

Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program

Sponsor a refugee – Financial support rules for sponsoring groups

Overview:

The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that resettled refugees receive adequate settlement and financial support upon arrival to Canada.

Effective January 1, 2018, the level of financial support that sponsoring groups are expected to provide to refugees sponsored under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program and the Blended Visa-Office Referred (BVOR) Program must be, at a minimum, equal to the current Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) rates in the community where the refugee will settle. The financial support must also comply with RAP policies on the provision of income support.

Financial support rules apply to refugees sponsored by:

- Sponsorship Agreement Holders;
- Groups of Five; and
- Community Sponsors.

Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), having already been financially assessed as part of the SAH application process, are not required to provide proof of financial support on a case-by-case basis when submitting new applications for sponsorship unless specifically requested by IRCC.

Sponsoring groups are welcome to contact IRCC if they have questions related to interpretation of financial guidelines and/or for assistance in resolving disputes by e-mailing IRCC.INPSR-PPPRRI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca.

Q1. What financial support does the sponsor need to provide to the refugees they have sponsored?

Start-up costs

Sponsoring groups must provide refugees with start-up costs. Start-up costs are a one-time payment and/or [in-kind support](#) for:

- household items (basic window coverings and common household products such as kitchen utensils, pots, pans, brooms, mops, detergents and cleaners, etc.)
- furniture (beds, mattresses, dining set, couches, end tables, lamps, etc.)
- linens (including bedding)
- food staples
- both seasonal and regular clothing
- school registration fees (if applicable)

Monthly costs

Sponsoring groups must also provide support for monthly costs including:

- food and incidentals;
- housing costs (including utilities);

- monthly public transportation passes for all adults; and
- a communication allowance to cover the costs of a telephone and/or internet connection.

To determine the actual amount of financial assistance that is required in a particular city or province, sponsoring groups should review the RAP rates in the community where the refugee will live. This is available via the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (<http://www.rstp.ca/en/sponsorship-responsibilities/resettlement-assistance-program-rap-rates/>). Some factors, such as in-kind donations or special needs, may impact the amount of monthly financial support that the sponsoring group must provide.

Note: *In keeping with RAP guidelines, adults who choose to live with other members of their family (e.g. children who are above the age of majority residing with their parents) must be provided with start-up and monthly basic needs, communications and transportation allowances (and shelter, if required) as per RAP rates for single persons.*

Although sponsoring groups are required to provide refugees with financial support that, at the very least, matches the level of RAP income support levels in the city where the refugee will live, sponsors must also consider other RAP and/or provincial/municipal social-economic benefits that might be required to support their cases. This could include:

- maternity benefits;
- child care;
- disability or age-specific top-ups;
- housing supplements; and/or
- health-related expenses, including travel to appointments, or critical health related expenses not covered through Interim Federal Health (IFH) or provincial health insurance plans.

Many costs first come up when a refugee settles in Canada. Sponsoring groups should also plan to provide enough money to cover deposits for:

- utilities;
- security; and
- first/last month's rent.

Q2. How is in-kind support factored into the financial support requirements for sponsoring groups?

Sponsors can use in-kind donations to help reduce the amount of financial support they must provide the refugee.

For **start-up costs**, in-kind donations include all donations made in goods, commodities or services instead of money (e.g. gently used furniture or clothing). In-kind donations cannot be valued for more than either their actual value or the financial benefit they are replacing.

Refer to the Financial Guidelines found within Appendix A of the sponsorship application guide for the maximum value of donated items that can be applied towards the financial obligations for start-up costs of the sponsorship

We don't recommend these items as in-kind donations:

- mattresses, which should always be purchased new;
- opened food products; and
- personal clothing items such as undergarments or footwear.

For **monthly costs**, only shelter may be provided fully in-kind, as long as it is appropriate and suitable. You must provide monthly income support to cover transportation (adults only) as well as food and incidentals. The financial amounts for these items will help refugees start their life in Canada and develop the necessary knowledge and skills to make such decisions and maintain these costs on their own.

Q3. How long is the sponsoring group expected to provide support? Is it possible to extend the sponsorship?

Sponsoring groups are responsible for giving refugees the financial support they need when they arrive in Canada.

Sponsoring groups must provide support to the refugee for 12 months or until the refugee(s) become self-sufficient, whichever comes first. In some cases, we can extend a sponsorship to up to 36 months. The sponsoring group needs to agree to the extension period.

Q4. How can sponsoring groups demonstrate that they are providing adequate financial support?

While sponsoring groups can provide financial support in any manner they think is correct, IRCC recommends you provide support using cheques, e-transfers or other traceable methods.

If we ask you for proof of financial support - e.g., in a sponsorship dispute situation – we may ask a sponsor who has provided financial support in cash to show proof of financial support (e.g., copies of cheques, e-transfers, etc.).

If sponsoring groups have made deductions to the monthly support, you must give an explanation and supporting proof that clearly outlines how the deductions were calculated.

Q5. How does the Sponsorship Cost Table in Appendix A of the Application Guide relate to the level of financial support to be provided?

The Sponsorship Cost Table is primarily used to provide Groups of Five/Community Sponsors with the information needed to demonstrate that they have the financial capacity to sponsor a case. IRCC uses this information as part of its assessment for a Group of Five/Community Sponsor application.

Post-arrival, sponsoring groups are required to provide financial support that aligns with the RAP rates in the community where the refugee will live.

Q6. What financial support is required for One Year Window cases?

Sponsoring groups are also responsible to provide financial support for One Year Window (OYW) cases for up to 12 months after their arrival in Canada, as per their commitment in the Sponsorship Undertaking.

Q7. Can sponsors ask refugees for receipts to demonstrate the need for income support?

Refugees cannot be obligated to provide receipts, bank statements, or other financial declarations as a condition of financial or in-kind support being provided.

Q8. Are sponsoring groups responsible for the Immigration Loans of the refugees they sponsor?

Sponsoring groups are not responsible for covering the costs of the refugee's Immigration Loan nor are they responsible for any debt that a refugee incurs in Canada, unless they have co-signed loans.

Q9. Can sponsoring groups lend or advance funds (like a loan) while the refugee family awaits their Canada Child Benefit (CCB) cheque?

The Canada Child Benefit (CCB) is a tax-free monthly payment made to eligible families to help them with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age. The CCB, which might include the [child disability benefit](#) and any related [provincial and territorial programs](#), is based on the family's net income, as well as the number and age(s) of children.

While the CCB will have a significant financial impact on families with children, the application process usually takes several months and although payments are retroactive sponsors should plan for the CCB waiting period. Sponsoring groups may choose to top-up the monthly income support by an amount similar to the CCB, as a grant or gift to sponsored newcomers.

Alternatively, sponsors may choose to advance or loan additional funds to the family instead. If a sponsor chooses to provide a loan, a clear record of agreement and terms should be kept by all parties and interest should not be charged to refugees. It is recommended that any deductions to future monthly support be done in accordance with the agreed upon terms. The terms should consider the ongoing needs of the family and should not cause undue financial hardship in its repayment.

Please note that once individuals begin receiving the CCB, they must annually file an income tax return in order to continue to receive this benefit.

Q10. Can sponsoring groups deduct Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and other benefit payments from monthly financial support?

No. Since the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), and other federal or provincial tax benefits or rebates, are tax-free monthly payments available to all qualifying Permanent Residents and Canadian citizens, they cannot be counted as earned income or used to calculate reductions to sponsor support. You also cannot count them towards the financial support requirements under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. These tax benefits have no impact on the minimum amount of financial support a sponsor is required to provide.

Q11. Do refugees have the right to manage their own resources?

Yes. Refugees have the right to manage their own finances, and should be encouraged to do so. Sponsoring groups cannot require the refugee(s) to submit their funds for management by others.

Q12. What is the RAP housing supplement and does it apply to PSR cases?

The RAP income support housing benefit has two components: the basic shelter rate and the national housing supplement.

The basic shelter rate is guided by the current provincial/territorial social assistance rates in the client's province/territory of residence and thus varies by province of destination and other variables, such as family size.

RAP also provides a national housing supplement as a discretionary top up of up to \$200 for RAP clients when the costs to secure shelter/housing exceeds the basic shelter rates. This national supplement also serves as a substitute for the more comprehensive rental supplement and subsidized housing programs offered by provinces, which are too numerous for RAP to administer/replicate.

The sponsoring group should work to ensure that the total amount provided to their clients for housing meets their rental needs (including utility costs), and that should include the housing supplement if required. The sponsoring group should also inquire about what housing incentives are available in their community, such as subsidized housing programs.

Q13. The refugee(s) being sponsored have personal assets. How should these be taken into account in determining the level of income support that a sponsoring group is to provide?

Personal assets are things that persons might own before arriving in Canada, or have in their possession when they arrive to Canada.

Should the sponsoring group wish to factor personal assets into the required levels of financial support they provide, the standards for use of personal assets should follow the same standards as the Resettlement Assistance Program; however, the sponsoring group may choose to maintain a higher level of income support.

The maximum personal assets that refugees can retain under the Resettlement Assistance Program income support guidelines without affecting the amount of income support they may receive can be found here ([see section 17.2 of the RAP manual](#)). Any remaining assets will be factored in when determining the level of income support needed.

If a refugee declares that they have more than the personal asset exemption limits outlined in the link above, you can give them the option to apply their funds against the balance of their Immigration Loan before you deduct any financial support.

If the refugee still has more than the personal asset limit, you can calculate support on a case by case basis taking into account the concepts of self-sufficiency and factoring in only the portion of assets above the exemption limit.

Family composition	Maximum amount allotted of personal assets (Canadian dollars)
Single person	\$5,000
Couple	\$7,500
Single plus one dependant	\$7,500
Each additional dependant	\$2,500

Note: Sponsoring groups, including co-sponsors, must not accept funds from the refugee(s) either before or after their arrival in Canada for:

- Submitting the Sponsorship Application;
- Housing, care or settlement help; or
- A deposit to guarantee they will remain with the sponsor for one year after they arrive.

The Sponsorship Undertaking (IMM5373) has a declaration that confirms that the refugees did not provide any funds towards the sponsorship. This applies equally to Sponsorship Agreement Holders, Groups of Five and Community Sponsors.

Q14. Do refugees have to report their personal assets to their sponsors?

Although IRCC recommends refugees declare income and assets to their sponsors, this is voluntary and income support cannot be withheld as a result of non-reporting.

Q15. What is a sponsor group’s role in encouraging a refugee to find employment?

A refugee’s focus during their first year in Canada is to participate in activities that will help them to become self-sufficient and independent, which may include settlement activities, language training classes, college or university courses, employment preparation programs, and employment. Sponsoring groups should support the refugee(s)’ efforts in gaining self-sufficiency

and independence and in undertaking activities that will best support their longer-term integration.

Q16. Can sponsoring groups reduce support to a refugee if they will not work, attend school or do anything to contribute to their integration?

Financial support **cannot** be reduced based on the personal choices of the refugees. If refugees are not participating in activities that would contribute to their integration, sponsoring groups are encouraged to try and work with them to understand why this is occurring, e.g. possible physical or mental health issues. Either side may request IRCC assistance if a mutually acceptable solution cannot be reached.

Q17. How much can a refugee earn before having financial support deducted by the sponsoring group? Can I require them to report employment earnings?

If sponsoring groups decide to make deductions to monthly financial support based on earned income, it must be done in accordance with the principles of the RAP. Deductions can begin after **net** employment income becomes higher than 50% of the monthly support payment, at which point income is reduced dollar for dollar for each additional dollar earned above the threshold.

Exception: Where the employment income is earned by a refugee who is attending secondary school on a full-time basis, the income is not to be included in the total of the family earnings.

Although refugees should be encouraged to declare earned income to their sponsors, this is voluntary and income support cannot be withheld as a result of non-reporting.

Q18. How is it determined that a refugee no longer requires financial support?

When a refugee's level of earned income ([see section 23 of the RAP manual](#) for what qualifies as "earned income") has surpassed 50% of their level of financial support, deductions can be made for every dollar earned **above** that threshold.

Once the monthly support is reduced to zero dollars (i.e. after a client has earned 150% of their financial support level) and the refugee can sufficiently support themselves and their families on an ongoing basis, they may no longer require financial support from their sponsor.

At any time during the commitment period, if the financial situation of the refugee and their family changes, the sponsor must resume financial support, as needed.

Q19. What does RAP provide to BVORs and what am I expected to provide during the period while they are on RAP and afterwards?

Refugees sponsored through the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program receive income support through RAP, administered by 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 to be covered by the sponsoring group. In addition,

supplementary benefits not covered through RAP for BVORs, such as the national housing supplement and special dietary or medical needs, should be covered by the sponsoring group even during the period while the refugee is receiving RAP.

Q20. For my BVOR case, are any RAP rates reduced if I provide in-kind or financial support?

RAP income support is based on need, and is not intended to duplicate benefits already provided through RAP or other sources, whether in-kind or financial. If in-kind or financial support is provided while a client is on RAP, the circumstances and nature of the additional support is reviewed to determine its impact on RAP levels of support.

Generally speaking, if a refugee's need is greater than the support being provided by RAP, a sponsoring group may be able to provide additional in-kind or financial support without any reduction in RAP rates. When the in-kind or financial supports duplicate the benefits already provided through RAP, a reduction in RAP benefits may occur. As per the RAP agreement that is signed by the clients, all income or benefits received from any source must be reported to IRCC.

For example, where a sponsor provides housing (in-kind housing at no cost) during the period in which a BVOR is receiving RAP, or at a cost which is less than the RAP income support allowance for shelter, this would trigger a reduction in the monthly shelter allowance component of payments to the refugee in line with RAP guidelines.

One-time or monthly financial contributions from a sponsor should be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine:

- Whether the amount and nature of the contribution exceeds what is necessary to support the needs of the refugee and their family;
- Whether it is a duplication of what is already provided under RAP; and
- Whether or not the amounts are typical for a person receiving financial support.

Q21. In the event of a marital breakdown, am I expected to sponsor 2 separate households?

In situations where the family undergoes marital or household separation, the sponsoring group is not responsible for supporting 2 separate households. The sponsor is expected to continue to support the household with the higher number of people. The other household is to be processed for breakdown and referred to a new sponsoring group, the RAP (for SAH cases only) or provincial social assistance. Sponsoring groups should contact IRCC for assistance in these situations.

Q22. Do I need to provide support if the refugee temporarily leaves the community of settlement, either to other parts of Canada or overseas?

If refugees leave the country permanently, a sponsorship breakdown should be officially declared in order to protect the interests of the sponsoring group by ensuring that the sponsors have no further obligations to refugees that have left Canada. It is in the sponsor's best interests

to report these situations in order to prevent further action by IRCC. If a refugee leaves the area or Canada temporarily, the length of the anticipated absence, the number of members in the household that will be both travelling and remaining, etc., are considered when determining whether or not the rate of financial assistance should be affected.

Q23. Do I need to provide support if the refugee is temporarily hospitalized?

Refugees entering a hospital do not automatically become ineligible for financial support. Certain factors such as the length of the anticipated hospital stay, the number of members in the household, etc., must be considered when determining whether or not the rate of financial assistance should be affected. For instance, if the refugees are temporarily hospitalized, they will likely still have rental or lease obligations. They should not lose their dwelling because they are in the hospital. There may be other expenses or factors to consider if sponsored refugees are hospitalized.