mailed to the sponsor for completion, and returned to the local IRCC office. The IRCC RAP officer will advise the sponsor of the exact documents the refugee will need to mail in or bring to this interview. Generally, the confirmation of Permanent Residence document, Social Insurance Number (SIN), bank account information including direct deposit form, registration with provincial health insurance, and proof of address are required.

Q. When should sponsored refugees be registered for RAP income support?

- A.** The RAP orientation meeting should take place within the first month after the sponsored refugees' arrival. Intake interviews are to occur at the time the initial RAP cheque is provided to the sponsored refugee, in order to ensure that they understand and accept the terms of the RAP program. If they have not been contacted by the local IRCC office shortly after receiving the NAT, sponsors are encouraged to connect with the local office and schedule the interview in a timely manner, so that there is no disruption to the flow of support between the sponsor and IRCC to the sponsored refugee.

Sponsors can request a blank copy of the RAP Agreement which outlines the sponsored refugees' responsibilities and potential RAP consequences to a change in sponsorship, by contacting the local IRCC office.

Q. How long do sponsored refugees receive RAP income support?

- A.** Refugees sponsored through the BVOR Program receive RAP for 6 months of the 12 month sponsorship period. IRCC provides RAP income support at least one month after arrival, depending on the date of arrival, for BVOR cases as per the following:

- BVORs who arrive during the **1st to the 15th of the month** will have their first month of RAP income support established for the 1st day of the following month. For example, a BVOR arriving on July 12th will have their first month income support be paid on August 1st.
- BVORs who arrive **on or after the 16th of the month** will have their first month of RAP income support established for the 1st day of the subsequent month. For example, a BVOR arriving on July 22nd will have their first month income support be paid on September 1st.

RAP payments are structured this way as a result of feedback received from sponsors and local IRCC offices, and in recognition of the fact that sponsoring groups cover start-up costs and other immediate post-arrival expenses. In addition, due to the time required to obtain the necessary information on behalf of the refugee (e.g. Social Insurance Number, bank account/direct deposit, etc.), this allows sufficient time for the necessary documentation (as outlined above) to be obtained in advance of the RAP orientation meeting. It also ensures that groups are better able to prepare and manage their sponsorship budgets and settlement plans.

Q. How are the RAP income support rates determined?

- A.** RAP rates are relatively equivalent to provincial social assistance rates and are calculated based on family size and composition. The RAP aims to standardize rates as much as possible, but there is some variation. The RAP rates provided to refugees for food and incidentals and basic shelter in a particular province might be the same, regardless of the community they are being resettled to, however, some provinces have varying shelter rates depending on the destination city. In the case of transportation, the transportation rates are usually determined by the cost of a monthly bus pass in the community the newcomers will be living in.

Sponsors are expected to plan and provide for the same coverage as is done with regular private sponsorships. This means that anything required for the refugees over and above what RAP provides for, should be covered by the sponsoring group. Local IRCC offices can be contacted for more information and clarification on the RAP rates in that jurisdiction. The RSTP can provide assistance with connecting to the relevant local IRCC office.

Q. Can sponsored refugees work while receiving RAP income support?

A. Yes, RAP allows clients to earn up to 50% of their total monthly RAP income support payment before any deduction is made to the monthly income support entitlement. Once the additional source(s) of income for the individual or family has surpassed 50% of their monthly RAP entitlement, all RAP funds over that threshold are reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis for each dollar earned over the incentive allowance amount. **Exception:** Where the employment income is earned by a minor who is attending school on a full-time basis, the income will not be included in the total of the family earnings.

Q. Can sponsors provide additional financial support while sponsored refugees are receiving RAP income support?

A. Yes, Sponsors can provide additional financial support, however sponsored refugees must report the additional financial support while receiving RAP Income Support.

Q. How can Sponsored refugees report their income if they are employed or receiving additional financial resources from their sponsors while receiving RAP income support?

A. At the initial intake interview, the IRCC officer will provide the refugees with a Client Report Form where they will report changes in their situation, including employment, which must be reported monthly.

Q. What happens after the 6 months of RAP income support are over?

A. RAP income support will not be provided for more than 6 months, therefore sponsors will assume the costs for the remainder of the sponsorship period or until the sponsored refugee is self-sufficient. This includes start-up costs and income support for months 1 & 8-12, if applicable.

Q. Are OYW dependants entitled to RAP income support?

A. Dependants of refugees sponsored through the BVOR Program who arrive to Canada through the One-Year Window of Opportunity (OYW) may be eligible for RAP income support. This will need to be evaluated when the dependant(s) arrive as neither the sponsor nor IRCC are required to provide support if the principal applicant (PA) is self-sufficient and able to provide for their family member. If that is not the case, the OYW dependants will be entitled to the same supports provided to refugees sponsored through the BVOR Program, as part of their family. The amounts are calculated based on the total family amount (including the non-accompanying dependants), minus what has already been paid to the PA or Head of Family (HOF), and current income, if applicable. The sponsoring group is responsible for reception, start-up and 12 months of settlement support.

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