

FAQ on the end of IRCC's Temporary Public Policy to facilitate the sponsorship of Syrian and Iraqi refugees by Groups of Five and Community Sponsors

The temporary public policy announced by Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC) on December 19, 2016 that enabled Groups of Five and Community Sponsors to submit applications to sponsor 1,000 Syrian and Iraqi applicants without formal refugee recognition has ended as of January 25, 2017.

Who is affected by this amendment?

Groups of Five and Community Sponsors intending to sponsor Iraqi or Syrian applicants without proof of refugee status given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the government of the country where the refugee is living.

What does the amendment entail?

Previously, Iraqi and Syrian applicants were temporarily exempted from this rule, and Groups of Five and Community Sponsors were able to sponsor Syrian and Iraqi refugees with and without proof of refugee status recognition.

From this point forward Groups of Five and Community Sponsors will only be permitted to sponsor refugees that have been formally recognized as refugees by UNHCR or by a local government. A document proving the status of an applicant as a “recognized refugee” issued by the UNHCR or a local government must accompany any refugee sponsorship applications submitted by Groups of Five and Community Sponsors.

IMPORTANT: This policy does not apply to applications submitted by Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs).

What does it mean to have a “proof of refugee status recognition”?

Having a proof of refugee status recognition means that an authorized body has determined that an asylum seeker meets the definition of a “refugee” and a document has been granted to the applicant to demonstrate that. This authorized body can either be the UNHCR or a local authority of the country where the refugee is currently living. For more information on who conducts refugee status determination in some of the countries from which refugees are sponsored to Canada, please visit: <http://www.rstp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/RSDs-by-country-updated-January-2017Final.pdf>

Are asylum seekers' certificates issued by UNHCR considered to be a proof of refugee status recognition?

No. an asylum seeker's certificate is not regarded as a proof of refugee status recognition, and neither is a refugee registration document. The proof of refugee status recognition should clearly state that an applicant is a refugee, has been accepted or recognized as a refugee by the UNHCR or a host government. To avoid a return or rejection of an application, Groups of Five and Community Sponsors should include a valid proof of refugee status recognition that clearly indicates the status of an applicant.

If you are unsure as to whether a document is a valid proof refugee status recognition, please contact RSTP and we will be able to verify the document for you.

Does it mean groups cannot sponsor any more Syrian and Iraqi refugees in 2017?

No. Syrian and Iraqi refugees can still be sponsored. There is no limit on the number of Iraqi and Syrian refugees that can be sponsored by Groups of Five and Community Sponsors, as long as they meet the legal requirements to be sponsored. Also, Syrian and Iraqi refugees can be sponsored by SAHs.

Now that Groups of Five and Community Sponsors can no longer sponsor Syrian and Iraqi refugees without proof refugee status recognition, what advice can we give to potential applicants?

Refugees can approach UNHCR Field Offices or relevant government authorities in their country of asylum to apply for refugee status. If granted refugee status, they will receive the appropriate refugee recognition document.

UNHCR Field Offices' addresses and contact information can be found at this link:

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a324fcc6.html>.

Please note that in order to receive refugee status the applicants need to meet specific requirements under international, regional and national law.

What if the Iraqis or Syrians live in a country where there is no access to UNHCR and the host government does not conduct refugee status determination?

Applicants without proof of refugee status recognition or who are unable to obtain refugee status designation can still be sponsored by a SAH. However, SAHs are limited as to how many refugees they are permitted to sponsor each year.

For more information on IRCC's policy change, please visit:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/notices/2017-01-25.asp>

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/laws-policy/syria-iraq-new.asp>



Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP),
Catholic Crosscultural Services
Tel: 416.290.1700, 1.877.290.1701
Fax: 416.290.1710
E-mail: info@rstp.ca Website: www.rstp.ca
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