Refugee Sponsorship Training Program

Managing Expectations

A Resource Kit for Refugee Sponsors

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The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) provides resources and information services to meet the ongoing information and training needs of private sponsors of refugees in Canada.

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1. ABOUT THIS RESOURCE KIT

While expectations are not inherently problematic, *unrealistic* expectations about Canada, the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program, sponsors and their responsibilities, financial support and other assistance as well as of sponsored refugees can negatively affect the sponsorship and its outcome.

Expectations may be amplified by rumours in communities abroad and in Canada, lack of or false information, misunderstandings and even excitement in anticipation of a new life in Canada. Refugees who are referred to the PSR program by the Canadian government may have a different view on refugee resettlement than those identified by relatives and sponsoring groups in Canada. Similarities and differences between the Government-Assisted Refugee, Joint-Assistance Sponsorship, Blended Visa Office-Referred sponsorship and the PSR program and their associated supports may be unclear or blurred.

Some sponsored refugees may arrive in Canada with specific expectations. They may anticipate higher financial and/or material assistance from their sponsors. They may not anticipate or underestimate the challenges and hurdles involved in settling in Canada. Similarly, some sponsors may also have specific expectations about the refugees and when these are unfulfilled, they may be surprised, shocked and even frustrated with the way in which the newcomers have chosen to lead their lives in Canada or with the perceived outcome of the sponsorship.

In some cases, unrealistic expectations have not only challenged the interpersonal dynamics and relationship-building process between sponsored newcomers and sponsors, but even lead to sponsorship breakdown. While not all sponsored refugees arrive with elevated expectations, the concept of planning to manage expectations has become a topic of concern within the sponsorship community.

1.1 PURPOSE

The aim of the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program was to develop an educational and practical resource kit that could support the work and efforts of sponsoring groups. The objective is to increase our knowledge base about expectations and where they come from, to contribute to the discussion about setting realistic expectations and to provide some tools that can be used in the training and preparation of sponsoring groups.

1.2 USING THIS RESOURCE KIT

This kit begins with a background reading and moves on to suggest ways in which sponsoring groups might better prepare to prevent and deal with problematic expectations. It has been divided into three general parts: background, prevention and preparing constituents.

Sponsors are encouraged to copy or adapt all or any part of this document for their use. We ask that discretion be used in the reproduction of any parts of this resource kit as it has been developed specifically for the context of the PSR program and may not be appropriate in other contexts.

1.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank members of the RSTP Advisory Committee and other Sponsorship Agreement Holder Representatives for sharing their experiences and insights which have gone into the development of this resource kit.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 WHAT ARE EXPECTATIONS AND WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

Expectations are a normal and necessary ingredient of life. We presume the outcome of an activity every day. Based on experience, we expect to wake up the next day, we expect the sun to rise, and to feel cold if we leave without proper attire in below zero degrees weather. In Canada, you may expect to have reasonable access to heat, electricity, water, food, and public transit if you have paid for them. At work, we might expect to interact with coworkers in a respectful and professional manner, receive support or guidance from co-workers if needed, and communicate openly with our immediate supervisor to set clear expectations. Similarly, we may be expected to fulfill out roles and responsibilities and raise any concerns we may have which concern our work or treatment at the place of employment.

> The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.
> - *Michelangelo*

Simply put, expectations are how we frame our present and out future based on our past experiences, perceptions, emotions, imagination and desires – sometimes even without a rational basis and with little available information.

Expectations can be powerful in that they can motivate us to do well if they are set high, and also cause us disappointment and grief if they are not met. At the same time, if we expect little of ourselves, we may not feel as disappointed if we fail and yet will not challenge ourselves to grow and achieve new things in life. Indeed, it can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Much energy and time goes into forming our expectations, but sometimes we struggle to own up to the fact that they are our own creations. As with other areas of life, sponsored newcomers and members of sponsoring groups will need to realize it is unreasonable to blame others for unmet expectations.

The Canada myth

Some newcomers to Canada have a rather rosy outlook of what their new lives will be like in Canada. Particularly, immigrants and other newcomers with high education levels and extensive work experience have great expectations when it comes to their employability and earning potential. However, a number of surveys, studies and reports reveal that these expectations often collide with reality and can affect the mental and physical health of newcomers to Canada.

Statistics Canada's *Immigrants' perspectives on their first four years in Canada* reported on the results of a longitudinal study of new immigrants (including refugees) who were surveyed at 6 months, two years and four years after their arrival in Canada between 2001 and 2002[1]. Lack of employment opportunities was what respondents most disliked about Canada. As a social determinant of health, employment helps structure day-to-day life and provides a sense of identity in addition to income.

Employment (i.e.: under- and unemployment) is incidentally also the most consistently determined

[1] *Schellenberg, G. & Maheux, H. (2008). Immigrants' perspectives on their first four years in Canada: Highlights from three waves of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada. Statistics Canada. Source: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2007000/9627-eng.htm*

[2] *Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. (2010). Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management. Source: http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/The_Canadian_Facts.pdf*

determining factor of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in newcomers who are survivors of torture and/or trauma[3]. In other words, many survivors of trauma and torture developed PTSD only after facing the challenges of finding meaningful employment in Canada.

Most refugees do not anticipate the level and type of challenges they will be faced with in Canada. In comparison to the conditions under which they were forced to flee their countries of origin, Canada may appear to be a land of milk and honey. Rumours and exaggerated accounts of the successes of other émigrés to Canada might fuel misconceptions about Canada. While Canada may provide safety and a sense of security, it is important to realize that newcomers' expectations of what it can offer them may be set high upon arrival.

Some common myths about Canada

There is work for everyone in Canada - if you are willing to work.

I will be able to earn and save a lot of money to help support all my family members back home.

If the money from our sponsors is not enough, we can get financial support through the government payroll.

The weather in Canada is always cold.

All Canadians are white.

All major Canadian cities are a short drive away from one another.

During the Canadian winter, people cannot leave their homes.

In Canada, parents are not allowed to discipline their children / Children can send their parents to jail if they want to.

Canadian are rich and live in big houses.

What's the problem?

In and of themselves expectations – whether high or low – are not problematic. Most of us want things we do not have. These wants are not necessarily bad, after all 'dreaming big' is a common North American mantra. This gives our lives focus and enables us to prioritize.

Expectations become problematic when they are unreasonable; when we believe we *deserve* something else or better because we believe we have already earned it. It becomes counter-productive when we take whatever we can without acknowledgment and keep making demands for more.

This sense of entitlement is what can cause feelings of resentment, frustrations and anger on the part of sponsored refugees and/or sponsors. It may negatively affect efforts to build rapport and a healthy interpersonal relationship, and it may eventually lead to a breakdown in the sponsorship.

The difference between high expectations and a sense of entitlement lies in the blame we lay when we feel disappointed once our experiences fail to live up to the expectations we hold.

As sponsors, we want to empower and support sponsored refugees in their path to achieve their goals in Canada; part of this support is being able to help them set and nurture realistic explanations while at the same time developing skills to address potential conflict arising from mismatched expectations. As with many things in life, managing expectations requires a delicate balance.

[3]*McKenzie, K. (Feb. 4, 2013). 'Immigration Sickness' Speech given at the Gardiner Museum, Toronto. Presented by the Literary Review of Canada and TVO Big Ideas: http://ww3.tvo.org/video/188398/kwame-mckenzie-immigration-sickness*

A note on resilience

As we differentiate between having expectations and having unrealistic or unreasonable expectations and a sense of entitlement, a reflection on the dynamics of power, control and self-determination in the context of the refugee experience may be in order. We need to be mindful that refugees often come from situations where their sense of self-determination and control over their own lives was diminished, if not destroyed, through persecution, torture, denial of basic rights and freedoms and other processes of disempowerment[4].

> 'The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places.'
> - *Ernest Hemingway*

Where people have lived in constant discouragement and disempowering circumstances, self-esteem and self-confidence may also be negatively affected. Research[5] suggests that some people with low self-esteem have unusually high expectations of others or nonexistent goals for themselves because they attempt to avoid personal failure. Self-esteem grows with realistic expectations. It may be worth considering: Could the refugee's over-reliance on - and high expectations of members of the sponsoring group be a sign of low self-esteem stemming from experiences of disempowerment?

We need to be aware that survival under the previously mentioned circumstances requires adaptability and resourcefulness. The refugees whom we meet in Canada are resilient: they were able to overcome adversity and major life crises because they did not allow the circumstances to define and destroy them. You may want to think of resiliency as health or mental health *despite* adversity[6]. While they may be physically and/or emotionally and mentally affected by what happened to them or those close to them, they have remained persistent in their survival and strengthened their adaptability in the face of hardships.

While resiliency is often described as a set of personal traits, it seems that the promotion of resilience among refugees is connected to a set of social factors including social support during settlement[7]. Helping the sponsored refugees establish their lives in Canada based on a set of realistic expectations involves supporting the growth of resiliency through social support and empowerment.

Depending on our lens, assertively asking for things can be perceived as being demanding or even disrespectful behaviour, when in actuality it may be part of someone's way of coping with adversity. To speak up in order to meet their basic needs is often the only way to survive in a country of asylum that does not grant equal legal rights and access to basic healthcare, education, employment, etc. to asylum seekers and refugees.

It may be useful to adopt a nuanced perspective as a group about resilience in order to differentiate behaviours related to self-empowerment and independence from problematic expectations and feelings of entitlement.

How resilient are *you*?

Take an online self-test to learn more about resilience
www.resiliencycenter.com/resiliencyquiz.shtml

[4] For more information on processes of disempowerment, see Patel, N. (2003). Speaking with the Silent: Addressing Issues of Disempowerment when Working with Refugee People. (Chapter 14) In R.Tribe, H. Ravel (Eds.), Working with Interpreters in Mental Health,. East Essex, Brunner- Routledge.
[5] E.g.:http://www.getesteem.com/lse-symptoms/emotional.html and http://www.life-with-confidence.com/self-sabotage-behavior.html
[6] Simich, L. & Roche, B. (2012). Defining resiliency, constructing equity. Wellesley Institute: Toronto, ON.
[7] Ibid.

The Characteristics of Resilient People

Emotional regulation

- ability to stay calm under pressure
- control of emotions
- appropriate expression of emotions
- to improve – learn to understand your thinking, and learn to calm and focus your mind.

Impulse control

- linked closely to emotional regulation
- impulsive interpretation of events can lead to the use of false beliefs and loss of perspective
- to improve - learn to understand your thinking and avoid thinking traps; also learn to challenge beliefs.

Optimism

- involves having a belief that things change for the better – seeing a bright future but also being realistic
- linked to self-efficacy – having faith in your ability to solve problems
- to improve – ensure that you have good self-efficacy.

Causal analysis

- able to identify the causes of problems
- using a thinking style that is flexible and open to possibilities as well as realistic
- avoiding blaming, as well as ruminating about things beyond your control
- to improve – challenge your beliefs.

Empathy

- how well you relate to other people's cues about their psychological and emotional states (this is useful in knowing how to motivate other people)
- to improve – learn to notice how you think and detect "icebergs" (the beliefs you use) to understand what motivates you, then you can apply these skills with others.

Self-efficacy

- our sense that we are effective in the world, and able to solve problems that may arise, and faith that we will succeed
- linked to optimism (pessimism damages self-efficacy)
- to improve – avoid thinking traps (put things in perspective), challenge beliefs – these help to improve problem solving and confidence – and thus self-efficacy.

Reaching out

- trying new things, getting involved with people or new things
- to improve – challenge beliefs, put things in perspective.

Source: Reivich & Schatté (2002). The Resilience Factor. Broadway Books: New York, NY.

2.2 WHY MANAGE EXPECTATIONS?

Unreasonable expectations and feelings of entitlement in the context of refugee sponsorship can lead to:

- Skewed perceptions about the PSR program, and perpetuation of such perceptions abroad (e.g. “They did not support me at all!”)
- Disappointment and dissatisfaction with the sponsorship experience
- Lack of communication resulting in miscommunication
- Difficulty building rapport
- Feelings of resentment
- Interpersonal conflicts (between the refugee and sponsors; among refugees; among sponsors)
- Sponsorship breakdown
- Unmet needs

Having a plan to manage expectations proactively will help ensure that the sponsorship experience is satisfactory to all involved. It minimizes feelings of resentment, frustrations and interpersonal conflict arising from unreasonable expectations and sense of entitlement and reduces the risk of sponsorship breakdown. Managing expectations is essentially about changing direction in an effort to bring everyone ‘on the same page’.

The emotional spiral to self-sabotage when expectations are mismatched

When your high expectations are not matched and you are too attached to a specific outcome, you:

1. feel you deserve the results you expected. You tell yourself that you should get something in return for your efforts. For example, you exercised every day so you should have lost weight.

2. feel angry and bitter for not getting what you feel you rightfully deserve

3. feel like a failure

4. feel like it’s not your fault. Someone or something else is to blame for why you didn’t get what you want.

5. feel powerless because things didn’t go as planned

6. feel tired and frustrated waiting for the results to happen so you quit

7. feel confused so you keep trying to analyze how you got where you are. Where did things go wrong?

The result is that you become too frustrated and sabotage yourself by simply giving up.

By Pratt, C. Self-sabotage behaviour: 7 ways your own expectations can cause self-sabotage. Source: http://www.life-with-confidence.com/self-sabotage-behavior.html

3. PREVENTION

A young couple moves into a new neighbourhood. The next morning, the woman sees her neighbour hanging the wash outside.

That laundry is not very clean, she said. *She doesn't know how to wash correctly. Perhaps she needs better laundry soap*.

Her husband looked on, but remained silent.

Every time her neighbour would hang her wash to dry, the woman made the same comments.

About a month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and said: *Look, she has learned how to wash correctly! I wonder who taught her this*.

The husband said: *I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows*…

3.1 SELF-REFLECTION

Being aware of our personal motivations for getting involved in refugee sponsorship, desired outcomes of a sponsorship and ideas about the refugees you are sponsoring will help in our efforts to set realistic expectation and manage expectations of both sponsors and sponsored refugees.

Consider the following questions as you reflect on your expectations of yourself, of the sponsorship and of the refugee(s):

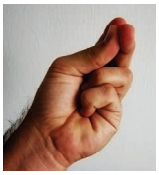
- What motivated me to join a refugee sponsoring group?
- What is my contribution in this sponsorship?
- What do I hope to get out of the sponsorship?
- Where do I envision the refugee(s) to be one year after their arrival, in terms of their language, employment, living situation and general integration?
- What hopes and dreams do I have for the refugee(s)? Do they match the refugees'?
- How would I feel if my hopes and dreams for them do not materialize?
- Does my group share my hopes, dreams and expectations?

As a group, you may want to have a conversation about the effects of your own expectations during the sponsorship (see section 4.2).

Similarly, be aware of your own values, beliefs and emotional triggers. People who are self-reflective and secure with their own identity can be more flexible with and open to people from different Ethnocultural backgrounds.

Knowing ourselves well will also help to prevent us from drawing conclusions about the actions, behaviours, demeanours, and appearances of others which may be biased or misconstrued. Everyone has a culture and no one is bias-free. However, critical self-awareness can go a long way in cross-cultural communication and interactions.

Interpersonal communication is laced with culturally specific nuances which may be interpreted differently in western societies. There may be significant differences in language norms that affect intonation, phrasing, expressions and gestures. Body language is similarly culturally interpreted. Consider the following pictures. What do these hand gestures express?



The meaning of these hand gestures can be different depending on the cultural lens you are looking through.

From left to right, the hand gesture depicted in the first picture motions taxi cabs to stop in some Middle Eastern countries and often times is used to mean 'stop'. The very similar gesture on the right is commonly used in Indian culture as a sign of eating, whereas it is a very offensive hand gesture in Italy. The commonly used gesture in North America for 'ok', as picture in the middle, is a sign for money in Japan, a sign for 'zero' in Australia, is an insult in France and Brazil. The thumbs up gesture, so commonly used to indicate approval or good in western societies, is one of the most obscene hand gestures in other parts of the world including the Middle East, West Africa, and South America.

You cannot know all of the cultural body language and verbal language cues, meanings and other cultural expressions that exist, however acknowledging that differences exist which can influence our interpretation and conclusions about others' intentions, motivations and dispositions can help communicate and set realistic expectations about the sponsorship and life in Canada.

For more information about cross-cultural awareness in the context of private refugee sponsorship please refer to the RSTP Training Manual on Cross-Cultural Awareness at www.rstp.ca.

3.2 COMMUNICATION

Communication is vital in setting realistic expectations and preventing complications arising from mismatched expectations for both the refugee applicant and the sponsor. Ultimately, clear, timely and effective communication is vital to the success of the refugee sponsorship.

Pre-arrival communication

If the group has put forth a 'named' sponsorship case, then the contact information of the refugee applicant should be known to the group. If the sponsors are engaged in a visa-office referred case, they will need to collaborate with the Matching Centre as well as the visa office abroad to obtain the refugee applicant's contact information. If it is not possible to obtain this information you may have to rely on the Matching Centre and the visa office abroad to facilitate your communication with the refugee applicant.

Where the refugee applicant has relatives or friends in Canada that are known to the sponsoring group, they too should be involved in the group's pre-arrival communication efforts with the refugee applicant abroad. The active involvement of acquaintances in Canada will also help dispel any myths or misconceptions they may hold about the private sponsorship of refugees program.

You may want to develop a pre-arrival communication strategy with your group. Consider what mode of communication is feasible and makes most sense given the refugee's situation abroad in terms of security, safety, access to technology, sufficient funds to facilitate communication and any other factors. If possible, use multiple ways of communication. You may want to:

- speak on the phone,
- send a letter by mail,
- write an email,
- send a picture of your group and Canada by mail or email,
- speak through Skype,
- chat online,
- send messages through facebook, and/or
- send a letter by fax.

Be sure to communicate clearly about the kinds of supports they will get from your group, why your group has sponsored them, how long the sponsorship is, your expectations and what they can expect from you. You may have to repeat these messages several times and in various ways because the refugees will have a lot of things to take care of and handle when they prepare to permanently move to Canada. If you have regular communication with the refugees before their departure, you may be able to gauge what worries them about being sponsored or coming to Canada and alleviate some of their fears. This will help them set realistic expectations and focus on settling in Canada.

Communicating through interpreters and translators

When the refugee is not proficient in English or French you will have to rely on interpreters for any verbal communication, such as over the telephone, and translators for any written communication, such as letters or emails.

If you have to communicate through an interpreter, working with a professional interpreter is ideal as they have been trained in sector-specific terminology, have professional interpretation skills and follow interpreters' ethical guidelines, such as maintaining confidentiality. Some interpreters work remotely and can assist you via telephone or video. However, when working with an interpreter is not possible due to time constraints and financial resources, you may have to rely on adult friends or relatives to interpret so that you and the refugee can speak. Never use children as interpreters as it can traumatize and expose them to sensitive information and negatively affect the family dynamics due to the role reversal that interpreting for their adult family members brings.

When using family members or friends of the refugee to interpret, you need to be aware that they can become the decision maker in terms of what information is passed on and what is not conveyed. They may start to answer questions for the refugee without you knowing or may not interpret information that they are personally uncomfortable with. It is important to clarify their role as interpreter and not family member right from the start. Check that the person interpreting understands that they have to interpret simply what the refugee and you have said without summarizing, amending, adding, or omitting any of the content. They are not professional interpreters and on occasions this may be difficult for them to do. It is advisable to paraphrase and repeat what has been said to confirm and avoid any misunderstandings.

When working with an interpreter:

- brief the refugee about the use of an interpreter
- obtain consent from the refugee to work with an interpreter
- discuss with the interpreter what you expect of him or her and to set the context ahead of time
- verify that the interpreter speaks the same dialect
- be mindful of the socio-political dynamics in particular communities; check for any prejudice the interpreter may hold against the refugee, if possible
- be mindful of gender differences and dynamics in the interpretation of sensitive topics
- let the interpreter brief the refugee about their role at the beginning
- address the refugee directly, not the interpreter, when speaking
- speak in a normal voice: not too fast, not too loud
- break your sentences up into shorter parts; avoid speaking in long sentences
- avoid jargon and colloquial expressions; use simple and clear language
- avoid jokes – they often do not translate well into a different culture when interpreted
- if you are unsure whether the message has been interpreted accurately, paraphrase and ask the refugee for confirmation of what you have understood
- if you feel that an interpretation mistake has been made, address the interpreter directly to clarify your message or ask the refugee to repeat what they have said
- if your experience with the interpreter was not good, arrange for someone else to interpret the next time if possible. You do not have to stick to the same person!

When working with a translator to communicate with the refugee in written form, it is important to remember that just because someone speaks two languages fluently; it does not mean that they have the skills to translate. After all, just because someone has two feet, it does not make him/her a professional dancer!

It is ideal to work with a professional translator or someone who has proven skills in translating documents. Translation is a regulated profession in Canada which ensures a certain level of professional standards, ethics, and quality and accuracy in the final translation product. You can hire a self-employed translator or a translator through a community agency or translator agency.

When it is not possible to work with a professional translator, it would be important for someone in Canada to translate for you and any written communication from the refugee in a manner that is accurate and truthful. As with the use of an interpreter, it is important that the translator can ensure confidentiality, will not be misusing any of the information, and will translate the text accurately from one language into another without loosing any of the text's meaning.

Post-arrival communication

Do not assume that the refugee applicant has fully understood or remembered all of the information you have discussed with them via facebook, email, letters, Skype, or other methods before their arrival – even if you repeated them several times and in several ways. After their arrival, it will be important to reiterate some of the key messages again.

Plan with your group how you will communicate this information in a consistent and objective way in order to establish realistic expectations. Be prepared that the refugees will have additional questions and worries now that they are in Canada. An orientation session to reassure them and to cover the most essential information is highly recommended. After an initial orientation, you may want to have subsequent orientation meetings to cover other information and to gauge the refugees' expectations and communicate your expectations as well. For more information about providing orientation see section 4.5.

Research shows that the health and mental health of recently arrived newcomers including refugees is strongly linked to settlement stressors[1]. Tell the sponsored refugees about some of the common settlement challenges as well as culture shock and the process of adaptation and what effects these may have on them and their family.

In addition to clearly and honestly telling the sponsored persons what the settlement stresses are, plan together how your group can assist them in handling potential stressors. This will empower the person as well as provide them with a realistic view on where sponsors can help and where they may not be able to help. The more they are aware of some of the stressors, the better mentally prepared they can be when facing settlement challenges and barriers.

 [1] For a summary of common settlement stressors for newcomers to Canada, visit http://www.vircs.bc.ca/settlement/common_issues.php

3.3 THE CANADIAN ORIENTATION ABROAD PROGRAM

The Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) Program is a CIC-funded pre-departure orientation project of the International Organization of Migration (IOM). The COA Program provides information about life in Canada to visa-ready immigrants and refugees, including those who are being privately sponsored. By providing vital information and cultural orientation to the migrants before their arrival in Canada, the program aims to help set realistic expectations about what their new life will be like when they arrive in Canada.

The COA program for refugees is structured as a series of group training sessions. It is usually delivered over the course of three days for urban refugees or five days for camp-based refugees for five hours each day. There are no COA training sessions with only privately sponsored refugees; in general, there are both government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees in the same room. Though participation in these trainings is voluntary, the attendance rate is generally high (about 95%). Encourage the sponsored refugee(s) to attend a COA session, if it is available in their area.

COA training sessions are offered through permanent COA sites in Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Sudan, Syria and Turkey as well as other locations through mobile COA training teams. You can liaise with the IOM COA program manager or offer to obtain more information about enrolment and available COA sessions where the refugee resides.

The five day COA curriculum for refugees covers a wide range of information, including support programs in services in place for newcomers in Canada and what refugees will be receiving in terms of assistance from their sponsors or RAP service centre, if they are government-assisted refugees.

A typical five-day COA curriculum outline consists of:

Introduction / Needs Assessment
Unit 1: Overview of Canada
Unit 2: Travel to Canada
Unit 3: Arrival and Services
Unit 4: Housing (incl. housing expectations: what you will/will not get from the SPO/NGO)
Unit 5: Health (including the Canadian health care system)
Unit 6: Education
Unit 7: Transportation
Unit 8: Employment (including barriers to employment for newcomers)
Unit 9: Cultural Adaptation
Unit 10: Budgeting
Unit 11: Laws

The person you intend to sponsor will most likely receive COA training close to their departure date. While COA Trainers attempt to dispel any myths and incorrect information that refugees may have obtained, the refugee may not remember all of the information that was covered during the training. This can be an overwhelming time for the refugee – he/she has to mentally and emotionally prepare to move to a country that is foreign, pack their belongings, tie any loose ends and say their goodbyes to friends and family that they will leave behind. The volume of new information combined with feelings of excitement, sadness or anxiety in anticipation of the move may also have an overwhelming effect on the person.

As a result, realistic expectations may or may not have been set despite of the COA training. As sponsors, it will be important to realize these factors surrounding the COA trainings and consider how you may want to help supplement and build on the IOM's efforts to manage expectations before as well as after the arrival of the refugee. Having an orientation session shortly after arrival in Canada where some of the same items are reviewed may help confirm and set realistic expectations (see section 4.5 for more information about orientation sessions).

3.4 TRAINING

Group discussions and training workshops on expectations will help your group members feel better prepared to respond to a situation where expectations may be mismatched or unrealistic. While you cannot foresee the future, working through some hypothetical scenarios will encourage brainstorming problem-solving solutions and strategies ahead of time. Such exercises will also help you identify and address any knowledge and/or resource gaps that need to be addressed.

The next chapter provides some ideas and tools for use in group trainings.

4. PREPARING CONSTITUENTS

Refugee applicants as well as sponsors have expectations. It is useful for group members to be aware of these and to prepare themselves together to try to prevent these expectations from becoming problematic and to develop skills to mitigate the effects of unrealistic expectations or sense of entitlement when they arise.

The following resources and handouts may be useful as you start a conversation as a group or with a group about the issue of managing expectations.

4.1 SAMPLE TRAINING OUTLINE

1. **Generate clarity** about the 'problem' – this will start to gauge interest and discussion about the issue of expectations.

   You may want to share practical examples, a joke, case scenarios (see section 1 for samples), or video clips that illustrate the topic or issue.

2. **Light theory** – this will bring everyone on the same page. To tackle the issue of expectations requires a healthy dose of self-reflection and developing awareness about our own expectations. Participants need to be aware that expectations are not bad in and of themselves and that we all carry them. The aim of this segment is to gauge empathy and create solutions that are empathetic.

   You may want to raise awareness about expectations by sharing a self-assessment questionnaire (see section 4.2) or presenting examples where expectations have positive connotations and impacts (see section 2 for examples).

3. **Tips and advice** – this will allow participants to engage in problem-solving after the 'problem' has been defined, discussed and understood.

   You may want to include examples of how others have successfully managed to handle potential conflict arising from mismatched or unrealistic expectations. You may also want to discuss the roles of orientation, communication and conflict resolution.

4. **Application** – this will allow participants to cement and reinforce the knowledge they have gained in an attempt to apply it. Let's not just walk the walk – let's try to walk it too.

   You may want to use role plays that illustrate different ways in which mismatched or unrealistic expectations could negatively affect the sponsorship. You can adapt the case scenarios or use the role plays provided in the following sections.

5. **Debrief** – review key concepts and learned skills. Make sure any outstanding questions or unclear areas are addressed. End the meeting positively.

4.2 SELF-ASSESSMENT

You may want to distribute these questions as an exercise in self-reflection or a starting point in small group discussion at the beginning of a group meeting or training sessions. It is important for facilitators to clarify that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. The purpose is for participants to become aware of their own expectations and to take responsibility for them, without being judged by others. The questions are not designed to be discussed in a larger group setting.

To get to know one another, we need to look at ourselves. What motives me? What makes me dis-appointed or feel frustrated? What expectations do I have? Take a moment to answer and reflect on the following questions:

1. Motivations:
    a. Why am I involved in refugee sponsorship?
    b. What will I get out of a successful sponsorship?

2. Resourcefulness:
    a. On a scale of 1 ('not at all') to 5 ('extremely'), how would you rate your own level of resourcefulness? What makes you a 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5?
    b. You may not always get what you want, but do you always get what you need? How so? What do you do or say to accomplish this? Do you have a strategy?

3. Secondary migration:
    a. How would I feel if the sponsored refugee were to express their intentions of moving to another city during the first week after arrival in Canada?
    b. What if they expressed this in the twelfth month of the sponsorship? Would there be a difference in my reaction/feelings? If so, why?
    c. How would I feel if the sponsored refugee were to catch a connecting flight to an other city on the way to our community?
    d. How would secondary migration affect me personally? How might it affect our sponsoring group? How could it affect the receiving community?
    e. How will secondary migration impact the refugee(s)?

4. Outcomes:
    a. How would I feel if the sponsored refugees refused to attend language classes?
    b. How would I react if the sponsored refugee did not send their children to school?
    c. What would I do if the refugees did not like the accommodation that we arranged for them? What if they did not get along with the landlord?
    d. How would I react if the refugee had a health condition which were not disclosed before their arrival?
    e. How would I manage if their health/mental health deteriorated after arrival?
    f. What if the sponsored person does not cooperate with the group?
    g. What if they rely on information from friends and relatives rather than the group?
    h. What general outcome(s) do I hope for?
    i. What would a sponsorship breakdown mean to me?
    j. Would I get involved in another sponsorship? Why or why not?

Alternatively, as a facilitator, you may want to ask some of the questions out loud to get people thinking – but remember, do not point to any particular person to answer the question. These are rhetorical questions, designed to get people to self-reflect and emphasize.

4.3 EXPECTATIONS VIDEO DISCUSSION

Video: 'Refugee Sponsorship and Expectations: Sponsor and Refugees Perspectives'

The RTSP interviewed sponsored refugees and members of various refugee sponsoring groups about their expectations in the context of the private sponsorship of refugees program. Their answers were videotaped and compiled as a resource that can be used in trainings of refugee sponsoring groups. The video has also been posted on the RTSP YouTube channel and can be found at: http://youtu.be/JvWbp_d5ivU.

The video is divided into two parts: the first part features responses from members of refugee sponsoring groups, while the second part focuses on the anticipations, discoveries, hopes and challenges experienced by sponsored refugees after their arrival.

The following video segments and accompanying discussion questions illustrate what potential expectations could be on part of sponsored refugees and refugee sponsors.

Sponsors' Expectations

Video segment:
5:53 minutes – 10:11 minutes

Activity:

1. Inform participants about the video they are about to watch.
2. Ask them to list all the expectations that the interviewed sponsors had of the refugees they would sponsor and of the refugee sponsorship itself.
3. Play the segment identified above.
4. After playing the video, ask participants to tell you what they have listed and record these on a flip chart.

Debrief:

1. Ask participants if they are surprised at the length of this list. Ask them why or why not?
2. Are there any expectations that surprised them and/or they disagree with?
3. Do any of these expectations sound familiar?
4. Are there any expectations that they would add?

Allow for the conversation to develop, moderate where needed.

Sponsored Refugees' Expectations

Video segments:
16:09 minutes – 18:07 minutes &
19:33 minutes – 22:41 minutes

Activity:

1. Before showing the next segment, ask participants to talk in their groups about the kinds of expectations that sponsored refugees might have after their arrival in Canada. Ask one person in each group to note these down. They will be discussed after watching the video.
2. Inform participants about the video they are about to watch.
3. Ask them to take note of what interviewees were surprised about and what initial expectations they said they had.
4. Play the segment identified above.
5. After playing the video, ask participants to tell you what they have listed and record these on a flip chart.

Debrief:

1. How does the list on the flip chart compare to the list of expectations they had discussed previously in their small groups?
2. Were there any surprises? Did the interviewed refugees mention things that surprised you or you did not expect?
3. How do the expectations of refugees compare with the expectations from the sponsors? What similarities and differences did you notice?

Managing Expectations

Video Segment:
11:46 minutes – 14:00 minutes

Activity:

1. Having watched the previous video segments, ask participants to briefly discuss in their small groups, to identify some of the expectations that could potentially become problematic, and to brainstorm how they might prepare to either avoid or mitigate the impact of such expectations.
2. Time permitting; ask one to three groups to briefly share what they have come up with.
3. Show the video segment above to add to what participants have already mentioned.

Debrief:

1. Briefly ask participants if they have any comments.

4.4 ROLE PLAYS & SCENARIOS

You may want to provide participants with role plays, have them act them out, discuss and then debrief together or allow participants to develop their own role plays and then perform it in front of the larger group, discuss and debrief together. The latter version works well with participants who have experience as refugee sponsors.

Always debrief role plays in large group or small group discussions:

- Any comments, impressions, feedback from the audience?
- Ask actors: How did it feel playing…?
- Ask audience: How would you have handled the situation differently, if you were…?

If you do not have any role plays or case scenarios to work with, you may want to start a group exercise by instructing participants to share and discuss examples where it was challenging to interact and/or meet the needs of sponsored newcomers due to unrealistic or mismatched expectations.

Ask participants to pick one of the scenarios that were shared in their group, and to prepare a three minute role play that illustrates:

- What happened in that situation
- What the challenge was
- How the persons involved were able (or unable) to overcome that challenge. Alternatively, your role play can illustrate how you would have liked to handle the situation.

Sample role play: At the refugee committee meeting[1]

We can't underestimate the importance of coming to an agreement about the main issues of sponsorship - before the people arrive…

Alice: Greetings, everyone. Can we call this meeting to order? Let's begin with a review of our sponsorship of Miroslav and the family. How long is it now?

Ben: Seven months. Time to get Miroslav out to work!

Alice: Well, hang on a minute, Ben. His English still needs a lot of work. If he stops studying now he'll pretty much be condemned to the lowest paying jobs. And he has no idea how to even look for a job in Canada. He'll need training for that, too. If he goes to work now, his life will hardly be better than it was in Europe.

Ben: Miroslav has had all the basic ESL classes now. (*That should be good enough. Lots of people come here with less help than that - and they make it!)* And Dina's working- it's good enough for her.

Alice: *(I wish Ben'd try to understand what they're going through. He just doesn't seem to get it.)* I don't think that's quite fair, Ben. Dina works as a cleaner- when there is work. She hasn't had many hours lately. And you know, she doesn't get much chance to talk when she's at work, so her English isn't benefiting from this job at all.

Ben: (*They've got a better life just being in Canada. We can't hand feed them forever.)* They're safe and they have the chance to work. There are lots of others that need our help. We should be directing our money toward them now.

Alice: Well, we've committed to supporting them for a year. I think they should have some say in what they want to do. Miroslav wants to study more, I think. Then, when he gets a decent job, Dina can quit cleaning and go to classes.

Ben: *(I know that Jim Brown would give him a job on his pig farm.)* I still think they can work and study if they want. If they couldn't, you know - I wouldn't push for it. But I really feel that we should be looking to help a new family now. We gave Miro and Dina their chance.

Alice: Well, what about the kids. They'll be in school and there'll be a lot of extras coming up for them. Miro had a good job before they had to run. If he gets a good base in English he should be able to build a career here, too. And a better life.

Ben: (She *needs to be more realistic!)* You're not convincing me, Alice. I thought that we agreed: one year's support or until they got working, whichever came first. So I think we should help him get to work – starting now.

 [1]*Courtesy of Maggie Hosgood and the Refugee Advisory Group of the United Church, Vancouver, BC*

Miroslav and Dina's point of view

Miroslav: You are late tonight, Dina. How was your day?

Dina: Oh, Miro, I am so tired tonight. We had to clean a house so dirty pigs would not live in it! And the smell! It was terrible!

Miroslav: I feel so bad that you must do this work. As soon as I get a good job you can stop cleaning and stay at home with the children.

Dina: Oh, Miro- I don't know if I want to stay at home. That is lonely, too. And I want to study English, too. It's too bad we both couldn't study together: It's your turn now. And if you study hard then you can get a real job, like back home. Not like me.

Miroslav: But I always have worked for the family. I should be working now- any job!

Dina: No, Miro! We agreed! For one year you study, you get good enough English. Then you get a good job. With the church money and my work we can get by for a while.

Miroslav: Tonight we are tired. We don't argue- okay. Make us a coffee, eh.

Sample case scenario: The Smiths

The community of Underhill was very excited about the arrival of the Smith family - their first sponsored refugee family. With a population of 9,590 people, Underhill is a scenic and calm community that offers the best of Canada's natural treasures: mountains, fresh green fields and proximity to the sea side. It has a vibrant arts and craft scene and a booming hotel and tourism industry. The winters are mild and the summers refreshing. For the residents of Underhill and the tourists that come here year by year, this is paradise in North America.

The Underhill refugee sponsorship committee has been in existence for two years. They consist of members from several faith communities who have come together to help a family in need. After over a year of waiting, the Smiths (a family of 4) finally arrived a month ago. Several of the committee members picked them up from the nearby airport and brought them to the basement apartment which they had rented and furnished for them.

Though they had seemed shy and very polite at first, the Smiths seemed to be happy. Then, everything started to change about a week ago: They constantly called the committee to be driven around to various appointments and to run errands. Then they asked for a mobile phone for each member of the family even though the committee had not included more than one phone into the monthly budget. Despite the donated TV and cable, the family asked for a satellite dish. And, when the committee proudly presented the family with the pile of clothing donated from generous community members, the Smiths refused to wear them or take them home.

Today, the committee received a call from the family. They asked if they could move to Toronto.

It took more than 12 months of hard work to fund-raise and collect the in-kind donations, and the group was under the impression that the family they would sponsor would be desperate. Members of the sponsorship committee are starting to doubt whether the family was really in need, and whether their funds should have been used to sponsor a different family.

In your group:

1. Discuss what you think the problem or issue here is and how you would handle this situation if you were members of this sponsoring group.
2. Designate who will play Mr. and Mrs. Smith and group members Jane, Ahmad, and Soraya and act out this scenario for the larger group and either discuss or act out a potential solution to this problem.

Sample case scenario: Abida

Abida and her family were sponsored 2 months ago from a refugee camp. They have endured torture and do not know who if any of their family members have survived the violence in their home town. Abida has left behind a sister who does not have any means of supporting herself in Yemen. Due to recent unrest in the country, Abida has been worried about her sister and wants to support her. Your group learned that she sent money to her sister from the monthly allowance that you have been giving her. Some members of the group were not happy as they felt that she should have used the little amount of money to feed herself and the children. The funds were raised with the help of a number of volunteers and were intended for sponsorship purposes only.

Group Discussion:

Do you agree with members of this sponsoring group? Why or why not?

Sample case scenario: Moving to another continent

Activity instructions:

- Ask participants to tell you the most exotic place that they can think of. Record several on a flip chart
- Ask participants to tell you, by show-of-hands, who has heard of each of these places
- Pick the place that the least number of them have heard of
- Ask participants to imagine that they are forced to leave Canada immediately and move to this new place. Ask them to think about the kinds of questions they would have about this new place since they are moving there for good. Ask them to reflect on the kinds of things they might worry about.
- Time permitting, ask participants to compare their top 5 questions in their small groups.
- Debrief by asking participants to share any comments about their questions, feelings and comparisons with peers.
- Conclude by drawing parallels to the kinds of worries refugees who are resettled to Canada might have when they do not have access to some information.

4.5 POST-ARRIVAL: PROVIDING ORIENTATION

Providing orientation to the newly arrived refugee family helps to ensure that both sponsors and sponsored refugees are on the same page with regards to the scope of the sponsorship including roles and responsibilities of both parties, that essential information about living in Canada is provided and that any questions that newcomers may have are clarified.

You may want to provide orientation in an informal and flexible way that will allow you and the sponsored newcomers to have two-directional conversations and allow for any questions that the newcomers might have to be asked and answered in a safe and comfortable atmosphere.

In the settlement sector, orientation sessions are provided separately to youth and adults. We advise sponsors to do the same, where possible, to address the specific needs and interests of youth which pertain particularly to the education system, youth culture, and rights and responsibilities. A settlement agency near you may have a youth settlement program that can provide newcomer youth with in-depth information about the school system, volunteering opportunities, youth employment and recreation.

The items listed below and topics to be discussed with the adults in the newcomer family in addition to the actual settlement support provided by members of the sponsoring group.

We recommend that 1 - 2 group members participate in these orientations. The entire group's participation may overwhelm and even intimidate the newcomers. Best practice is to start each orientation with a warm and friendly welcome. Make sure you arrange for an interpreter ahead of time, if needed, and that the interpreter is briefed prior to or at the beginning of the meeting.

Orientation: First few days

Checklist for orientation after a few days

- What it means to be sponsored (social assistance, residence, term)
- Who are the sponsors (general & specifically the names)
- What types of supports do sponsored refugees get (general)
- What specific support will they get, when and how – esp. financial
- Responsibilities of sponsors (limitations, availability, expectations, etc.)
- Responsibilities of newcomers
- Their rights as permanent residents
- Emergency contact numbers and procedures
- Information about any matters requiring immediate attention – this will differ case by case. Prioritize according to their situation and needs. For example:
    - If arriving from warm climate during the winter months, you may want to discuss the Canadian winter (where to obtain appropriate winter attire, concept of wind chill, outdoor safety, school/school bus cancellations, etc.)
    - For families with young children, set up a time to accompany to school for school registration and provide support for school preparations (school attire, stationary, plan school route, vaccinations, etc.)
    - If arriving with medical need, identify a local health care provider together, set up a time to accompany for IFH and provincial health care registration, explain health care support and system in broad terms

Orientation: First week

Checklist for orientation during first week

- Review any questions they may have, pay particular attention to issues relating to financial support
- Repeat their rights and responsibilities as permanent residents
- Provide a general overview of the neighbourhood they have moved to – if possible, do this while you go for a walk together through the neighbourhood. Cover nearest grocery store, bank, public transit stop, library.
- You may want to discuss local customs relating to handling/paying money, transportation, social interactions and anything else that might be useful to know in order to meet their basic needs

Orientation: Second or Third Week

Checklist for orientation during second or third week

- Check-in: any questions, concerns or issues that need to be clarified
- Discuss aspects of life in Canada:
  - Rights
  - Responsibilities
  - Employment customs, interview etiquette, etc.
  - If newcomer has not met with a settlement worker yet, ensure any other settlement related questions are answered
- Discuss any possible misunderstandings, conflict and crisis and what do to in those situations
  - Reassure the newcomers that they can speak up if they are unhappy with the support that they are receiving from the group or co-sponsor, if applicable.
  - Inform of who can be contacted in such a situation
- Address any other questions that the newcomers might have

During your training, ask participants to brain-storm what items they would cover in an orientation session with newly arrived sponsored refugees. Direct groups to prioritize their orientation list according to immediate, first week, and second/third week. Ask participants to focus on the items they have identified as 'immediate' and to plan an orientation meeting around these items. Time permitting, ask two of the groups to role play their orientation session. You can debrief this session by asking for feedback from the audience and by reviewing the orientation lists above.