

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO SPONSOR A REFUGEE?

Please note that the order of some of the following may change according to your groups' needs.

1. MAKING YOUR DECISION:

- a. Review/discuss the financial requirements (see attached); decide on family size
- b. Review/discuss the work required (see below)
- c. Get parish council approval
- d. Raise necessary funds (depending on family size agreed to)
- e. Paperwork: when you are ready to proceed, the Refugee Sponsorship Coordinator will:
 - i. Provide refugee profiles which fit your request
 - ii. Obtain additional information your group may wish to know about the family
 - iii. Submit all required documentation according to your decision
- f. Committee requirements:
 - i. Between 8 – 10 individuals is ideal (though some have been smaller)
 - ii. Volunteer 'qualifications':
 1. Some with vehicles;
 2. Some with day time availability
 3. All with big hearts
 4. Also helpful are volunteers with experience in an area and can take the lead, e.g., housing, health, education, sports, recreation, etc. (or be consulted)
 - iii. Time commitment? This varies: preparation and initial arrival are the most intensive; all volunteers are needed to help at that time (see below); after the family has settled in, usually only weekly visits are needed; however, depending on family needs, such as dr. appointments, etc., they might require more time.
- g. Refugee Sponsorship Coordinator will provide:
 - i. Orientation to whole committee regarding role/responsibilities of sponsorship (note, this can be provided at any point that you request)
 - ii. Written handouts with information about registrations, resources and key contacts
 - iii. Assistance to connect with people from the same country/language group
 - iv. Workshop on cross cultural awareness (as requested).

2. NOTICE OF ARRIVAL AND GETTING READY (the notice is usually sent 2-3 weeks in advance of arrival)

- a. **Secure housing!**

Once you've received the notice of arrival, you need to narrow down the housing search. This is a key task and often one of the most difficult. Ideally housing will not be too far from the area of your parish for the convenience of your committee; finding an apartment with rent within the budget will be a challenge (see budget guidelines).
- b. Get utilities hooked up.
- c. Finalize procurement of furniture and household effects and set up apartment. Here's where St. Vincent de Paul will be VERY helpful!

- d. Arrival planning:
 - i. Identify drivers/greeters/interpreters for airport reception
 - ii. Bring bottles of water; possibly snacks (they have been travelling a long time)
 - iii. Prepare a meal (culturally appropriate if possible) to leave in the family's house.

3. ARRIVAL and FIRST TWO WEEKS

- a. The first 2 weeks are the busiest because it is necessary to get registrations and documentation completed as soon as possible, such as, register for Alberta Health Care, Social Insurance, open bank account, other registrations, enrollments, etc. Volunteer(s) with vehicles and day time availability is required (maybe interpreters too).
- b. When possible, find volunteers with specific experience/knowledge in areas such as the school system, doctors/clinics; follow up on medical issues, children get inoculations, family is seen by a family doctor, etc.
- c. Volunteers (perhaps youth?) with experience/knowledge of the transit system are needed to go with the family showing them how to use public transit from their apartment to school, shopping, etc. A key part of your role is to help them be independent; showing them how to get around on their own is part of this.

4. ONGOING – Settling into the community

- a. Following the rush of pre-arrival preparation and post-arrival busyness, ongoing support for the family is much less intense or time consuming. The parents will likely be enrolled in English classes on a daily basis, keeping them busy. Your role shifts to providing ongoing friendship/support and orienting them to the community, such as:
 - i. Committee members take turns to invite them for supper on a weekend to visit together, give them a chance to practice English, learn about their skills and background (later refer them to employment).
 - ii. Take them on outings to see Edmonton: go to a park and have a picnic; take them to a point of interest (the Fringe festival, street performers' festival, the museum, zoo, etc.).
- b. Usually there are 2 or 3 of the sponsors who spend more time with the family and develop a rapport with them; such a relationship/rapport is important as it helps to build trust. It is important that the family feels comfortable with someone with whom they can share concerns, etc.

5. THE UNEXPECTED

- a. Most sponsorships proceed as above but there is never a guarantee what they will be like. Some more challenging sponsorships have had:
 - i. One family member required weekly visits to the Cross Cancer for treatments.
 - ii. One refugee was hospitalized for mental issues and could not live on her own.
 - iii. A family with greater cultural barriers plus 5 children required more contact and support for a longer time (e.g., medical issues, school contact/follow-up, etc.).