

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

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Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program



Groups of Five

Information Booklet

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What is the Private Sponsorship of Refugees?

Private Sponsorship is the resettlement of a refugee to Canada, in which financial costs and settlement support are provided by private groups or organizations. Sponsoring groups commit to provide basic financial support (i.e. housing, food, etc.) and care for the sponsored refugee for the sponsorship period, or until the sponsored refugee no longer requires assistance, whichever comes first.

Who may be sponsored to come to Canada as a refugee?

To be eligible to be sponsored to Canada as a refugee, a person:

- must be outside Canada and outside their country of origin or habitual residence;
- must have a sponsoring group in Canada;
- cannot return to their home country;
- cannot be able to locally integrate in the country where they currently reside (i.e. cannot be able to live there permanently and have rights that are similar to the rights of citizens);
- must meet one of two definitions that Canada uses to determine who is a refugee (Convention Refugee Abroad class or Country of Asylum class);
- must pass medical, security and criminality screenings;
- must show that they can become self-sufficient in Canada within a reasonable period of time.

To sponsor refugees through a Group of Five, the Principal Applicant **MUST** already have **refugee status**. Having refugee status means that an authorized body has determined that an asylum seeker meets its refugee definition. This authorized body can either be the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the government of the country where the asylum seeker is currently living. **A document proving recognized refugee status that has been issued by the UNHCR or a government must accompany the refugee sponsorship application submitted to the Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa (ROC-O)**. In some countries, the process of granting refugee status is not conducted. Principal Applicants without recognized refugee status can only be sponsored by a Sponsorship Agreement Holder.

Who may not be sponsored?

The following persons cannot be sponsored as refugees:

- Persons who are already in Canada
- Individuals who were previously the subject of a sponsorship application and were refused, unless:
 - their circumstances have changed;
 - new information, which was not presented in the previous application, has come to light; or
 - Canadian laws affecting the case have changed.
- Persons who have other durable solution, such as voluntary repatriation or local integration in the current country of residence;
- Persons who have not been recognized as refugees by either the UNHCR or state authorities in the country of asylum.

What is a Group of Five?

A Group of Five is any group of five or more Canadian citizens, Registered Indians or permanent residents who fulfill the criteria (see below) and who have come together to sponsor refugees. The group must meet all the criteria and agree to support the sponsored refugee(s) for the duration of the sponsorship period.



How does a Group of Five qualify to sponsor?

In order to qualify to sponsor, EACH individual member of the Group of Five MUST:

- be a Canadian citizen, Registered Indian or permanent resident;
- be 18 years of age or older;
- reside (or have representatives) in the community where the refugees are planning to live; and
- not be in default of previous refugee or family sponsorship commitments.

The group needs to show that it has enough money, understands its sponsorship obligations, is committed to assisting the sponsored refugee(s) and can fulfill its responsibilities listed in the sponsorship undertaking. The group must agree to support the sponsored refugee and any family members that come with him/her for the duration of the sponsorship period, which is usually twelve months (and in very exceptional circumstances up to 36 months)

Why do all group members have to live in the community where the refugee is expected to settle?

All members of the sponsoring group should live within a reasonable proximity to the place where the refugee will settle, because they are expected to provide regular settlement assistance to the refugee, including emergency help when required. You may assign representatives. There must be one representative for each group member who does not live in the community of settlement.

Do Groups of Five have to be related to the sponsored refugee?

No, Groups of Five do not have to be related to the refugee they sponsor. Sometimes, it helps to have a family member, relative or contact in Canada as one or more of the members of the Group of Five, because of a stronger link and potential support for the refugee's settlement and integration. However, it is not a requirement. It is important to distinguish refugee sponsorship from family sponsorship such as sponsorship of spouse, dependants and parents. In family sponsorship, the main reason for sponsorship is the family connection, whereas in the private sponsorship of refugees, the primary reason for the sponsorship is refugee protection.

What are the settlement responsibilities of a Group of Five?

At the outset of the sponsorship process, the Group of Five has an obligation to provide a settlement plan that outlines the settlement assistance it will offer to the sponsored refugee(s). During the sponsorship period, a Group of Five undertakes many tasks, including:

1. receive the refugees at the airport, and provide an orientation to life in Canada
2. provide suitable accommodation, basic furniture, and other household essentials
3. provide food, clothing, local transportation costs and other basic necessities of life
4. help the refugees to:
 - complete forms for health insurance, social insurance and child benefits;
 - learn English or French (i.e.. help with getting into a free ESL or FSL class, provide tutoring);
 - understand the rights and responsibilities of permanent residents;
 - find a job
 - make friends;
 - learn about and access the services available in the community;

- register children in school and orient them to the school system;
- locate a family physician and dentist; and
- become independent

How long is the Group of Five responsible for providing support to sponsored refugees?

The sponsoring group is responsible for supporting the sponsored refugees financially and with settlement assistance, counselling and support for the **duration of the sponsorship period**, which is **usually one year** from the date of the arrival of the refugee. In exceptional circumstances, sponsors may be asked by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) if they can provide more than one year of financial and settlement support (up to three years), but IRCC would ask sponsors if this would be possible before the arrival of the refugee(s).

How much money does the group need for the sponsorship?

Members of the Group of Five must show that they have sufficient financial resources available to support the sponsored refugee(s) for the duration of the sponsorship period. IRCC has created a **Sponsorship Cost Table** (see Appendix A) that is equivalent to an average of the social assistance rates across Canada. The Sponsorship Cost Table outlines the minimum amount of money that a group must prove to IRCC that they have for the sponsorship. A group should always consider that the actual cost of the sponsorship may be higher than the amounts outlined in the Sponsorship Cost Table. When calculating the overall budget, the group can factor in any in-kind donations they have received, such as furniture or housing. Please see the **In-kind Deductions Table** (Appendix B) for the amount of money that can be deducted.

Note that sponsoring groups may not accept money from the refugee for the sponsorship. The financial resources that a refugee family brings with them to Canada could reduce the amount of financial support that a sponsoring group must provide if they are able to contribute to paying their expenses. However, please note that a contingency plan is still needed.

During the sponsorship period the sponsored refugees should not access social assistance or welfare.

Application package to sponsor refugees as a Group of Five

Each application package submitted to the Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa (ROC-O) should include **two sets** of forms. All application forms can be found here:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/private.asp>

1) Forms to be completed by sponsors:

- Sponsorship Undertaking and Settlement Plan – Groups of Five (G5) [IMM 5670]
- Sponsor Assessment [IMM 5492]
- Financial Profile [IMM 5373B]

2) Forms to be completed by refugee applicant(s):

- Generic Application Form for Canada [IMM 0008]
- Schedule A – Background/Declaration [IMM 5669]
- Schedule 2 Refugees Outside Canada [IMM 0008 SCHEDULE 2]

Optional:

- Use of a Representative [IMM 5476]
- Appointment of Representative(s) in Expected Community of Settlement [IMM 5956]

Other forms:

- Request to process overseas family members under one-year window of opportunity provision
- Request to add a family member to a private sponsorship undertaking [IMM 5618]

What should I consider when completing the sponsorship forms?

- Before starting to fill in the forms, carefully read the instruction guide.

- Choose one person to be your primary group representative.
- Provide a personal e-mail address for each member of the sponsoring group.
- Remember you will only have 90 days from the time the signatures are collected in which to submit your application.
- All members of a Group of Five must complete a criminal record check and include a copy of the certificate with the application package (non-vulnerable sector criminality checks are sufficient).
- Save a copy of the completed application package, including all supporting documents. Do not send original documents.
- All forms must be typed.
- Never leave anything blank.
- Be careful to list the name and date of birth of the principal applicant on each form or document. Ensure that this is consistent.
- Make sure that all application forms – the ones that are filled out by the sponsors, and the ones that are filled out by the refugees – have original signatures.

How do Group of Five members show they have financial capacity to sponsor refugees?

Groups of Five can show IRCC that they have the financial capacity to sponsor refugees by either:

- A. Pledging their income (to be done by at least 3 group members). This is done by showing IRCC that, based on their income, they will be able to provide the necessary funds to the refugees when they arrive.
- B. Depositing money in a bank account with certain specifications, to show IRCC that the money is already in place to provide the refugees when they arrive.
- C. A mixture of both A and B.

At least three sponsors must contribute financially. All sponsors contributing financially must provide a **copy** of their most recent Notice of Assessment issued by the Canada Revenue Agency, **or**

- A copy of their most recent T4 Statement of Remuneration Paid form
- Their most recent T5 Statement of Investment Income form
- Pension statements that confirm annual revenue for the last 12 months
- Employment Insurance pay stubs confirming revenue within the last 12 months

If money is deposited in a bank account, the account should be in the

name of the sponsoring group, with a note that the money is in trust for the principal refugee applicant (this is not a 'trust account' in the formal sense of the term). Each bank account must have two group members as co-signers. If you are submitting multiple applications, you must keep funds separate and have separate bank accounts for each application.

You will need to provide an **original** letter from a Canadian financial institution dated within 6 months of the submission of your application. The letter must include:

- The name of the Canadian financial institution;
- The names of at least two of the account holders;
- The account number;
- The current account balance, and
- Must be signed and stamped by an employee of the institution

Sponsors must also provide the most recent account statements signed and stamped by an employee of the financial institution. Each must have the account number, account holders' names and branch information. Sponsors must provide a written explanation on how the funds were gathered on the Sponsorship Undertaking and Settlement Plan. They must also submit documentation on how those funds were gathered. This might be a bank statement showing transfer of funds from a donor; evidence of a fundraising event; or, a T4 or notice of assessment for the most recent tax year that shows personal income.

How does IRCC determine if a group member has the financial capability to contribute towards a sponsorship by a Group of Five?

If a group member has pledged his/her income, ROC-O will consider the income of the group member, the number of persons the group member already financially supports in Canada (ie. children, spouse, himself/herself), and the amount pledged for the sponsorship. ROC-O will not approve an application if they believe that the amount of money pledged by a group member is beyond his or her capability, and may result in placing either the group member or sponsored refugees below the poverty line.

Who cannot be a member of a Group of Five?

The following persons cannot be part of a Group of Five for refugee sponsorship:

- Persons convicted of serious criminal acts, if five years have

not passed since the end of the sentence

- Persons who have not fulfilled all of their previous sponsorship undertakings or other court-ordered support payments (i.e. child support)
- Removable and incarcerated persons or persons subject to citizenship revocation proceedings

If a person who falls under any of the above mentioned categories is a member of a Group of Five, the sponsorship undertaking will be refused by the ROC-O office.

My sponsorship undertaking was refused by ROC-O. What can I do now?

ROC-O will refuse or return a sponsorship undertaking if the sponsoring group or its members do not meet the criteria to sponsor as a Group of Five; or if ROC-O finds that they do not have sufficient capacity to provide settlement assistance or financial support; or if the forms have not been filled out correctly or supporting documents are missing. Incomplete applications will be returned to the group representative (group member #1), explaining the reasons for the return. For incomplete e-mailed applications, an e-mail will be sent to all group members explaining the reasons for return, however the applications themselves will not be returned. The Group of Five can resubmit a sponsorship undertaking after addressing the concerns. Please note that once an application has been refused/returned, no record of it is kept, and the resubmitted application will go back to the bottom of the pile. Groups of Five should prepare their applications carefully to avoid any unnecessary delays in time and resources, and keep the originals of all documentation and copies of the applications.

Are there any application fees?

No, there are no application fees for Group of Five undertakings.

The refugees overseas said they can contribute some money if we sponsor them. Can we accept their money?

No, sponsors cannot accept any money from the refugees. However, sponsored refugees can contribute towards their own settlement costs once they arrive if they have enough money to do so.

I would like to sponsor a refugee, but he/she is very ill. Will they be refused at the medical screening?

A refugee can be refused on medical grounds only if she/he has a condition that would present a danger to Canadian public health or safety. Refugees are not usually refused on the basis that they will regularly utilize the Canadian health system. Although a Visa Office assesses "the ability of applicants to establish themselves in Canada," more emphasis is given to "their protection needs" due to being a vulnerable refugee.

My application was approved at the ROC-O office. What happens now?

Your application will be forwarded to the appropriate Canadian Visa Office abroad, where a file will be opened and the refugee will be called for an interview. If the interview is positive, criminality and security screenings will be conducted and the refugee will undergo medical exams. If cleared, the refugee will be issued a visa and travel arrangements to Canada will be made.

I have submitted a sponsorship undertaking. How long will it take until the refugees arrive?

It can take anywhere from a few months to a few years from the time a complete application is received at the Visa Office until the refugees arrive, depending on the Visa Office and the complexity of the case. Current processing times for privately sponsored refugees are posted at the IRCC website: www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/perm-other.asp

Can I be a member of more than one Group of Five?

This depends on your financial capacity and your time. IRCC will deduct any prior commitments from the sponsorship undertaking and assess whether you have the necessary funds and time to support the additional undertaking, based on your previous and present commitments.

How do I inform the Visa Office of a change in the refugees contact information or family composition?

To avoid problems it is very important to make sure the Visa Office always has the most up-to-date and correct information for the refugee(s). Contact the Visa Office to inform them of a change in contact information, family composition or anything other change. A list of Visa Offices can be found here: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/offices/apply-where.asp>

Appendix A – Sponsorship Cost Table

The following Sponsorship Cost Tables are taken from IRCC's Financial Guidelines as provided in the Refugee Sponsorship Application Kit. These figures were updated in March 2017. Please consult IRCC's website www.cic.gc.ca for the most current figures.

Family Size	12 Months of Income Support	Start-up Costs	Estimated Total Annual Settlement Cost (\$)
1	13,200	3,300	16,500
2	19,700	5,100	24,800
3	20,400	6,300	26,700
4	21,200	7,500	28,700
5	23,700	8,600	32,300
6	25,700	9,800	35,500
Additional member	1,600	1,100	2,700

Start-up Costs

Start-up costs include a one-time payment for:

- ❖ Household items, furniture, linens, food supplies, (winter) clothing, deposit for utilities, phone set-up, first month's rent.

Please note that these figures are estimates and represent a guideline for the minimum amount of funds required. The costs of housing, food, and transportation can vary according to the age of dependants and location.

Appendix B - In-kind Deduction Table

In-kind donations may also reduce the financial resources required. The following table was provided by IRCC as an estimate of the value of a variety of in-kind donations according to family size. These approximate figures are based on annual costs, and may change over time. Please check the IRCC website at www.cic.gc.ca for current rates.

Family Size	Shelter	Clothing	Furniture	Household Needs	Linens	School Start-up	Food Staples
1	7008	385	1,085	300	80		105
2	9984	770	1708	325	160		150
3	10632	1033	2016	350	240		195
4	11328	1295	2310	375	320		240
5	12024	1558	2604	400	400		285
6	12372	1820	2898	425	480		330
For extra member add	12,372 (for family of 7+)	263	294	25	80	75 per child between ages 4-21	45

Useful links and resources

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) website
www.rstp.ca

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website
www.cic.gc.ca

Application forms for Groups of Five
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/private.asp>

Guide to the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program
www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/ref-sponsor.pdf

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