

Arrival and Orientation of Newcomers

7

Refugee Sponsorship Handbook

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

- 2** [Terms and Acronyms](#)
- 3** [Why are Arrival and Orientation So Important?](#)
- 4** [Arrival and Orientation: What to do](#)
- 5** [First things first](#)
- 6** [Post-arrival Requirements Guide](#)
- 7** [All About Orientation](#)
- 10** [Keeping Records](#)
- 11** [Connecting with Settlement Providing Organizations](#)
- 12** [Using Existing Resources](#)
- 14** [A Note on Orientation in Rural Areas and Small Towns](#)
- 15** [Arrival and Orientation: What to know](#)
- 16** [Health and All That Makes It Good](#)
- 18** [Cultural Adjustment](#)
- 20** [Appendix: Cultural Adjustment](#)

ABBREVIATIONS

- BVOR** - Blended Visa Office-Referred
- COA** - Canadian Orientation Abroad Program
- IRCC** - Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- LIP** - Local Immigration Partnership
- PSR** - Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program
- RSAT** - Resettlement Services Assurance Team
- RSTP** - Refugee Sponsorship Training Program

TERMS

Arrival - when a sponsored Refugee enters Canada for the very first time. Arrival is also when Sponsors greet the sponsored Refugees for the first time.

Case Review - the process in which IRCC contacts Sponsors to review a particular sponsorship to ensure that sponsored newcomers are receiving adequate financial and settlement supports.

Newcomer - (informal title) a permanent resident, refugee or temporary resident, usually within their first 5 years in Canada.

Orientation - a course or information that helps a person understand and navigate a new place, culture, or group of people.

Permanent Resident - someone who has been given Permanent Resident status in Canada, but has not yet become a Canadian Citizen with voting rights.

Post-arrival - the period of time in private sponsorship that starts just after a sponsored newcomer arrives in Canada.

Post-arrival Requirements Guide - a resource created by IRCC that sets out the supports that Sponsors are expected to provide to resettled refugees at and after arrival in Canada.

Settlement Plan - a plan detailing what you and members of your group will do to orient and support the newcomer(s) during the sponsorship. The Settlement Plan is a formal part of the sponsorship application process.

Settlement Service Provider Organization (SPO) - organizations funded by IRCC to provide programs and supports to newcomers resettling in Canada.

(Refugee) Sponsor - individuals or organizations who are able to formally support refugees to resettle in Canada through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program.

The Importance of Orientation

Arrival and **Orientation** make up the very first part of the sponsorship year.

Arrival is the long-awaited moment when the sponsored refugees enter Canada and become Permanent Residents. New Permanent Residents are called **Newcomers** for about their first 5 years in Canada.

Orientation is made up of the activities, conversations and learning that Newcomers go through to get comfortable in Canada and in their new community.

Orientation activities can take place over time, starting on the day of Arrival and continuing throughout the first 3 months of the sponsorship year.

Orientation helps new Permanent Residents:

- get to know and manage the new housing they will live in
- understand the local community including shopping, banking and other activities
- navigate a new social and geographic environment
- understand what to expect from people and institutions in Canada
- create a foundation for long-term independence

Resettlement Goals

Canada's Refugee Resettlement Program has immediate, intermediate and ultimate or long term goals. **Arrival** and **Orientation** help support the immediate goals. However, when Sponsors provide Arrival and Orientation support to Newcomers, that support also sets up success for a Newcomer's intermediate and ultimate resettlement experience.



What to do

A lot of Arrival and Orientation involves activities: conversations, showing Newcomers around, helping filling forms, making appointments, etc.

This section of the Resource book covers:

- First Things First
- Post-arrival Requirements Guide
- Keeping Records
- Connecting with Settlement Service Provider Organizations (SPOs)
- A Note on Arrival and Orientation in Rural Areas and Small Towns





Key actions that open access to everything else!

It is important to organize certain things as quickly as possible when Newcomers arrive. For example, a newcomer needs:

Proof* of Permanent Residence to  **apply for a Social Insurance No.**

a Social Insurance Number (SIN) to  **open a bank account**

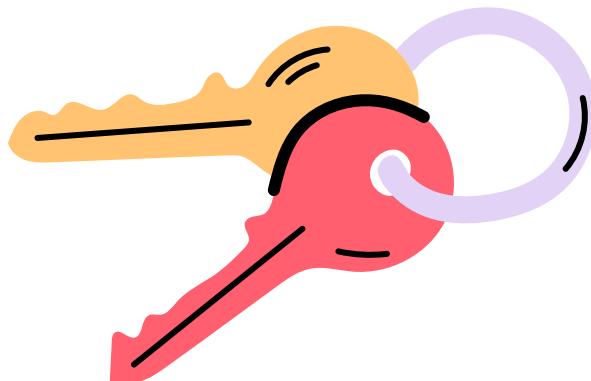
Health insurance to  **access health services**

Start-up funds to  **independently get needed items**

a Language Assessment to  **access Language classes**

You can think about these first tasks as “enabling” tasks. You and the Newcomers need to complete these tasks so regular daily life can begin. The most important first tasks are listed in the **Post-arrival Requirements Guide** checklist explained below.

*Proof of Permanent Residence may be a Confirmation of Permanent Residence (COPR, document received on Landing in Canada) or a Permanent Resident card



Post-arrival Requirements Guide

After decades of experience built over thousands of sponsorships, a Guide and checklist have been developed to help your sponsorship group know what you need to do and when during the sponsorship period.

The Post-arrival Requirements Guide is a resource created by IRCC. It explains what your sponsorship group needs to do to support the sponsored Newcomers from Arrival to the end of the sponsorship period.

That checklist exists in the **Settlement Plan** form as part of the sponsorship application package. You can also find an expanded and informative version of the checklist as part of the [Post-arrival Requirements Guide](#).

1	Ongoing Activities that your group will support throughout the sponsorship period to help the sponsored Newcomers.	●
2	Arrival and first 3 weeks Sponsors receive and welcome refugees as Newcomers and help with immediate and essential needs.	●
3	Months 1-3 Immediate needs addressed, supports move to orientation, connecting with Settlement agencies, long-term housing	●
4	4-6 months Further settlement supports such as One-Year Window applications, Language classes, education and employment	●
5	7-9 months Continued supports and starting to prepare for independence at end of sponsorship, identify unmet needs	●
6	10-12 months Last phase, transition out of sponsorship period to independence, employment or other supports in place for Month 13	●

Orientation - What is it? When to provide it. What to include.

Think of **orientation** as the activities, conversations and learning that Newcomers go through to get comfortable in Canada and in their new community.

Orientation activities can take place over time, usually in the first 2 weeks and continued throughout the first 3 months of the Sponsorship year. Orientation activities can be informal but intentional conversations with Sponsors. Other activities can be organized sessions at a local **Settlement Service Provider Organization (SPO)** delivered by agency staff. Orientation helps Newcomers understand the community and how to navigate the new social and geographic environment.

Make sure you begin with the tasks listed in the **Post-arrival Requirements Guide**. Here are some examples to give you an idea about what you will find in the Guide.

Some Examples of Orientation Activities from the Guide:



Housing

- Provide a simple tour of where the newcomers will live
- Check if Newcomers are familiar with all the appliances, utilities and functions of the housing your group has provided
- Make sure Newcomers have phone, internet or other methods of communication, especially to communicate with you
- Make sure they understand how to contact any emergency services

Neighbourhood

- Take Newcomers on a tour of the neighbourhood
- Show them what is close to their residence
- Take Newcomers on a tour of public transit or any other methods of transportation you expect them to use in the first weeks
- Take them shopping at the local grocery store/show them what they can buy with the budgeted funds you will provide

Health care

- Explain how Newcomers can access medical and dental services
- Show Newcomers how you will help them obtain their provincial health insurance and how they can use the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) coverage in the interim
- Explain how you will help the Newcomers find a local doctor and dentist
- Provide information about counselling and mental health supports in case the Newcomers choose to access those supports

Weather/Seasonal details

- Talk with the Newcomers about the season and climate they have arrived in (winter temperatures, UV index in your locale, etc.)
- Show Newcomers the types of clothing they may need to be comfortable in the immediate season
- Talk about how the Newcomers can manage heat/cold in their new residence



Financial Orientation

- Help the Newcomers open bank accounts
- Discuss the financial support and budget that your sponsorship group will provide
- Discuss how and when your sponsorship group will provide required monthly financial support
- Help the Newcomers apply through Canada Revenue for any benefits they are eligible for such as the Child Tax Benefit

There are more activities and supports listed in the Post-arrival Requirements Guide as part of Arrival and Orientation. Please be sure to look at the detailed list so your sponsorship group is prepared to provide all the necessary supports.

Managing Expectations

An important task will be to clarify expectations on all sides. Some sponsor groups are able to begin this conversation before the refugees arrive in Canada.

While the Canadian government expects certain outcomes (finding employment, learning English, learning life skills to function in Canada), Newcomers and Sponsors have aspirations that both include and go beyond this. (To read a bit more on [Managing Expectations](#), read the RSTP Factsheet.)

You will want to learn about each others' backgrounds and develop a sense of community. Your group may hope to increase their skills through this learning experience; Newcomers may hope to motivate you as Sponsors to become more involved in advocacy. Newcomers may hope to be supported while they study or re-qualify for certain trades or professions, and Sponsors may hope that the newcomers find work when possible. If these hopes and aspirations can be expressed and agreed on, the potential for misunderstanding and disappointment can be reduced.

During the first year, Newcomers learn a tremendous amount and generally move from a high degree of dependence to a high degree of independence. Through it all, your role is that of an enabler, supporting newcomers to equip themselves, make their own decisions and find out as much as possible about their new environment. Above all, you are providing warm friendship and support.



Keeping Records, Contacting RSAT, and Case Review

Your sponsor group should keep records of all the supports you provide to sponsored Newcomers. This includes financial supports and resettlement supports. You can find examples of the kinds of records to keep in the [Case Review-Examples of Proof of Support](#) document.

If you have any questions about what supports your group is providing or needs to provide, you can contact the RSAT team for help. The **Resettlement Services Assurance Team (RSAT)** “provides guidance and support to sponsoring groups on post-arrival program requirements and issues”. This means, your sponsorship group can contact RSAT if you have any concerns or questions about providing settlement supports once the Newcomers have arrived.

You can contact RSAT

IRCC.PSRCasereview-RevuedecasPSR.IRCC@cic.gc.ca

To have a useful conversation with an RSAT Office, it is important that you are able to be specific and show record of any supports or issues you want to ask about. So, be sure that your group is keeping record of the settlement and financial supports you provide to the newcomers.

RSAT can contact you



It is also possible that an RSAT Officer will contact your group as well. RSAT is responsible for making sure newcomers are receiving required settlement and financial supports. If RSAT contacts your group for a **Case Review**, they may ask for information about the settlement and financial supports your group has provided to the newcomers. This is where your record-keeping comes in so handy!

RSAT will be asking for types of records like the ones listed in the [Case Review-Examples of Proof of Support](#). For more information about Case Review, see the [Case Review Process Timeline](#).

Settlement Service Provider Organizations (SPOs)

Even though you are part of a sponsorship group or organization, there are other people and organizations set up to also support the Newcomers you have sponsored. Settlement Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) and community organizations and partnerships receive government funding to provide programs for newcomers. These programs are free of charge.

Think of SPOs as a community resource for the Newcomers you have sponsored and your sponsorship group. SPO staff may have expertise in specific areas like languages, employment readiness, supporting Newcomer youth in schools. SPOs may have programs that Newcomers will benefit from participating in such as:

- Language courses
- Orientation courses
- Employment in Canada readiness
- Employment placement
- Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS)
- Family programs
- Outdoor programs

Keep in mind, even when the Newcomers are accessing services from an SPO, it is still the responsibility of you and your sponsorship group to make sure the Newcomers are receiving the supports they need according to the Settlement Plan.

To help you understand the balance between what your group provides and what settlement supports SPOs may help with, click on the links below:

[Responsibilities of Sponsors & Availability of IRCC-funded Services for PSRs and BVORs](#)

[Responsabilités des répondants et disponibilité des services financés par IRCC pour les RPSP et RDBV](#)

Find free newcomer services

To find SPOs near you and the programs they offer, search on the IRCC website [Find free newcomer services near you](#).

Existing Orientation Resources

The orientation that your sponsorship group provides fits into a set of efforts to help refugees resettle in their new community.

You don't have to be experts about all of Canada or even your province or municipality. There are many resources to help you and your sponsorship group talk to the newcomers about life in Canada.



Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA)

The COA is a global refugee orientation initiative funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and implemented worldwide by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The program is provided to refugees before they travel to resettle in Canada. Some overseas refugees will receive the COA training in person. Some remotely.

You can also find the same useful COA content through the COA O-Canada app!



Check out a Sample COA workbook

[COA Participant Workbook](#)

Download the O-Canada app for iOS or Android



O-Canada for iOS



O-Canada for Android

Provincial and Municipal Newcomer Guides

You can find newcomer guides published by each of the provinces as well as many municipalities. Newcomer guides often include information about:

- finding employment
- driving regulations
- housing
- accessing provincial or municipal services
- accessing schools
- public libraries and other institutions
- accessing settlement services
- language and translation services
- and more

Newcomer guides may also be published in a number of different languages. You can find links to a number of [newcomer guides](#) on the RSTP website.

You can also search the web for a local newcomer guide by searching the name of your province or community and the words “newcomer guide”.



Other Arrival and Orientation Resources

Various organizations that support or provide refugee sponsorship have created and shared some of their own Arrival and Orientation tools. These tools sometimes contain checklists and ideas that may not be in other resources.

Here are links to a few examples of other Arrival and Orientation resources:

[Office for Refugees Archdiocese of Toronto \(ORAT\)](#).

[Anglican United Refugee Alliance \(AURA\) checklists](#)

[Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative \(GRSI\)](#).

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs)

Search in your area to find out whether there is a Local Integration Partnership (LIP). LIPs are funded by IRCC to:

- Integrate newcomer needs into the community planning process
- Identify community strategic priorities
- Implement a settlement strategy and action plans to improve newcomer outcomes

You can find out if there is a LIP in your area by searching the web. Enter the name of your region, county, town, etc. and the words “local immigration partnership”.

Federal Newcomer Resources

There are a number of digital resources produced by IRCC about getting started in Canada.

Check out the [Start Your Life in Canada](#) website published by IRCC that includes information about:

- Housing
- Employment
- Credentials assessment
- Health care
- Language skills development
- Driver’s Licensing
- and more



A Note on Orientation in Rural Areas and Small Towns

Depending on the population size in your area, the closest SPO may not be outside your community. SPOs in your province may offer some virtual or online supports. Check organizational websites for settlement services in your province to see what services they offer virtually or remotely.

As well, many of the resources listed in this book are available online, such as:

- Federal Newcomer Resources (see above)
- O-Canada app for iOS and Android devices (see previous pages)
- Provincial and Municipal Newcomer Guides (see previous page)
- Other Arrival and Orientation Resources (see)

There may also be a Local Integration Partnership (LIP) group that supports Newcomers in your area.

What to know

While a lot of Arrival and Orientation involves activities, it can be very useful to have some extra knowledge about what newcomers may be experiencing.

While every person's experience is individual, knowing a little about:

- Health and All That Makes It Good
- Cultural Adjustment

may help your sponsorship group understand why certain tasks are included in the Post-arrival Requirements Guide and also how to best support newcomers in the first weeks and months.



An Expanded Idea of Health – from Medical to Social

When we think of health, we may quickly think of family doctors or nurses, hospital or clinic visits, prescriptions. And these are part of what helps us maintain health. There is a wider idea about health based on the social parts of our lives: community, work, family, home, and lifestyle. Sponsors can have a large and positive impact on the social aspects of newcomer health. And many of the post-arrival settlement supports are closely connected with the social aspects of newcomer health. You can think of those aspects as promoting or protecting health or damaging health if we are not able to access the “good” aspects.

In the early 1990s, two Public Health researchers named Göran Dahlgren and Margaret Whitehead organized these social aspects of our lives into a “rainbow model”. The model was designed to help governments consider all the ways to support better equity in public health. The problem at the time showed that many people were in poor health even with a healthy economy, lots of clean water, good food available, and a very good health care system. The problem was about **access**.

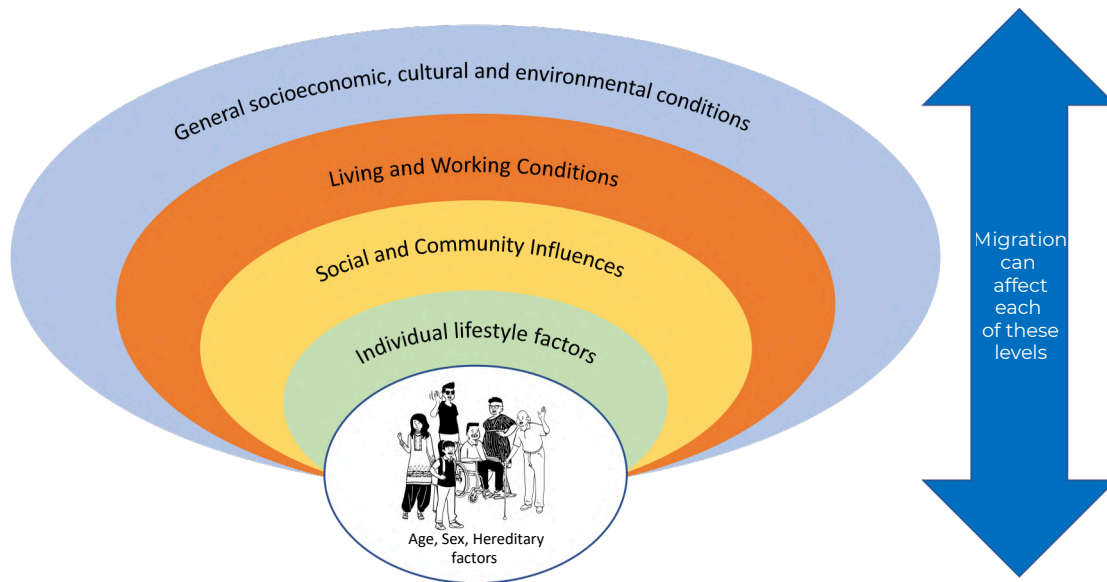
Sponsors can help newcomers access health promoting factors through Arrival and Orientation activities.



How Sponsors Can Have the Greatest Impact on Newcomer Health

The rainbow model shows 4 levels. Each level shows a context that can affect or determine a person’s health. So, the levels are called “social determinants of health”. You can think about each level as a collection of things that can damage, protect or promote health.

Remember that this model was created so that governments could think about how to create better equity in health care. Other community members and service providers have used the model to think about the “level” where they can most effectively support better health for people. Level 1 factors are affected by governmental policy decisions. Level 4 is affected by personal choices. Sponsors actions can affect Levels 2 and 3. Specifically, Sponsors can help newcomers with access to the things that promote health in levels 2 and 3.



Adapted from Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991.

Access to things that promote and protect good health

Sponsors are in a great position to help newcomers access things that can promote health. Access means both being able to reach or use something. The first way sponsors promote newcomer health is by letting newcomers know about all the resources they can access. Then, sponsors promote health by helping newcomers access those resources.

Below are examples of health promoting resources under Living and Working Conditions (Level 2) and Social and Community Influences (Level 3) of the rainbow model.

Living & Working Conditions

- Housing
- Health care
- Water and sanitation
- Unemployment
- Working environment
- Education
- Agriculture and food production

Social & Community Influences

- Settlement Services
- Language learning
- Community or Faith groups
- Markets and shopping areas
- Social space outside work/home
- Community and holiday events
- Transportation

Sponsors have the ability to help newcomers understand how best to access and manage these conditions and influences.

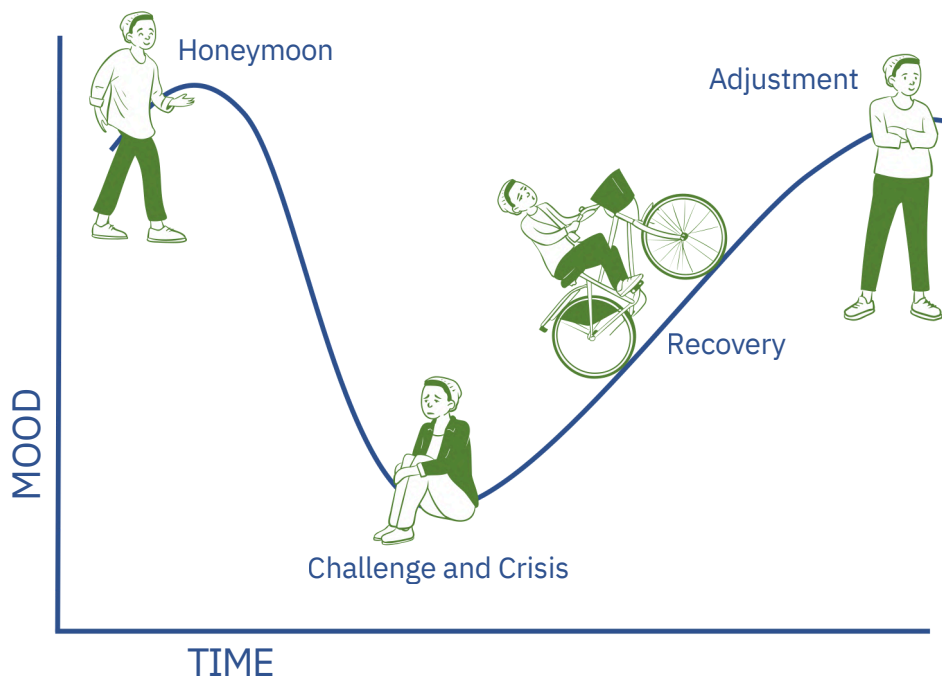
Cultural Adjustment

Being in a new place can be very disorienting. Most people go through an adjustment process.

Cultural adjustment is typified by ups and downs. Keep in mind that the pace at which people progress through adjustment stages is highly individual, and even family members may progress at quite different rates.

This process may last three to five years. People may need different supports at each stage.

STAGES OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

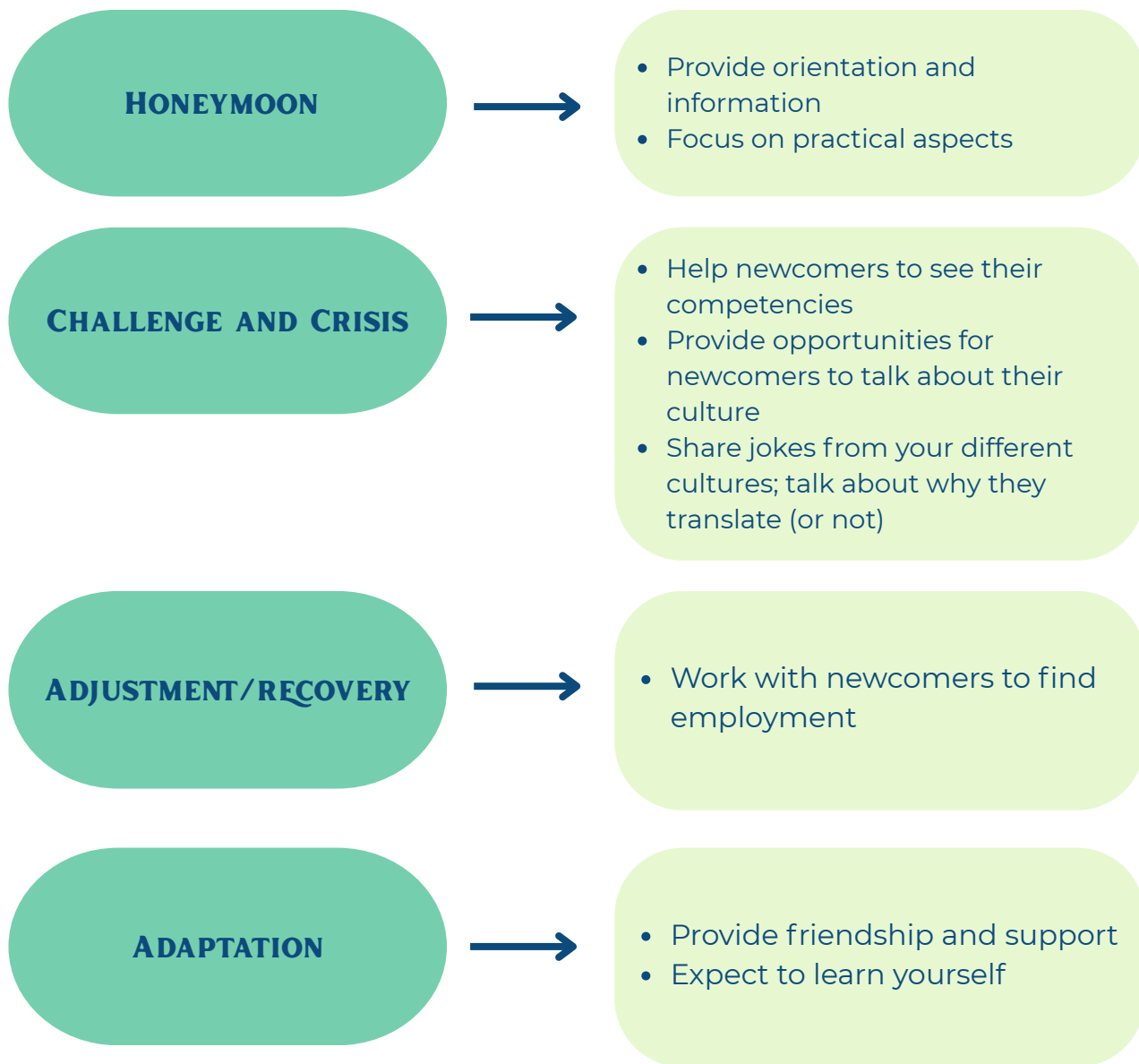


Cultural Adjustment after Forced Migration

Not everyone experiences a “honeymoon phase” first. If you recall, arrival to Canada may be a difficult process for some newcomers.

Newcomers may experience **culture shock**, a period of disorientation and a normal part of cultural adjustment. While it can be painful, it usually results in profound learning. As newcomers move through the stages of cultural adjustment, sponsors and other community members can help knowing that different support may help at different stages. Below are some brief examples of supports that align with the stages of cultural adjustment.

(For a full outline of the stages of cultural adjustment and corresponding supports, see [Appendix: Cultural Adjustment](#).)



Appendix: Cultural Adjustment

Stages	Newcomer Experiences	Potential Supports
Honeymoon	An initial reaction of enthusiasm, fascination, admiration and cordial, friendly, superficial relationships with hosts. Refugees have not come to Canada by choice, and may be less enthusiastic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide orientation and information • Focus on the practical aspects of becoming competent in the new situation (i.e. getting around, looking for a job, language training).
Challenge and Crisis	<p>Differences in language, concepts, values and symbols lead to feelings of inadequacy, frustration, anxiety and anger. During this time, studies show that most people find the most difficult situations to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making friends your own age • Dealing with someone who is cross • Approaching others • Appearing in front of an audience • Getting to know people in-depth, intimately • Understanding jokes, humour, sarcasm • Dealing with people staring at you • Being with people that you do not know well • Complaining in public/dealing with unsatisfactory service 	<p>Give empathy, friendship and support; accept that anger and frustration are normal and legitimate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information about culture shock. • Help newcomers to see their competencies. • Provide opportunities for newcomers to talk about their culture. • Provide opportunities to learn together about cross-cultural communications. • Talk about the most difficult situations. Share how these things are dealt with in both your cultures. • Share jokes from your different cultures; talk about why they translate (or not). • Set up a fun time for role plays or reversals. • If newcomers are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or other psychological problems, help them to find appropriate help.
Adjustment or Recovery	<p>The crisis is resolved as the person learns the language and culture of the host country. Life factors known to reduce stress and aid recovery include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Having a sense of purpose • Being socially or politically involved • Having (employment) opportunities • Maturity • Having strong social support • Having structure in life • Equal or greater status than before 	<p>In a number of these areas, neither you nor the newcomer has any control. In some areas such as <i>status</i>, newcomers are likely to be worse off than before. However, there are things you can do to enhance a sense of purpose, belonging, and structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with newcomers to find employment and to map out an employment strategy that will lead to a fulfilling job. • Help newcomers see the positive contribution they are making to your community. • As newcomers' English abilities increase, set aside more times for storytelling—this is both an opportunity for the newcomers to teach you about their situation, and a way for them to structure/make sense of events
Adaptation	Newcomers begin to work in and enjoy the new culture, though there may be some instances of anxiety and strain.	Continue to provide friendship and support, and expect to learn as you walk alongside the newcomer.



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