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# CHAPTER 9

## *Joint Assistance Sponsorships*

### *What is a JAS?*

A **Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS)** refers to a joint undertaking by the sponsoring group and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to sponsor a refugee or a refugee family requiring special assistance and whose settlement depends on the additional support of a sponsor. Refugees sponsored under the JAS program are identified as having special needs that will likely result in a longer or more difficult period of integration.

'Special needs' can include:

- ▶ a large number of family members;
- ▶ trauma resulting from violence or torture;
- ▶ medical disabilities; and
- ▶ the effects of systemic discrimination.

Groups of Five and Community Sponsors are not eligible to participate in the JAS program.

Under the JAS program, SAHs and their Constituent Groups work together with the Government of Canada. The government provides financial assistance to the refugee while sponsoring groups provide community and emotional support and orientation, and ensure access to appropriate settlement services.

Sponsoring groups do not designate JAS cases and cannot refer cases to the program. Typically, JAS determination is done by a Canadian Visa Officer overseas during the eligibility interview, however a Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) service provider in Canada can also identify Government-Assisted Refugees in Canada as requiring joint assistance. If at the time of the eligibility interview overseas the Visa Officer determines that the applicant has special needs and therefore requires longer-term financial support and other forms of support, they may consider the applicant for referral to the JAS program. Under the JAS program, most refugees are provided support for 24 months after arrival. In exceptional circumstances, assistance could be available for up to 36 months.

#### **Who Can Qualify for JAS?**

In order to be designated as a JAS case, an applicant:

- ✓ must be a member of the Convention Refugee Abroad or Country of Asylum classes; and
- ✓ must be expected to need a longer and/or have a more difficult resettlement period due to the serious nature of the problems faced, including but not limited to one or a few of the following:
  - ❖ emotional problems resulting from the refugee experience, which could include:

- 1) incidents of trauma or torture;
  - 2) the threat of physical violence or emotional duress;
  - 3) the threat to physical safety or human rights violations in a country of asylum; or
  - 4) a long-term stay in a refugee camp which makes adjustments to new surroundings, freedoms and responsibilities difficult;
- ❖ physical or mental disability which could require treatment in Canada;
  - ❖ unusual family configuration such as families with large numbers of children, elderly parents, single-parent families with several young children or families consisting only of siblings, one or more of whom has assumed parental responsibilities; and
  - ❖ separated minors.

The problems should be of such a serious nature that the Officer doubts applicants would be able to resettle themselves successfully in Canada through either the normal government assistance for refugees (GAR) or private sponsorship programs (PSR). They must, however, be able to demonstrate a potential to resettle over an extended period of time. In some instances, a JAS case could also meet the definition of a *vulnerable case*, which would mean the person is exempted from the requirement to demonstrate a potential to establish him- or herself.

## ***Finding a JAS Case***

Sponsorship is a requirement for the JAS Program. The Visa Officer sends the details of JAS cases to IRCC's Matching Centre. The Matching Centre assembles a profile of the case, and posts the profile on a secure web site accessible only by Sponsorship Agreement Holders, ROC-O and local IRCC offices. If the refugees have identified family members or relatives already in Canada, the appropriate local IRCC will also be alerted of the need for a match in their community. If no match is found in a reasonable amount of time, the profile will be removed from the secure site.

Alternatively, groups can fill out and submit a [Request for a Joint Assistance Refugee Profile \(IMM 5504\)](#). If the Matching Centre is able to propose a match, it will provide the detailed profile to for sponsorship consideration. Once the group decides whether or not to sponsor a particular case, the SAH must advise the Matching Centre and verify that the case is still available. The group will then need to complete and submit the required forms with a copy of the detailed refugee profile to ROC-O.

The application package, including the Document Checklist, Undertaking/Application, Sponsor Assessment, Settlement Plan, and, if applicable, Use of Representative form can be found under [Application for Refugee Sponsorship: Joint Assistance Sponsorship](#) on the IRCC website.

Delays in obtaining medical or security results, or difficulties making travel arrangements can delay the arrival of the refugees but, on average, refugees sponsored under the JAS Program will arrive in Canada within 12 weeks of the date the sponsorship is approved by IRCC.

The JAS partnership between IRCC, ROC-O and the sponsoring group also involves many other players. The sponsoring groups must work closely with the local IRCC office, the Resettlement Assistance Service Provider Organization (RAP SPO), settlement and other community agencies to ensure that the special needs of the newcomers are met. Groups must also be aware that while the selection process identified some special needs, many other needs may arise over the sponsorship period. JAS sponsorship is,

therefore, recommended for experienced sponsoring groups with sufficient human resources.

JAS refugees should be matched to communities where their needs would most likely be met. Information considered before matching includes, but is not limited to, specialized services available and/or special requirements of one or more family members; location of any family members in Canada; location of same or similar ethnic communities in Canada; size of family; employment; and language skills. JAS refugees will not be matched with communities that cannot provide the required settlement services (e.g., programs or services to address the needs of refugees who are victims of torture, persecution, etc.). Sponsoring groups are advised to demonstrate that they have sufficient expertise or experience to accommodate the refugees' special needs and that their community offers settlement services that are well-suited to the particular needs of the refugee applicants.

## *The Application Process*

1. Submit the completed application package including necessary supporting documents to ROC-O
2. ROC-O reviews the application to ensure everything has been completed and signed properly
3. If the application forms have not been completed properly, ROC-O will return the application package to the sponsoring group.
4. If the application forms have been completed and signed properly, ROC-O processes the application and a letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the sponsoring group.
5. Upon approval, the sponsoring group receives a letter including a ROC-O file number and information on receiving updates on the case.
6. The Matching Centre will notify sponsors of the Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT) which contains information about the arrival of the refugee(s).

## *What is IRCC's Role?*

IRCC agrees to provide the following assistance to JAS refugees for a period of up to 36 months (in exceptional circumstances) from the date the refugees arrive in Canada (the standard is a period of 24 months) or until they become continuously self-supporting, whichever comes first:

1. financial assistance equivalent to provincial social assistance rates to meet basic food, shelter and clothing needs;
2. start-up costs, including one-time payments for clothing, household effects, linens, staple foods and furniture;
3. access to emergency medical services and supplemental health benefits through the Interim Federal Health (IFH) program;
4. access to loans for rent, utilities and telephone deposits;
5. access to transportation and assistance loans; and
6. access to settlement support through funded community agencies

## *What is the Sponsoring Group's Role?*

Sponsorship under the JAS program means giving refugees a welcoming environment, helping them integrate, helping them access services for their special needs and

giving moral and emotional support. During the sponsorship period, the sponsoring group is responsible for the following:

- ✓ providing orientation to life in Canada, including information on the rights and responsibilities of residents;
- ✓ assistance in accessing services such as medical care, and accompaniment to various services as needed;
- ✓ ensuring that special needs are met through appropriate referral and support services;
- ✓ assistance in getting access to resources: interpreters, community support groups, settlement services, etc.;
- ✓ assistance in getting children into school and dealing with the school system;
- ✓ assistance in finding help learning English or French (e.g., getting into an ESL class);
- ✓ assistance in finding employment;
- ✓ emotional support and companionship;
- ✓ assistance in becoming independent;
- ✓ advocacy to help the refugees obtain the assistance required for integration into Canadian society; and
- ✓ depending on local arrangements with the Resettlement Assistance Program Service Provider Organization (RAP SPO), the sponsoring group may also be responsible for finding and preparing permanent housing, purchasing or taking delivery of furniture and household effects, stocking initial food staples, etc.

**SPONSORING GROUPS are NOT responsible for repaying loans.**

## *Resettlement Assistance Program Details*

Financial entitlements under RAP are based on prevailing social services rates, and as a result vary from province to province and also between municipalities. The local IRCC office can provide the group with the details on the RAP entitlements relevant to the community.

### Resettlement Assistance Program

The **Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)** provides income support and a range of immediate essential services to government-assisted refugees and humanitarian cases for which the federal government has undertaken a financial commitment. Financial entitlements under RAP are based on prevailing social services rates. RAP is a program of IRCC.

IRCC contracts community agencies as **RAP Service Provider Organizations** to provide: temporary accommodation for the refugees; airport reception, financial and basic orientation, assistance in applying for health cards and social insurance numbers, links to mandatory broader-based programs and services, as well as services to meet special needs; assistance in finding permanent accommodation; and counseling.

The newcomer refugees are referred to as *RAP clients*. Before newcomers arrive, it is also useful for your group to understand how RAP assistance is delivered, and the obligations of the clients. While this information will be explained to the newcomer during the initial

orientation sessions at the RAP SPO, this will be a very busy period. It will be helpful if your group already has a basic understanding of the program.

## ***RAP Cheques***

The initial cheque will be issued by the IRCC RAP Counsellor to the client in person. This cheque includes non-repayable allowances for clothing, household effects, linens, staples and telephone installation and the start-up allowance plus one full month's entitlement (for rent, food and incidentals, and transportation) in addition to an assistance loan (see below). Monthly cheques will be mailed directly to the RAP client's residence in Canada during the last week of every month for the period of RAP eligibility or until recipients become self-sufficient, whichever comes first. These cover the remaining months of entitlement. Cheques are normally payable to the head of the household who is responsible for payment of monthly expenses including rent, groceries and utilities.

**Note:** RAP clients who are eligible for [The Canadian Child Tax Benefit \(CCTB\)](#) will have the amount automatically added to their monthly cheques during the waiting period. **HOWEVER**, once the family receives their first CCTB cheque which includes the lump-sum amount, the family must **repay RAP** the amount of the CCTB for the past three months. For more on the CCTB, see Revenue Canada's [Overview of Child and Family Benefits](#).

**Entitlements for shelter and food** follow maximum prevailing social assistance rates. Shelter rates include basic rent, heat, electricity and water. **Food and incidentals or basic needs** include money for basic food requirements and such items as personal care products, household supplies, etc. The standard monthly amount issued depends on the size of the family and the number and age of dependants. Calculations are always based on the age of the dependants on the date of arrival. Entitlements based on age will be reassessed at the end of the first 12-month period. Transportation allowances and other special allowances may be added to the monthly cheque.

An **Assistance Loan** is also given to assist newly arrived refugees in Canada with living expenses associated with the basic needs of life, basic household needs or labour market access. This loan is assessed and issued by an IRCC officer in Canada after the arrival of the refugee. RAP makes use of assistance loans to cover deposits for last month's rent and telephone. If two or more single individuals are sharing the same dwelling, they may want to share one telephone in order to share the deposit costs. As this is a loan, the refugees will have to pay this back in time.

**Clothing** – In some cities, money is issued in the start-up cheque to allow the newcomers to purchase their own clothing. A one-time basic clothing allowance is given and additional winter outerwear is provided or included in the start-up cheque. Between October 15th and April 15th, the winter allowance is issued at the airport in the form of clothing such as a winter jacket, winter boots, socks, hats and gloves. Depending on their age, children may receive snowsuits. Between April 16th and October 14th, IRCC includes the winter clothing allowance in the start-up cheque.

**Basic Household Needs Allowance** – Suggested items include: beds, table and chairs, bed linens, basic window coverings and common household products such as kitchen utensils, pots, pans, brooms and mops. Depending upon the RAP centre, this entitlement may be provided as a pre-determined package supplied to the newcomer, a financial entitlement included in the start-up cheque, or a combination of both. For example, in Ontario, based on the family composition, newcomers are provided with new basic furniture such as beds and mattresses, dressers, kitchen table and chairs, sofa, coffee table and living room lamps.

**Staple Allowance** – This is a one-time allowance to offset the purchase of basic food and cleaning supplies to start up a household. It includes items such as flour, sugar, rice, spices and condiments, detergent, cleansers, etc.

**Telephone Installation** – a one-time allowance established in accordance with provincial social assistance rates to connect one telephone per family unit may be approved. Other telephone costs are the client's responsibility and must be covered by the basic food and incidental rate.

**Children Under 6 Years** – Newcomers who arrive with children under the age of 6 years as of the date of arrival or who have a baby within their first year in Canada may be issued an additional allowance per month on top of their normal food and incidental rate. This money is intended to cover the cost of diapers, laundry, formula and other infant needs.

**Maternity Allowance** – On receipt of a physician's letter confirming pregnancy, a one-time additional clothing allowance and per-month allowance to assist with special dietary needs may be approved. This allowance may be issued for a maximum of nine months within the sponsorship period or until the birth of a baby, whichever comes first.

**Newborn Allowance** – About one month prior to the expected due date, the client should be issued a cheque to purchase clothing, furniture, etc., for the baby. This allowance can be issued if the due date (provided in writing from a physician) is not more than 21 days after the last date of the sponsorship period.

**School Start-Up Allowance** – This allowance for children between 4–18 years of age is paid to help offset the costs of school supplies, activity fees, gym clothing, etc. It is normally issued on a one-time basis and should be included in the entitlement payment for the month of August or later during the school year. However, some families may require this amount twice if the entitlement period covers two school years.

**Special Diet Allowance** – This allowance is paid to individuals who provide a letter from a physician. An officer will review the request and increase the allowance as needed.

## ***Resettlement Assistance Program Agreement***

As clients under the Resettlement Assistance Program, the newcomers will sign a RAP Agreement. The agreement is a binding contract that describes the roles and responsibilities of a recipient of RAP benefits. Recipients of RAP must keep in mind that the RAP program is a privilege that carries with it an obligation on the part of recipients to work towards self-sufficiency.

The agreement will be fully explained to the newcomer clients during the RAP orientation session upon arrival, which a representative of your sponsoring group is strongly encouraged to attend. Clients must fully understand their roles and responsibilities and the terms and conditions of the client agreement before they sign it and receive their first cheque. Clients will receive a copy of the signed agreement. Your group can reinforce the family's understanding of their obligations under RAP.

If there is any change in the client's situation during the sponsorship period, a new assessment of the needs and means is necessary. This includes a change in the status of the client or a family member, a change of address, the commencement of employment, travel outside of Canada, pregnancy and birth, health conditions that require a special diet or hospitalization, or the departure or death of a family member. Clients **must** notify the

IRCC RAP counsellor of any changes as soon as possible by submitting a Resettlement Assistance Program Client Report Form by mail along with any required documentation. The IRCC RAP counsellor will review the client's situation at the end of the first 12 months to determine eligibility for the remaining 12 months and to recalculate entitlements as appropriate. You will receive the contact details for the IRCC RAP counsellor during the orientation.

Income support may be refused, discontinued or reduced by an IRCC RAP counsellor if clients do not report changes in their financial circumstances, or do not cooperate in the settlement process. The clients' responsibilities include:

- ✓ making every effort to become self-sufficient as soon as possible; \*
- ✓ ensuring income support is used to pay monthly expenses;
- ✓ reporting any changes of status to the IRCC RAP counsellors (submit a Client Report Form);
- ✓ repaying all benefits which exceed the amount of the entitlement;
- ✓ completing and returning monitoring questionnaires upon receipt; and
- ✓ reporting to IRCC RAP counsellors for in-person monitoring interviews whenever called upon to do so.

*\* While becoming self-sufficient as soon as possible is an important client responsibility, it is understood that the refugees who arrive under the Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program will require a much longer settlement period.*

## ***JAS Application Forms***

SAHs and CGs are the only sponsoring groups permitted to submit a sponsorship for JAS case. Additionally, it is important to note that JAS cases require a specific application package which is available at: [www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/ref-joint.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/ref-joint.asp).

The required forms include:

- [Document Checklist — Joint Assistance Sponsorship \[IMM 5495\]](#)
- [Undertaking/Application for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship \[IMM 1324\]](#)
- [Sponsor Assessment \[IMM 5492\]](#)
- [Settlement Plan — Joint Assistance Sponsorship \[IMM 5494\]](#)
- [Use of a Representative \[IMM 5476\]](#) (if applicable)

If you require assistance in completing any of the forms included in this application package, please contact the RSTP at 1-877-290-1701.



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