

Sponsoring Syrian Refugees through the Blended Visa Office-Referred (VOR) Program

What is the BVOR program?

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program matches refugees identified for resettlement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with private sponsors in Canada. It is referred to as “blended” because it is a cost-sharing arrangement between Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and private sponsors.

Refugees resettled under the BVOR program receive income support from IRCC through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for 6 months after their arrival, during months 2-7. Private sponsors pay the other 6 months of support, months 1 and 8-12, plus all of the startup costs. For the duration of the sponsorship period, private sponsors are required to provide settlement support – receiving them, setting them up in accommodation, settlement assistance (enrolling them in language classes, in school, finding health care providers, job search, etc.), and emotional and moral support. Refugees arriving through the BVOR program are also fully covered under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) for the duration of the sponsorship, in addition to provincial health care.

Refugees selected under this initiative have already met eligibility and admissibility criteria. However, they must be matched with a sponsor before they can travel to Canada.

Who can Sponsor Syrian Refugees through the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program?

As of September 25, 2015, all three categories of private sponsors can sponsor Syrian refugees through the BVOR program – Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), Groups of Five (G5s) and Community Sponsors. Up until that point, only Sponsorship Agreement Holders and their constituent groups could benefit from the blended or cost-sharing aspect of the BVOR Program. This expansion of the BVOR program to include G5s and Community Sponsors only applied to Syrian refugees, but as of March 1st, 2016 it includes all refugee populations.

Can Syrian refugees be referred to the BVOR Program by sponsoring groups?

No. Refugees chosen under this program can only be referred by Canadian visa offices.

What are the expected costs of sponsorship under this program?

The sponsorship application kit (see chart below) provides details of the minimum financial support needed to meet the sponsorship obligations. RAP income support provided by IRCC is intended to cover the basic costs of shelter, food and transportation for the refugee family for 6 months, so expected costs can be reduced accordingly. RAP rates are roughly equivalent to prevailing social assistance rates in the expected community of settlement.

What is expected of refugees under this program?

Sponsored refugees are expected to work with their sponsors to develop a detailed plan with the goal of becoming independent and self-sufficient at the end of the sponsorship period. It is expected that sponsored refugees will not access social assistance during the sponsorship period. If this occurs, IRCC will look to the sponsoring group to reimburse the Government. In order to continue receiving support from their sponsors, sponsored families are expected to remain in their sponsorship community for the duration of the sponsorship period.

What is the process of sponsoring Syrian refugees under the Blended VOR Program?

1. Register:

FOR: G5s and Community Sponsors*

G5s and Community Sponsors must register with RSTP before they can participate in the BVOR program as follows:

Registering with the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP)

1. Complete a Request For Refugee Profile:
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/kits/forms/Imm5438e.pdf>
2. Send the completed Request for Refugee Profile electronically to RSTP: bvor@rstp.ca
3. Participate in an RSTP orientation webinar that RSTP organizes on an as-needed basis.

Once the webinar is completed, RSTP places the representative for the Group of Five or Community Sponsor on a list to receive the list of Syrian BVOR profiles.

*Note: This process of registering does not apply to Sponsorship Agreement Holders (and their Constituent Groups) who are already registered.

2. The Matching Process:

FOR: SAHs, and Registered G5s and Community Sponsors

Accessing the BVOR Profiles	Brief Syrian BVOR profiles are sent by the Matching Centre (an office within IRCC) to RSTP who in turn sends them out to the list of SAHs and registered G5s and Community Sponsors. Each case is available to all sponsoring groups for 3 weeks .
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<h2>Choosing a Profile</h2>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If a group would like to consider sponsoring a case on the list, they request a hold be placed on the profile by emailing bvor@rstp.ca. 2. Once a hold is placed on a profile, RSTP sends an expanded profile to the sponsoring group with additional details about the family. The sponsoring group has a <u>maximum of 3 days</u> to inform RSTP at bvor@rstp.ca whether the group will proceed or not. 3. If the sponsoring group decides to proceed with the sponsorship, this is reported by RSTP to the Matching Centre and is considered the group's confirmation that they will proceed with the sponsorship. If the sponsoring group decides not to proceed with the sponsorship after the 3-day period and this is within the overall 3-week deadline, the case will be shared with all sponsoring groups again and the process repeats. If RSTP receives no response from the sponsoring group after 3 days, the case will automatically be made available to all sponsoring groups again. 4. If profiles are not chosen within 3 weeks of being referred by the Matching Centre to RSTP, they are cancelled and are no longer available for sponsorship.
<h2>Submitting the Application</h2>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Once a sponsorship is confirmed, the Matching Centre sends the names and dates of birth to the sponsoring group. 2. Sponsors have a total of <u>6 weeks from the date the profile is first referred</u> from the Matching Centre to RSTP to submit the following forms to the Centralized Processing Office – Winnipeg (CPO-W): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Document Checklist (all sponsors);</i> • <i>Undertaking/Application to Sponsor (all sponsors);</i> • <i>Sponsor Assessment (G5s and Community Sponsors)</i> • <i>Settlement Plan (G5s, Community Sponsors and some SAHs)</i> • <i>Financial Profile (G5s)</i> <p>The sponsorship application kit with these forms can be found on the RSTP website at: http://www.rstp.ca/en/processing/the-refugee-sponsorship-application-forms/</p> 3. The application can be submitted to CPO-W electronically at: CPOW-BTCW@cic.gc.ca or mailed to: 269 Main Street, Suite 400, Winnipeg, MB R3C 1B2

<p>Processing</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Once CPO-W has approved the application, they will forward it to the Matching Centre and the appropriate visa office abroad. 2. Sponsors receive a Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT) with detailed information about the refugees' departure and arrival dates. 3. Refugees are ready to travel within 1 to 4 months of the application being received by the visa office.
<p>Travel and Arrival</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refugees board a plane to Canada, and are given permanent residency upon arrival. 2. Sponsors are responsible for reception, housing & basic necessities, income support for 6 months including start-up costs (RAP income support is provided by the Government for 6 months), settlement assistance and emotional & moral support. As permanent residents, the sponsored families are legally entitled to work, go to school, receive health care, and access free services for newcomers to Canada, such as language classes, employment counseling and other support services. Sponsored families are eligible for provincial health care coverage right away. For information on services available in each province: See www.rstp.ca → Under the Sponsorship Responsibility tab across the top, click on Settlement Services → Find a Settlement Service. 3. After receipt of the NAT, sponsors will be contacted by the local Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) office to schedule an intake interview for RAP and IFH registration, or to make arrangements for completing and mailing these documents.

For more information please contact:

[**bvor@rstp.ca**](mailto:bvor@rstp.ca)

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