

Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program 9



Refugee Sponsorship Handbook

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

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ABBREVIATIONS

BVOR - Blended Visa Office-Referred

CG - Constituent Group

GAR - Government Assisted Refugee

IRCC - Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada

JAS - Joint Assistance Sponsorship

RAP SPO - Resettlement Assistance Program Service Provider Organization

ROC-O - Resettlement Operations Centre - Ottawa

SAH - Sponsorship Agreement Holder (organization)

SPO - Settlement Service Provider Organization

TERMS

Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program - the Visa Office has determined a refugee to be eligible and has referred them for sponsorship to Canada. Sponsorship costs are shared between the Canadian government and the sponsors. Sponsors pay the start-up costs and provide settlement assistance.

Constituent Group (CG) - A group authorized in writing by a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) to act on its behalf in sponsoring refugees. Refer to section 138 "group" of Immigration Refugee Protection Regulations (IRPR).

Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) - an individual determined to be a refugee and usually referred to Canada through UNHCR; supported by the Canadian government through the Resettlement Assistance Program.

Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) - funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and administered by Medavie Blue Cross, provides limited temporary coverage of health-care benefits to specific groups of individuals. Find more information on [IFHP coverage](#).

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

Resettlement - (durable solution) when refugees transfer from the country where they were granted refugee status to another country that has agreed to admit them and offer them long-term resident rights and/or citizenship.

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

Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) - Incorporated organizations that have signed a formal sponsorship agreement with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). SAHs assume overall responsibility for the management of sponsorships under their agreement, and generally submit several refugee sponsorships a year.

What Is Joint Assistance Sponsorship?

Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS)

A **Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS)** refers to a joint undertaking by a sponsoring group and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Only **Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR)** or a GAR family requiring special assistance are eligible for the JAS program. 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
- Effects of systemic discrimination



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.

During the eligibility interview overseas, refugees with special needs may be identified as potential JAS clients by a Canadian Migration Officer. This happens if the applicant has personal circumstances (listed above) and would benefit from longer-term financial, emotional and additional settlement support.

After the refugee arrives in Canada, a Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) service provider organization (SPO) can also identify GARs in Canada as requiring 'joint assistance'.

Only Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) and their Constituent Groups are eligible to participate in the JAS Program. Groups of Five and Community Sponsors are not eligible.

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 ([for full definitions click here](#))
- must be expected to need a longer and/or have a more difficult resettlement period due to the serious nature of the problems faced.

That need may include one or more of the following:

Emotional problems resulting from the refugee experience	For example: • 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 • 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	• Families with large numbers of children • Families with elderly parents • Single-parent families with several young children • Families consisting only of siblings, one or more of whom has assumed parental responsibilities
Separated minors	Children under the age of majority separated from their family

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

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](#).

Finding a JAS refugee to sponsor

Sponsoring groups can request a JAS Profile from the Refugee Sponsorship program (RSTP). You can contact RSTP by emailing jas@rstp.ca. An RSTP staff maintain a list of active profiles of JAS cases that are overseas and ready to travel to Canada, or are already in Canada.



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.

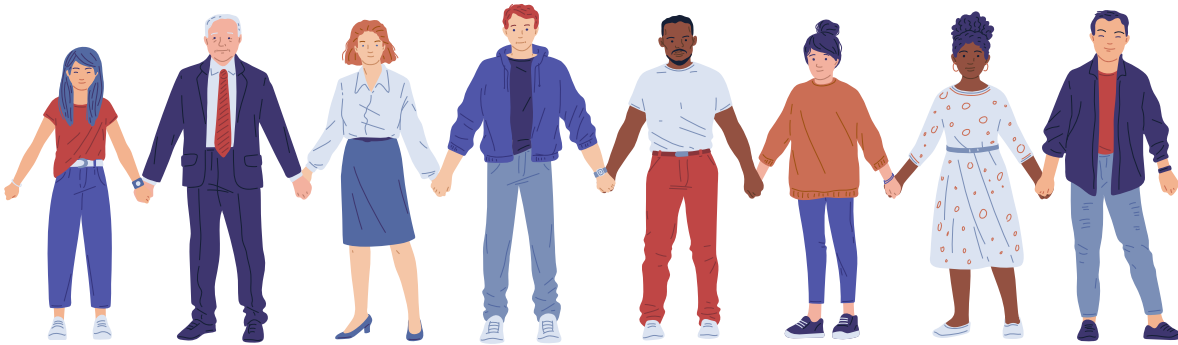
The JAS partnership between IRCC and the sponsoring group also involves many other players. The sponsoring groups must work closely with the local IRCC office, the **RAP SPO**, settlement and other community agencies to ensure that the special needs of the JAS clients are met. Groups must also be aware 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.



Finding a JAS refugee to sponsor

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
- 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 the Resettlement Operations Centre - Ottawa (**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 reviewing a [JAS Roles and Responsibilities Checklist](#).

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 RAP SPO'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:

- 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:
 1. Transportation allowance : SPOs may provide a transportation allowance to clients if they require it to access IRCC-funded settlement services
 2. Childcare services available in some locations while clients are receiving settlement services on site
 3. Interpretation services
 4. Translation services
 5. 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](#)

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.

An illustration of three stylized houses. The house on the left is red with a chimney, two windows, and a door. The house in the center is blue with a dark roof, a circular window, and four square windows. The house on the right is yellow with a chimney, a semi-circular window, and six square windows. All houses have a dark door.

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 with living expenses associated with basic needs, 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 a loan, refugees will have to pay this back in time.



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.

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 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.



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 [Application for Refugee Sponsorship: Joint Assistance Sponsorship](#).



The application package includes:

- [Document Checklist — Joint Assistance Sponsorship \[IMM 5495\]](#)
- [Request for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship Refugee Profile \[IMM 5504\]](#)
- [Undertaking/Application for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship \[IMM 1324\]](#)
- [Sponsor Assessment \[IMM 5492\]](#)
- [Settlement Plan — Joint Assistance Sponsorship \[IMM 5494\]](#)
- [Use of a Representative \[IMM 5476\]](#)
- [Instruction Guide \[IMM 5493\]](#)

If you require assistance in completing any of the forms included in this application package, please contact the RSTP at jas@rstp.ca or 1.877.290.1701.



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