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CHAPTER 9

Joint Assistance Sponsorships

What is a JAS?

A **Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS)** refers to a joint undertaking by the sponsoring group and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to sponsor a Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) or a GAR family requiring special assistance, and whose settlement process will be further supported by a sponsor. Refugees sponsored under the JAS program are identified as having special needs owing to personal circumstances that will likely result in a longer or more difficult period of integration.

'Personal circumstances' can include:

- ▶ a large number of family members;
- ▶ trauma resulting from violence or torture;
- ▶ medical disabilities; and
- ▶ the effects of systemic discrimination.

- Only Sponsorship Agreement Holders and their Constituent Groups are eligible to participate in the JAS program.
- Groups of Five and Community Sponsors are not eligible.

Under the JAS program, Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) and their Constituent Groups work together with the Government of Canada. The government provides financial assistance to the refugees, while sponsoring groups provide emotional support, support the refugees as they access RAP services, settlement services, and broader-based community services, and further support refugees in living safely and becoming independent in their new community. Under the JAS program, most refugees are provided support for 24 months after arrival. In exceptional circumstances, sponsorship assistance could be available for up to 36 months.

Sponsoring groups do not designate or refer GAR cases to the program. Typically, GARs are identified as potential JAS clients by a Canadian Migration Officer overseas during the eligibility interview, however a Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) service provider organization (SPO) in Canada can also identify GARs in Canada as requiring joint assistance. If at the time of the eligibility interview overseas, the Migration Officer or ROC-O determines that the applicant has special needs and would therefore benefit from longer-term financial,

emotional and additional settlement support, they may consider the applicant for referral to the JAS program.

Note: Sponsoring groups can recommend BVOR cases to JAS, however, conversions of BVOR cases to JAS are only done in exceptional circumstances, such as situations when information regarding high medical or settlement needs is known only post-arrival or at the NAT stage, and with the concurrence of the local IRCC office. For more information, see [existing guidance](#).

Who Can Qualify for JAS?

In order to be designated as a JAS case, an applicant:

- ✓ must be a member of the Convention Refugee Abroad or Country of Asylum classes; and
- ✓ must be expected to need a longer and/or have a more difficult resettlement period due to the serious nature of the problems faced, including but not limited to one or a few of the following:
 - ❖ emotional problems resulting from the refugee experience, which could include:
 - incidents of trauma or torture;
 - the threat of physical violence or emotional duress;
 - the threat to physical safety or human rights violations in a country of asylum; or
 - a long-term stay in a refugee camp which makes adjustments to new surroundings, freedoms and responsibilities difficult;
 - ❖ physical or mental disability which could require treatment in Canada;
 - ❖ unusual family configuration such as families with large numbers of children, elderly parents, single-parent families with several young children or families consisting only of siblings, one or more of whom has assumed parental responsibilities; and
 - ❖ separated minors.

The problems should be of such a serious nature that the Officer doubts applicants would be able to resettle successfully in Canada through the regular GAR program.

Finding a JAS Case

Sponsoring groups can view [JAS profiles](#) on the [RSTP website](#). The website contains active profiles of JAS cases that are overseas and ready to travel to Canada, or already in Canada. If no match is found in a reasonable amount of time, the profile will be removed from the website.

The application package, including the Document Checklist, JAS Sponsorship Undertaking/Application, Sponsor Assessment, Settlement Plan, and, if applicable, Use of Representative form can be found under [Application for Refugee Sponsorship: Joint Assistance Sponsorship](#) on the IRCC website.

For JAS cases that are overseas, delays in the arrival of the refugees can occur for a number of reasons such as difficulties making travel arrangements. However, in most cases, refugees sponsored under the JAS Program will arrive in Canada within

12 weeks of the date the sponsorship is approved by IRCC.

The JAS partnership between IRCC and the sponsoring group also involves many other players. The sponsoring groups must work closely with the local IRCC office, the RAP SPO, settlement and other community agencies to ensure that the special needs of the JAS clients are met. Groups must also be aware that while the selection process identified some special needs, many other needs may arise over the sponsorship period. JAS sponsorship is, therefore, recommended for experienced sponsoring groups with sufficient human resources.

JAS clients who are overseas should be matched to communities where their needs would most likely be met. Information considered before matching includes, but is not limited to:

- specialized services available and/or special requirements of one or more family members;
- location of any family members in Canada;
- location of same or similar ethnic communities in Canada;
- size of family;
- employment; and
- language skills.

JAS clients will not be matched with communities that cannot provide the required settlement or broader-based community services (e.g., programs or services to address the needs of refugees who are survivors of torture, sexual and gender-based violence, etc.). Sponsoring groups are required to demonstrate that they have sufficient expertise or experience to accommodate the refugees' special needs and that services offered by local settlement services or broader-based community services are well-suited to the particular needs of the refugee applicants.

The Application Process

1. Submit the completed application package including necessary supporting documents to ROC-O.
2. ROC-O reviews the application to ensure everything has been completed and signed properly.
3. If the application forms have not been completed properly, ROC-O will return the application package to the sponsoring group.
4. If the application forms have been completed and signed properly, ROC-O processes the application and a letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the sponsoring group.
5. Upon approval, the sponsoring group receives a letter including a ROC-O file number and, for overseas JAS cases, information on receiving updates on the case.
6. For cases overseas, the ROC-O will notify sponsors of the Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT) which contains information about the arrival of the refugee(s).

Note: Before the arrival of a JAS case from overseas, or at the start of a JAS

initiated from within Canada, the local IRCC office assists in coordinating a case conference discussion between the sponsoring group and the RAP SPO to clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of all partners and to determine which responsibilities will be handled by which partner by completing a [JAS Roles and Responsibilities Checklist](#) form.

What is IRCC's Role?

IRCC agrees to provide the following assistance to JAS clients for a period of up to 24 months or until they become self-sufficient, whichever comes first:

- ✓ financial assistance equivalent to provincial social assistance rates to meet basic food, shelter and clothing needs;
- ✓ start-up costs, including one-time payments for clothing, household effects, linens, staple foods and furniture;
- ✓ access to basic and supplemental health benefits through the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP);
- ✓ access to transportation loans and assistance loans for rent and utility deposits; and labour market access needs; and
- ✓ access to RAP and Settlement services through IRCC-funded SPOs

What is the RAP SPO's Role?

- ✓ To provide temporary accommodation and assistance with locating permanent accommodation;
- ✓ To provide needs assessment and referrals to other settlement programs and broader-based community services, such as medical services, mental health services, dentists, pharmacists, etc.;
- ✓ To provide information and orientation on financial and non-financial information, as well as life skills training; and
- ✓ To provide orientation and link clients to essential federal and provincial programs, such as the IFHP, provincial health care, Social Insurance Numbers, Canada Child Benefit, and registering children for school.

More information on RAP services can be found in the [RAP Service Provider Handbook](#).

What is the Settlement SPO's Role?

- ✓ Language Assessment and Language Training to develop official language skills to live and work in Canada
- ✓ Needs Assessment and Referrals to other IRCC-funded settlement services and/or community-based supports (e.g. mental health facilities, shelters for abused women, etc.)
- ✓ Information and orientation sessions on a variety of settlement topics, individual and family consultations or counseling, information referral
- ✓ Employment-related services (e.g. mentoring and networking, employment and credential assessment counseling, skills development and training, etc.)

- ✓ Community Connections to connect clients with the broader community, public institutions and community organizations (e.g. Settlement Workers in Schools, one-on-one or group mentoring with established immigrants and/or long-time Canadians, conversation circles, etc.)
- ✓ Programming adapted to the needs of clients who may face significant barriers to settlement, such as refugees, survivors of family and gender-based violence, survivors of trauma, youth, women, seniors, etc.
- ✓ French settlement services delivered by Francophone organizations to better connect refugees to Francophone communities
- ✓ And support services linked to IRCC-funded Settlement Services:
 - ❖ Transportation allowance : SPOs may provide a transportation allowance to clients if they require it to access IRCC-funded settlement services
 - ❖ Childcare services available in some locations while clients are receiving settlement services on site
 - ❖ Interpretation services
 - ❖ Translation services
 - ❖ Short-term counseling

What is the Sponsoring Group's Role?

Sponsorship under the JAS program means further supporting clients beyond the support they receive from RAP and Settlement SPOs. JAS sponsors are expected to provide emotional support, support the refugees as they access RAP services, settlement services, and broader-based community services, and further support refugees in living safely and becoming independent in their new community. During the sponsorship period, the sponsoring group is responsible for the following:

- ✓ providing emotional support and companionship;
- ✓ further assisting clients in becoming independent;
- ✓ further supporting clients as they receive orientation from RAP and Settlement SPOs on life in Canada, including information on the rights and responsibilities of permanent residents;
- ✓ further supporting clients in accessing services RAP SPOs have referred them to, such as medical care, and accompaniment to various services as needed;
- ✓ assisting RAP SPOs in ensuring that special needs are met through appropriate referral and support services;
- ✓ assisting RAP SPOs in having clients access resources, such as interpreters, community support groups, settlement services, etc.;
- ✓ further supporting clients in the process of school registration for children, and in adapting to the Canadian education system;
- ✓ further supporting clients in their English or French language learning by speaking to them in English or French, or encouraging their participation in activities in their community that will help them improve their official language skills;
- ✓ further assisting client to connect with the broader community, public institutions and community organizations (e.g. Settlement Workers in Schools, one-on-one or group mentoring with established immigrants and/or long-time Canadians, conversation circles, etc.)
- ✓ further assisting clients in finding employment;

- ✓ depending on local arrangements with the RAP SPO, as detailed in the **JAS Roles and Responsibilities Checklist**, the sponsoring group may also be responsible for finding and preparing permanent housing, assisting clients with purchasing or taking delivery of furniture and household effects, stocking initial food staples, etc.

Additional information on the sponsoring group's role can be found in IRCC's [Guide to the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program](#)

SPONSORING GROUPS are NOT responsible for repaying loans.

Resettlement Assistance Program Income Support

Financial entitlements under RAP are based on prevailing social assistance rates, and as a result vary from province to province and also between municipalities. Current RAP rates can be found on the [RSTP website](#). The local IRCC office can further provide the group with the details specific to the case they are sponsoring.

JAS clients are also referred to as *RAP clients*. Before newcomers arrive, or before the start of a JAS initiated from within Canada, it is also useful for your group to understand how RAP assistance is delivered, and the obligations of the clients. While this information will be explained to the newcomer during the initial orientation sessions at the RAP SPO, this will be a very busy period. It will be helpful if your group already has a basic understanding of the program.

RAP Cheques

The initial cheque will be issued by the IRCC RAP Officer to the client in person or via the RAP SPO. This cheque includes non-repayable allowances for clothing, household effects, linens, staples and utility installation plus one full month's entitlement (for rent, food and incidentals, communication allowance and transportation). Most JAS clients will be eligible to apply for an assistance loan to cover the costs of rental or utility deposits needed to secure a lease. Upon opening of a bank account and submitting the necessary banking information to IRCC, clients will be enrolled for direct deposit and will receive subsequent monthly payments deposited into their account during the last week of every month for the following month, during their period of RAP eligibility or until recipients become self-sufficient, whichever comes first. Payments are normally made to the head of the household who is responsible for payment of monthly expenses including rent, groceries and utilities.

Entitlements for shelter and food follow maximum prevailing social assistance rates. Shelter rates include basic rent, heat, electricity and water. **Food and incidentals or basic needs** include money for basic food requirements and such items as personal care products, household supplies, etc. The standard monthly amount issued depends on the size of the family and the number and age of dependants. Transportation allowances and other special allowances may be added to the monthly cheque.

An **Assistance Loan** is also given to assist newly arrived refugees in Canada with living expenses associated with the basic needs of life, basic household needs or labour market access. This loan is assessed and issued by an IRCC officer in Canada after the arrival of the refugee. RAP makes use of assistance loans to cover deposits for last month's rent and telephone. If two or more single individuals are sharing the same dwelling, they may want to share one telephone in order to share the deposit costs. As this is a loan, the refugees will have to pay this back in time.

Clothing - Money is issued in the start-up cheque to allow the newcomers to purchase their own clothing. A one-time basic clothing allowance is given and additional winter outerwear is provided or included in the start-up cheque. Between October 15th and April 15th, winter clothing is issued at the airport and includes items such as a winter jacket, winter boots, socks, hats and gloves. Depending on their age, children may receive snowsuits. Between April 16th and October 14th, IRCC includes the winter clothing allowance in the start-up cheque.

Furniture - A furniture allowance is provided so that clients have basic furniture items such as beds, dressers, sofa, loveseat, and dinette sets, etc. Depending on the city, furniture provisions can be provided either in cash at start-up or in goods upon their move-in date to their permanent accommodations.

Linens - Linens include bed linens, towels, etc. These items are provided either in cash at start-up or given to the clients in goods by the reception centre.

Basic Household Needs Allowance - Suggested items include: common household products such as kitchen utensils, pots, pans, brooms and mops. Depending upon the RAP centre, this entitlement may be provided as a pre-determined package supplied to the newcomer, a financial entitlement included in the start-up cheque, or a combination of both.

Staple Allowance – This is a one-time allowance to offset the purchase of basic food and cleaning supplies to start up a household. It includes items such as flour, sugar, rice, spices and condiments, detergent, cleansers, etc.

Utility Installation – A one-time allowance to connect telephone or utilities in the household. Other telephone costs are the client's responsibility and must be covered by the communication allowance.

Maternity Allowance – On receipt of a physician's letter confirming pregnancy, a one-time additional clothing allowance and per-month allowance to assist with special dietary needs may be approved. This allowance may be issued for a maximum of nine months within the sponsorship period or until the birth of a baby, whichever comes first.

Newborn Allowance – About two months prior to the expected due date, the client should be issued a payment to purchase clothing, furniture, etc., for the baby. This allowance can be issued if the due date (provided in writing from a physician) is not more than 2 months after the last date of the sponsorship period.

School Start-Up Allowance – This allowance for children between 4–17 years of age is paid to help offset the costs of school supplies, activity fees, gym clothing, etc. It is normally issued at start-up. However, some families may require this amount twice if the entitlement period covers two school years, and the second installment will be issued in their August cheque.

Special Diet Allowance – This allowance is paid to individuals who provide a letter from a physician. An officer will review the request and increase the allowance as needed.

Resettlement Assistance Program Agreement

As clients under the Resettlement Assistance Program, the newcomers will sign a RAP Agreement. The agreement is a binding contract that describes the roles and responsibilities of a recipient of RAP benefits. Recipients of RAP must keep in mind that the RAP program is a privilege that carries with it an obligation on the part of recipients to work towards self- sufficiency.

The agreement will be fully explained to the newcomer clients during the RAP orientation session upon arrival, which a representative of your sponsoring group is strongly encouraged to attend for JAS cases initiated from overseas. Clients must fully understand their roles and responsibilities and the terms and conditions of the client agreement before they sign it and receive their first cheque. Clients will receive a copy of the signed agreement. Your group can reinforce the family's understanding of their obligations under RAP.

If there is any change in the client's situation during the sponsorship period, a new assessment of the needs and means is necessary. This includes a change in the status of the client or a family member, a change of address, the commencement of employment, travel outside of Canada, pregnancy and birth, health conditions that require a special diet or hospitalization, or the departure or death of a family member. Clients **must** notify the IRCC RAP officer of any changes as soon as possible by submitting a *Resettlement Assistance Program Change of Status Form* along with any required documentation. You will receive the contact details for the IRCC RAP officer during the orientation or when the case conferencing meeting is arranged.

Income support may be refused, discontinued or reduced by an IRCC RAP officer if clients do not report changes in their financial circumstances, or do not participate in the settlement process. The clients' responsibilities include:

- ✓ making every effort to become self-sufficient as soon as possible;*
- ✓ ensuring income support is used to pay monthly expenses;
- ✓ reporting any changes of status to the IRCC RAP officers (submit a Change of Status Form);
- ✓ repaying all benefits which exceed the amount of the entitlement; and
- ✓ completing and returning monitoring questionnaires upon receipt.

** While becoming self-sufficient as soon as possible is an important client responsibility, it is understood that the refugees who arrive under the Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program will require a much longer settlement period.*

JAS Application Forms

SAHs and CGs are the only sponsoring groups permitted to submit a sponsorship for JAS a case. Additionally, it is important to note that JAS cases require a specific application package which is available at:
www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/ref-joint.asp.

The required forms include:

- [Document Checklist — Joint Assistance Sponsorship \[IMM 5495\]](#)
- [Undertaking/Application for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship \[IMM 1324\]](#)
- [Sponsor Assessment \[IMM 5492\]](#)
- [Settlement Plan — Joint Assistance Sponsorship \[IMM 5494\]](#)
- [Use of a Representative \[IMM 5476\]](#) (if applicable)

If you require assistance in completing any of the forms included in this application package, please contact the RSTP.

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