

RAP & the BVOR Program

Questions & Answers

Q. What is RAP?

A. The Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) is a program through which the Government of Canada provides assistance to resettled refugees, so they can establish themselves in their new home country. The program has two main components: income support and a range of immediate essential services.

Q. How does RAP relate to the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program?

A. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides RAP income support for six months (as explained below) of a BVOR refugee's 12-month sponsorship period or until they become self-sufficient, whichever comes first.

The sponsoring group must cover the remaining costs as part of its commitment to provide settlement support for up to one year upon arrival of the refugee(s). These include start-up costs (such as furniture and kitchen supplies), immediate essential services (such as interpretation) and any additional or exceptional expenses that would normally be covered under the RAP (such as newborn allowance).

Q. What RAP income supports do BVOR refugees receive?

A. BVOR refugees are eligible for the following monthly income support from RAP during the six months they are supported by the Government of Canada:

- Food and incidental allowance
- Basic shelter allowance
- Housing supplement
- Transportation allowance
- Communication allowance

- Other monthly allowances specific to the province of residence (for example, an age of majority top-up)
- Maternity dietary allowance (where applicable)
- Special dietary allowance (where applicable)

Q. What RAP benefits are BVOR refugees not eligible for?

A. BVOR refugees are not eligible for the following RAP benefits:

- Start-up payments (for such items as furniture and kitchen supplies),
- One-time special payments (such as a newborn allowance), or exceptional allowances.

The sponsors must pay for any special or exceptional expenses, including during the six months BVOR refugees receive RAP income support.

Q. Are BVOR refugees eligible for RAP services from a government-funded Service Provider Organization?

A. It is the responsibility of the sponsoring group to provide all settlement services for up to one year, including during the six months that refugees receive RAP income support.

For example, sponsors are responsible for finding and paying for interpretation. Interpretation is a RAP service, and is therefore not available to BVOR refugees through the RAP.

BVOR refugees may be eligible for RAP services in certain limited circumstances such as a sponsorship breakdown, or a pending breakdown. However, services already provided by the sponsor (such as temporary accommodation) will only be duplicated by the RAP in exceptional circumstances, and only if recommended by the local IRCC office.

Note that BVOR refugees are entitled to all IRCC- and provincially-funded settlement services available to permanent residents. These services may include some interpretation, and sponsors may be able to access interpretation for newcomers through these services. Sponsors should contact settlement agencies both before and following the newcomers' arrival to find out what is available to BVOR refugees. It is ultimately the sponsor's responsibility to provide interpretation services, so when publicly funded interpretation is not available, it must be provided by the sponsor.

Q. How do BVOR refugees access RAP income support?

A. Once the Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT), indicating the refugees' arrival date, is sent to the sponsor and local office, a RAP officer will email the sponsor shortly after to make arrangements for registering the sponsored refugees for RAP. Depending on the location of the sponsor, an in-person orientation meeting may be conducted or the necessary documents may be mailed to the sponsor for completion, and returned to the local IRCC office in order for the first RAP cheque to be released to the refugee. It is the responsibility of the sponsor to explain to the refugee how the income support will be provided over the year, and to help them manage their budget.

Q. When should BVOR refugees be registered for RAP income support?

A. The RAP orientation meeting should take place within the first month of the BVOR refugee's arrival. If sponsors have not been contacted shortly after receiving the NAT, they should contact the local office and schedule the orientation in a timely manner. This will ensure that there is no delay in support to the refugee by either the sponsor or IRCC. RSTP can help sponsors find the relevant local IRCC office.

Sponsors may request a blank copy of the RAP agreement before the refugees' arrival by contacting their local IRCC office. The agreement outlines the BVOR refugees' responsibilities and potential RAP consequences of a change in sponsorship,

Q. What documents are required for RAP registration?

A. The IRCC RAP officer will advise the sponsor of the exact documents that must either be brought to the orientation meeting or mailed in, if requested. Generally, these include:

- Confirmation of Permanent Residence document,
- Social Insurance Number (SIN),
- Bank account information including a direct deposit form,
- Proof of registration with provincial health insurance,
- Proof of address and rent paid (e.g. a lease),
- Signed copy of the RAP Agreement, and

- any other form provided by the RAP officer for the client to sign, including the Declaration of Funds and Assets form

Q. How long do sponsored refugees receive RAP income support?

A. Refugees sponsored through the BVOR Program receive RAP for six months of the twelve-month sponsorship period. IRCC begins RAP income support starting on the first day of the following month after arrival, or the first day of the second full month after arrival. This depends on the date of arrival, as outlined below. Sponsors should be ready to provide start-up costs and initial resources to the BVOR refugees according to this schedule.

➤ BVOR refugees who arrive during the first to the fifteenth of the month have their first month of RAP income support begin on the first day of the following month. For example, a BVOR refugee arriving on July 12th will have their first month of RAP income support paid on August 1st.

➤ BVOR refugees who arrive on or after the sixteenth of the month will have their first month of RAP income support begin on the first day of the second month following. For example, a BVOR refugee arriving on July 22nd will have their first month's RAP income support paid on September 1st.

Sponsors and local IRCC offices have found this schedule to be a helpful way to structure RAP payments. Sponsoring groups have already committed to cover start-up costs and other immediate post-arrival expenses. This schedule gives them time to gather the information required for the RAP orientation meeting (such as the refugees' SIN and bank account/direct deposit numbers). It also allows more time for the group to manage their sponsorship budgets and settlement plans.

These timelines can be impacted if essential documentation is missing when requested by the local IRCC office, and sponsors are required to continue providing financial support when delays occur. Delays will not impact the overall amount of support that sponsors are required to provide, but it may impact the timeframe that the support needs to be provided.

Q. How are RAP income support rates determined?

A. RAP rates are similar to provincial social assistance rates and are calculated on family size and composition. The RAP standardizes rates as much as possible, but there is some variation in provincial rates. The RAP rates provided to refugees for food, incidentals and basic shelter might be the same throughout one province, while another province may have shelter rates that vary depending on where the refugees settle. Transportation rates are usually similar to the cost of a monthly bus or transit pass in the community of settlement.

BVOR sponsors are expected to budget for and provide the same supplemental coverage as with other private sponsorships. The sponsoring group should be ready to pay for everything required for the refugees over and above that which RAP provides. The RAP rates for each province, including start-up costs and supplemental allowance rates, are posted on the [RSTP website](#).

Q. Can a sponsored refugee work while receiving RAP income support?

A. Yes, clients may earn up to 50 percent of their total monthly RAP income support payment before any deduction is made to their monthly income support entitlement. Once the additional source(s) of income for the individual or family has surpassed 50% of their monthly RAP entitlement, all RAP funds over that threshold are reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis for each dollar earned over the incentive allowance amount. There is an exception. Any employment income earned by a member of the family who is attending secondary school on a full-time basis will not be included in the total family earnings.

Q. Can sponsors provide additional financial support while a BVOR refugee is receiving RAP income support?

A. Yes, sponsors can provide additional financial support that will not be deducted from the refugees' RAP income if it supplements, not duplicates, the benefits already offered through RAP. For this reason, BVOR refugees must report the additional financial support to IRCC while they receive RAP income support.

Q. How does a BVOR refugee report their income if they are employed or receiving additional financial resources from their sponsors while receiving RAP income support?

A. During their initial orientation meeting, the IRCC officer will provide the refugees with a Change of Status Form. BVOR refugees use it to report changes in their situation, including employment. This must be reported monthly.

Q. What happens after the six months of RAP income support are over?

A. RAP income support will not be provided for more than six months. Sponsors assume the costs for the remainder of the sponsorship period, or until the sponsored refugee is self-sufficient. This includes start-up costs and income support for the first month(s) and the months after RAP has ended, until the end of the 12-month commitment (if applicable).

Q. Are OYW dependants entitled to RAP income support?

A. Dependants of BVOR refugees who arrive in Canada through the One-Year Window of Opportunity (OYW) may be eligible for RAP income support. This will be evaluated when the dependant(s) arrive.

Neither the sponsor nor IRCC need to provide support if the principal applicant (PA) is self-sufficient and able to provide for their family member(s). If this is not the case, the OYW dependants will be entitled to the same supports provided to the BVOR refugees, as part of their family unit.

The amounts are calculated based on the total family amount (including the non-accompanying dependants), minus what would have already been paid to the PA or Head of Family, and factoring in current income, if applicable.

Note that the levels of support for non-accompanying dependent children arriving as adults will be calculated as though they are singles. The sponsoring group is responsible for reception, start-up costs, the balance of the monthly financial support, and 12 months of settlement support.

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