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Self-Assessment Tool for Sponsors

Overview

In deciding to sponsor a refugee or refugee family, sponsors are taking on a significant responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. This self-assessment tool provides sponsors with some useful tips to think about whenever they consider sponsoring a refugee or refugee family in order to ensure that the sponsored refugee will have a positive settlement experience in Canada.

When a group commits to sponsor, they first prepare a settlement plan to ensure that the necessary support will be in place to facilitate the refugee's settlement process. This may include material and financial support to meet basic needs like food, clothing, shelter and transportation, and/or emotional support and orientation to assist the refugee in transitioning into his or her new life in Canada.

Sponsoring groups should ensure that they have money set aside to assist the newcomer(s) with basic up-keeping when they arrive. It is also important to have contingency or back-up plans to ensure that finances will be available in worst case scenarios (i.e. loss of job, poor fundraising efforts, etc.). Cosponsoring individuals or organisations can help sponsoring groups in fundraising efforts or sharing of settlement responsibilities.

Having sufficient finances to meet various needs is one challenge but equally important is being able to manage those resources. It is not an easy task especially for people new in the country. As with any family in Canada, refugees have to be conscious of limited finances and necessary expenses such as rent, phone, heating, groceries, and other bills. Appropriate budgets consist of funds that can



UNHCR Photo by John Isaac

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meet the refugee's basic needs and incidentals, but also empower individuals to become self-supporting and independent of the sponsoring group. It will be important for sponsoring groups to help the newcomer(s) in budgeting and maintaining current budgets while ensuring that the newcomers are actively involved in the process in order to have an understanding of how to manage their own finances.

There will be challenges when sponsoring larger families in urban areas as, for example, finding appropriate housing can be difficult. It is important, for the group to understand these challenges from the outset and be prepared to find creative solutions to overcome them or to budget more funds to cover what is necessary.

When dealing with basic needs, it may be easily claimed that issues like housing, clothing and food have been considered. However, it is necessary to look into appropriateness and accessibility. For instance, is the proposed accommodation in a safe area that is close to schools, grocery stores and places of worship? Is second hand clothing appropriate? Are specific dietary food items available in their area?

Equally important is meeting the newcomer(s) basic orientation and emotional needs. Refugees need support to adapt to life in Canada. Sponsors should be a reliable source of settlement information for the newcomer. They should also connect the refugee with settlement support services in the community. Such organisations offer counselling services and information about the community where they live. Some also provide services that help prepare the sponsored refugee for the Canadian labour market. Sponsoring groups can work with settlement counsellors and the newcomers to plan and monitor their own settlement process.

The following self-assessment tool can assist your sponsoring group in preparing the settlement plan and in considering the essentials of successful settlement.

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FINANCIAL NEEDS

	YES	NO	NOTES
Can we fundraise?			
Are in-kind donations available?			
Is it possible to partner with others (co-sponsors)?			
Is our budget realistic?			
How will we share budget information with the newcomer?			
Who will be responsible for monitoring the budget and supporting the newcomer to manage the budget?			
At what point in the sponsorship should the budget be managed solely by the newcomer?			

ACCOMMODATION NEEDS

	YES	NO	NOTES
Do we have a plan in place for temporary accommodations?			
Can we find reasonable accommodations that meet Canadian standards and are within the budget?			
Is the accommodation in a safe area of the community?			
Is the accommodation accessible to refugees with mobility challenges, if applicable?			
Are services and public transportation accessible from the location?			
Are we prepared to co-sign a lease if necessary?			
Have we considered tenant insurance and liability?			

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CLOTHING & HOUSEHOLD NEEDS

	YES	NO	NOTES
Can we provide in-kind clean and good quality household items that we would be comfortable using ourselves? If not, have we considered this expense in the budget?			
Can we provide in-kind appropriate and fashionable clothing in good condition? If not, have we considered this expense in the budget?			
Will we let the newcomers purchase goods and clothing for themselves?			
How will we meet winter and ongoing clothing needs?			
Are we prepared to introduce the newcomer to good used furniture/clothing outlets and shopping skills?			
Are we prepared to provide finances for internet and/or television?			

LANGUAGE NEEDS

	YES	NO	NOTES
Do we have an interpreter available, if needed?			
Are English classes available in our community? Are they subsidized or free? Is child minding available?			
Can we arrange for language testing to determine the appropriate level of language instruction needed?			
How will we support their language learning? (i.e. distance learning, volunteer teachers/tutors, etc.)			
Are we ready to learn a few words in the newcomer's language to help them feel more comfortable learning our language?			
Are we committed to NOT using the children in the family as interpreters?			
Are our schools equipped for newcomer children who			

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		YES	NO	NOTES
may have language needs?				
EMPLOYMENT NEEDS	Are we prepared to help orient the newcomer to the local labour scene; explain the concept of job mobility; retrain?			
	Will we continue to support or subsidize the newcomer if he or she is working?			
	Have we discussed our own attitudes regarding work and what we expect the newcomer to do in his/her first year?			
		YES	NO	NOTES
HEALTH & SOCIAL NEEDS	Does our community have services appropriate to the newcomer's psycho-social needs?			
	Are we prepared to help the newcomer access needed services? Can we find a reliable family doctor? Dentist? Optometrist?			
	Are such services convenient? Or will we have to arrange for transportation to them?			
	Privately sponsored refugees are covered by provincial medical coverage and basic health care coverage through IFH until provincial coverage kicks in. Are we prepared to cover prescription and non-prescription medicine? Routine dental work?			
	Are social workers and family counselling available if needed?			
	Will we explain the laws of the land and introduce the police as friends?			
	Will we provide for recreational needs?			

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		YES	NO	NOTES
Will the newcomer's religious and dietary (e.g. Halal) needs be met?				
MOBILITY NEEDS	Have we discussed the newcomer's right and perhaps need to move away from the community? How will we handle it should they decide to leave our community upon arrival?			
	Are we prepared to support them only as long as they remain in our own community?			
	Is public transportation available in the community?			
	If not, are we prepared to explore alternative ways of meeting the newcomer's mobility needs?			
	How can we ensure they have access to distant necessary services?			
	Are we prepared to teach the newcomer to drive or use the public transit system? To loan him or her a car?			
		YES	NO	NOTES
AUTONOMY NEEDS	Have we discussed among ourselves a newcomer's difficulty of being at the receiving end and the need to be sensitive to his/her self-esteem?			
	Are we prepared to equip the newcomer to become independent of us?			
	Will we respect the newcomer's need for confidentiality and privacy?			

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CULTURAL NEEDS

	YES	NO	NOTES
Have we considered the newcomer's cultural needs?			
Is our community culturally diverse?			
Will the newcomer feel at home in our community?			
Do we have ways to learn more about the newcomer's culture?			
Can we include cultural expertise in our sponsorship group?			
Is there a settlement agency that can be an additional resource to the newcomer?			