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# CHAPTER 6

## *The Sponsorship Process*

The sponsorship process involves many steps, some in-Canada and others at Canadian Visa Offices overseas. As described in previous chapters, the first part of sponsoring refugees consists of IRCC assessing in-Canada whether the sponsoring group is eligible to sponsor. The second part entails processing at the Visa Office overseas where IRCC will assess whether the refugee and his or her dependants meet the requirements for refugee sponsorship and resettlement to Canada (often referred to as eligibility and admissibility).

This chapter outlines the entire refugee sponsorship process starting with the first step of submitting the application after you have formed your sponsoring group, to the final step of the refugee arriving in Canada.

### ***Assembling the Application Forms***

To officially initiate the sponsorship application process, sponsoring groups need to complete and submit the relevant [application forms](#). There are two sets of application forms: forms to be completed by the sponsoring group; and, forms to be completed by the refugee/s being sponsored. The forms you need to complete differ depending on which of Canada's refugee sponsorship programs you are sponsoring under.

Read Chapter 4 of this guide carefully when completing the sponsorship application forms.

If your group is sponsoring a refugee under the **Privately Sponsored Refugee** (PSR) program, the sponsoring group must complete the [forms for their sponsoring group](#), and the refugee/s being sponsored must complete the forms in the [Application for Convention Refugees Abroad and Humanitarian Persons Abroad \(IMM 6000 Application Package\)](#). Both sets of forms are then submitted via mail or email to the Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa (ROC-O).

If your group is sponsoring a **Visa Office-Referred** case, the ROC-O will provide the group with detailed information about the refugee/s in order for the group to complete the application forms. In such cases, the sponsoring group only need complete and submit the [forms for their sponsoring group](#), as the forms for the refugee/s have already been completed.

If your group is sponsoring a **Blended Visa Office-Referred** (BVOR) case, you must be matched with a refugee profile. To be matched with the profile, please email [bvor@rstp.ca](mailto:bvor@rstp.ca). Once you have been matched with a refugee profile, the ROC-O will provide the group with detailed information about the refugee/s in order for the group to complete the application forms. In such cases, the sponsoring group only need to complete and submit the forms for their sponsoring group, as the forms for the refugee/s have already been completed.

# *In-Canada Processing*



After the relevant application forms have been completed, and all of the supporting documentation gathered, they can be submitted via mail **or** email to the ROC-O at the following addresses:

Resettlement Operations Canada - Ottawa  
365 Laurier Avenue West Ottawa,  
Ontario  
K1A 1L1

[IRCC.INROCO-CORORI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca](mailto:IRCC.INROCO-CORORI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca)

For specific instructions on how to submit applications via email, please visit: <http://www.rstp.ca/en/refugee-sponsorship/latest-policy-program-update/instructions-on-how-to-submit-a-sponsorship-application-via-email-3-2/>

## **ROC-O will review the received application package to determine whether:**

- ▶ The application package is complete and there is no missing information on the forms or missing supporting documentation.
- ▶ The individuals meet the requirements to participate in refugee sponsorship.
- ▶ The group has the financial and settlement capacity to meet their sponsorship responsibilities and obligations.
- ▶ There is a back-up plan in case of change of circumstances.
- ▶ There is a clear settlement plan consisting of orientation and support for the newcomers throughout the year.
- ▶ There is consideration as to how to use available settlement services such as local settlement agencies.
- ▶ The applicant intends to live in the same community as the sponsoring group.
- ▶ There are enough individuals who are willing to provide settlement support.
- ▶ The settlement plan includes arrangements for: housing, interpreters, settlement services, transportation, health care, education, schooling, dealing with crisis or trauma, etc.
- ▶ The in-kind donations seem reasonable and have been explained in detail, and are available to the sponsoring group at the time they submit the application.
- ▶ The sponsoring group, or individuals in the group, is not in default of previous sponsorship applications.

## **Change in Circumstance/s Post-Submission:**

If the sponsoring group has submitted its application but becomes aware of new information important to the application or relevant to the applicant's safety, this information must be communicated by the sponsoring group to the ROC-O and the Visa Office abroad. Such information might include:

- Change in family configuration, e.g. marriage, birth of a new child or death;
- Change in contact information of the sponsoring group or the refugee;
- Change in level of security of the applicant, i.e. refugee/s have become vulnerable or are being subjected to persecution; and,
- New information about the refugee case regarding eligibility and/or admissibility

## **ROC-O also:**

- ▶ Returns an application package to the sponsoring group if: the forms have been completed incorrectly; supporting documentation is missing; or, if the application is handwritten.
- ▶ Contacts the sponsoring group and allows them to correct minor omissions or corrections.
- ▶ Provides the sponsoring group with an Acknowledgment of Receipt (AoR) when they receive the application via mail or email.
- ▶ Issues the sponsoring group a file number (beginning with the letter "G") when they have reviewed the application and confirmed that it is complete and there are no errors or missing documentation.
- ▶ Enters information into the IRCC data system (the GCMS).
- ▶ Approves the application if they consider the sponsoring group eligible to sponsor and fulfill their sponsorship responsibilities.
- ▶ Communicates via email to the sponsoring group that they have been approved as sponsors and the file has been transferred overseas for processing.
- ▶ Sends the entire package electronically to the appropriate Visa Office overseas to continue with processing.

# Overseas Processing



The second part of the process takes place at a Canadian Visa Office overseas. This process begins with the Visa Office receiving the application package electronically from ROC-O.

## **Overseas preparation of the refugee's file**

When ROC-O forwards an application to an overseas Visa Office, it is opened in order of receipt. The overseas process begins with the following activities:

### *Overseas Processing Benchmarks*

IRCC will provide the refugee and the sponsoring group contact with a report on the application process at two stages in the overseas processing:

To inform of the outcome of the selection interview, and, in positive cases, pending the final results of of the medical, security and admissibility checks, the estimated time to visa issuance.

1. The Visa Office receives the entire application package. If needed, the Visa Office may send an update request to the refugee/s regarding the information provided in the forms of the IMM 6000 application package.
2. Upon receipt, the Visa Officer opens a file and assigns the refugee applicant a **B-number** (if ROC-O has not already done so). This number is important for identification of the refugee's file and will be needed for any requests for updates and communication with the Visa Office regarding the sponsorship.
3. The Visa Officer notifies the sponsoring group contact or representative that the application is complete and sends the first **benchmark letter** with an estimate of the number of months until the interview date. The refugee is put on a wait-list for an interview. The wait for an interview can range from a few months up to a few years.

### **Processing times**

You can find the average application processing times by Visa Office at the following link: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/English/information/times/index.asp>.

**Note:** The processing times at the above link does not include the time it takes to process the application in-Canada at ROC-O; the times are only applicable once the file is received by the Visa Office overseas.

### **Paperscreening**

A refugee sponsoring application may be subject to paper screening at the Visa Office to assess basic eligibility criteria and admissibility elements. The application may be refused without an interview in certain situations (for the full list of reasons, please visit: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/tools/refugees/resettlement/processing/post/refuse.asp>). Applicants do not automatically have a right to an interview; if the applicant passes the paper-screening, an interview is scheduled.

A Visa Officer conducts the interview, although in some Visa Offices other staff may hold a preliminary interview. An interpreter may also be present in the interview if required.

**During the interview the Visa Officer:**

1. Confirms the personal information (e.g. name, date of birth, place of birth etc.) of the refugee/s.
2. Ensures that all family members that meet IRCC's definition of a family are included on the application forms either as accompanying or non-accompanying dependants.
3. Reviews the refugee/s story and assesses the Principal Applicant's eligibility for refugee sponsorship. If the Principal Applicant is found to be ineligible, the Visa Officer must assess the eligibility of the dependants for refugee sponsorship and whether humanitarian and compassionate considerations apply.
4. Asks the refugee/s questions relating to his or her story in order to obtain more information and to ascertain consistency and determine credibility.
5. Determine whether there are any special considerations that necessitate processing priority.
6. Reviews the refugee/s background in order to ensure they are admissible and that there are no security, criminality or admissibility concerns (separate criminality, security and medical screenings will also be conducted as part of the application process).

## *Interpreters*

During the interview, refugees who are not fluent in English or French will receive assistance from interpreters. IRCC has no blanket policy on the use of interpreters in refugee interviews. A common practice is to use Visa Office employees who speak the language in question and whose knowledge of the interview process and reliability are known. Where Visa Office employees are not available the UNHCR may, on occasion, be able to lend the officer an interpreter who is experienced with refugee interviews and has been selected based on language ability. Although it is the least preferred option, the officer may, due to necessity, use relatives, friends of the applicant or hired interpreters. Visa Office practices vary for many reasons. The interview convocation letter will advise the applicant whether he/she needs to make any arrangements for an interpreter.

For information on responding to a negative decision, please refer to the RSTP information sheet on [Responding to a Negative Decision](#).

After the interview, the applicant may be provisionally accepted or refused. If she/he is refused, both the applicant and the sponsoring group contact or representative should receive notification from the Visa Office of the outcome of the selection interview.

### ***Expedited and Urgent Processing***

In exceptional cases, interviews and decisions can be prioritized. In 'urgent' cases there is an immediate risk to the life of an applicant. 'Vulnerable' cases involve persons with greater protection needs than other refugees in a country of asylum. Vulnerability can be related to medical needs, trauma, women-at-risk or other individual circumstances. A sponsor can flag such circumstances and request the Visa Office to process the case expeditiously. **Note:** such requests should only be made in **exceptional** cases, and the need for prioritizing should be substantiated.

## ***After a Positive Interview Decision***

A positive interview decision (provisional acceptance) does not necessarily mean that the refugee/s will be resettled to Canada. Each applicant will still have to pass an admissibility screening. If one applicant is found to be inadmissible, all family members are inadmissible.

After a positive interview outcome, the Visa Officer:

1. Refers the refugee/s for medical testing;
2. Conducts criminality and security screenings;
3. Decides whether another interview is needed for a final decision;
4. Makes the final decision as to whether a person is admissible to come to Canada;
5. Enters the final decision on the application into the GCMS;
6. Facilitates the acquisition of travel documents in cases where the refugee/s have no valid passport or are stateless.
7. Issues instructions to the [International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM) regarding travel booking, and the [Canadian Orientation Abroad](#); and,
8. Issues admissibility and travel loans if needed.

### **Medical exams**

The Visa Officer refers the applicants to designated medical staff for medical tests. The medical exam is mandatory for refugees and all of their dependants and serves to determine whether applicants have medical conditions that present a danger to Canadian public health or safety. The applicants will receive instructions regarding the time and place of the medical exam. The cost of the medical exam is covered under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) as Pre-Departure Medical Services.

Section 38(2)(b) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), states that refugees **will not** be found inadmissible to Canada on the basis that their health condition is expected to cause an excessive demand on Canada's health care system. Your sponsoring group should be informed of any significant medical issues that will impact the settlement of the refugee family. Applicants with a medical condition considered to be a danger to public health or safety are inadmissible to Canada. If the condition is treatable the applicant may be scheduled for a follow-up medical exam after the treatment.

*The pre-departure medical exam is limited, therefore check-ups should be scheduled for all newcomers soon after their arrival in Canada.*

***If any one member of the family is found to be inadmissible, the entire family will be deemed inadmissible.***

### **Security and criminality checks**

Refugee/s and all their dependants who are 18 years and over, including non-accompanying family members, are subject to security and criminality checks to verify information in the application form and to ensure that the refugee/s are admissible under these criteria. There may be long delays involved in the security check process, especially if there are concerns about membership in an organization that is suspected of being involved in terrorist acts, subversive activities, war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

## ***Travel and Arrival***

Once the refugee applicant has been accepted the Visa Office will provide an estimated processing time for visa issuance.

In most cases, travel arrangements are made by the IOM. The IOM can arrange for accompaniment within airports when the applicants must change airlines during their journey. Without support from the IOM, this may be a difficult procedure as refugees are unable to obtain transit visas to be within the country where they change airlines. IOM is also able to make special arrangements for unaccompanied children. IOM will provide travel services where a transportation loan is not required or has not been approved.



Once the Visa Officer is satisfied that all travel preparations have been made, the Officer will give instructions for the visa to be issued. The Visa Officer will send a Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT) to ROC-O and the local IRCC office. ROC-O will then send a copy of the NAT via email to the contact person or representative from the sponsoring group. The NAT should be sent at least 10 days prior to arrival and will specify the date of arrival, the port of entry and the flight details of the refugee/s.

Additionally, the [Canadian Orientation Abroad Program](#), a project of the IOM, offers orientation covering a range of topics related to life in Canada to refugees before they travel to Canada. The orientation ranges from three days to one week and aims to prepare refugees for life in Canada.

A few of the large Canadian international airports have an IRCC funded reception service for Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs). This may also assist refugees sponsored under the PSR program who have an onward flight from the port of entry. Costs for overnight stays in hotels and meal expenses are usually added to the refugee's transportation loan.

### ***Examination at port of entry***

Upon arrival at the Canadian port of entry, the refugee/s must be examined by an Immigration Officer. The purpose of this examination is to establish that, at the time of the examination, the Principal Applicant and his or her accompanying family members and/or *de facto* dependants meet the requirements of the *IRPA* and the *IRPR*. Where the Officer is satisfied that it would not be contrary to the *IRPA* and the *IRPR* to grant permanent residence, the Officer will grant permanent residence. The port of entry officer then signs the document and the refugee/s is no longer a refugee but a permanent resident of Canada. **Sponsors should ensure that the newcomer goes through this process before they leave the port of entry.**

### ***Reception by sponsors***

Sponsoring groups are responsible for receiving the refugee/s at the airport when they arrive in Canada. This is the beginning of the sponsorship period and the time for the sponsoring group to get acquainted with the newcomers they have sponsored and begin implementation of the settlement plan.

## ***Status Update Requests***

The sponsoring group may request updates on the processing of an application from ROC-O, but only within the guidelines established by IRCC.

The guidelines are intended to reduce the number of status update requests that divert Officers away from the actual task of processing refugee cases for resettlement. At the same time, IRCC agrees to update the sponsor within reasonable timeframes when there appear to be unexplained delays in processing.

### ***e-Client application status***

Sponsors can use IRCC's online status update service to check the status of an application. Sponsors can check the file status by entering a Principal Applicant's name, date and country of birth and the client ID or file number.

This service is available at:  
<https://services3.cic.gc.ca/ecas/?app=ecas&lang=en>.

The PSR Case Status Update/Information Change Request outlines when a SAH or another sponsor may request a status update from ROC-O and expect to receive a response from the Visa Office. This can occur when:

- ✓ Processing time has exceeded the mission's completion time for **75%** of PSR applications, based on the calculated processing start date from the date the IMM 0008 and accompanying forms and documents were received at the mission abroad or three months from approval of undertaking.
- ✓ The completed application kit was submitted to the Visa Office. Three months have passed, and the first benchmark letter has not been received.
- ✓ First benchmark letter was received. **Two months** have elapsed since estimated date given for the selection interview, with no subsequent contact from the mission.
- ✓ Second benchmark letter was received. **Three months** have elapsed since the estimated date given for visa issuance, with no subsequent contact from the mission.
- ✓ **Six months** have passed since second benchmark letter was received, which did not contain an estimated time frame for visa issuance.
- ✓ **Three months** have passed since selection interview and no second benchmark letter was received.

Refugee  
Sponsorship  
Training  
Program

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program  
Tel: 416.290.1700, 1.877.290.1701  
Fax: 416.290.1710  
E-mail: [info@rstp.ca](mailto:info@rstp.ca), Website: [www.rstp.ca](http://www.rstp.ca)



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