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# SECTION 1:

## *Sponsorship Agreement Holders*

### ***Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs)***

A Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) is an organization that has an [agreement](#) with the Government of Canada, permitting them to resettle refugees through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program. This agreement is a legal agreement between a corporation and the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. When it is signed, the organization accepts the legal responsibility for all sponsorships it signs directly, as well as those it authorizes its [constituent groups](#) to sign. Agreements can specify an expiration date and limit the number of individuals who can be sponsored.

Currently, there are 82 SAHs across Canada. While they vary in composition, type and organizational structure, the responsibilities of each SAH are generally the same. SAHs are responsible for managing sponsorships under their agreement and have the prerogative to identify refugees who they would like to sponsor. More information about the identification of specific refugees or refugee families in need of resettlement is provided in Chapter 3.

SAHs can also authorize Constituent Groups (CGs) to sponsor under their agreement. The SAH is responsible for assessing the feasibility of a sponsorship, both in terms of the refugees' eligibility and a group's ability to carry out the sponsorship. Each SAH has its own procedures for assessing and approving potential sponsorships. SAHs are also responsible for the training, advising, assisting, monitoring and information-sharing of their CGs. A SAH may have many CGs across Canada, only a few in a specific region or area, or none at all.



*Lydia Yasotha Elankairajah, Nina Chiba, Larry Pearce and Antoinette Godbout receiving certificates in recognition of their dedication to the resettlement of refugees in Canada, in celebration of the PSR programs 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Calgary, Alberta. 2009*

### ***Constituent Groups (CGs)***

A Constituent Group (CG) is a group that sponsors refugees on behalf of a SAH. If your group is sponsoring with a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), the first step is to contact your SAH representative to find out more about the process in their organization. Each SAH has its own process of recognizing sponsoring groups or Constituent Groups.

While each SAH sets its own criteria for recognizing CGs, CGs must be:

- ▶ authorized, in writing, by the SAH to act on its behalf as sponsors of refugees;
- ▶ located in the community where the refugee is expected to settle; and
- ▶ be managed under the SAH.

The SAH bears the legal responsibility for all sponsorships submitted under its agreement. Given the legal responsibilities of the SAH for the activities of its sponsoring groups, and taking into account some of the liability considerations, SAHs must clearly define who is eligible to be a Constituent Group. CGs may or may not already be members of the SAH. As the animators of the sponsorship itself, the main role of a CG is to provide support for the newcomers during their first year in Canada. This includes preparing to receive the refugees.

**If your group is interested in sponsoring, you can begin by contacting your SAH who will provide you with the required forms or instructions, and advise you on the criteria and the process. Your SAH will be a useful source of information and advice throughout the application process and the sponsorship period.**

## *Parties to a Sponsorship*

A SAH may choose to authorize a Constituent Group and/or a cosponsor individual or organization or choose to work alone on a private sponsorship case. Where settlement responsibilities are shared through a sponsorship partnership between SAH, CG and/or cosponsor, in case of a sponsorship breakdown or default by the CG and/or the cosponsor, the SAH is ultimately responsible to ensure that the conditions of the sponsorship undertaking are met. Failure to do so may result in a default being declared against the SAH and the cancellation of their agreement. For this reason, all partners to a sponsorship should keep in touch throughout the application process and the sponsorship period to ensure that concerns that arise can be addressed and to avoid breakdown or default.

# Responsibilities

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## OVERVIEW OF SPONSORSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

As any other human endeavor, refugee sponsorship entails a number of moral, financial and legal responsibilities in relation to the refugees sponsored, CIC and other parties. Broadly speaking, the responsibilities of a sponsoring group can be categorized into two: responsibilities that should be carried out before the arrival of refugees and responsibilities that should be implemented after the arrival of refugees.

Each duty requires a sponsoring group to perform an action or a set of actions or activities that result in positive sponsorship outcomes and/or experiences. Below are the main duties under these broad categories.

### PRE-ARRIVAL DUTIES

Sponsoring groups are expected to carry out the following duties in relation to refugees they are sponsoring and CIC:

#### Prescreening Refugee Sponsorship Inquiries

To avoid rejection and raising false hopes and to save precious time and resources of CIC and the group, sponsoring groups have a duty to pre-screen refugee sponsorship inquiries. Sponsors should only submit cases that meet the legal requirements of the Private Sponsorship Of Refugee Sponsorship Program.

#### Submitting Fully And Correctly Completed Refugee Sponsorship Applications

To avoid return of an application and save precious time and resource, sponsors are expected to properly and fully complete all sponsorship applications forms and include all required documents before submitting the application to CPO-W.

#### Maintaining Contact With Refugee Applicants And Updating Them With About Any Progress

Being in contact with the refugee applicant throughout the process allows sponsors to share information and updates with them. It also enables the sponsoring group and refugee applicant to keep the visa office and the CPO-W posted about any important changes.

#### Updating CIC About Any Changes In Family Composition

To ensure that the family unit remains intact, sponsors need to update and ensure that refugee applicants inform the visa office and CPO-W office about any changes in the family composition of the applicant. Failure to declare changes such as a new baby or spouse on time can result in permanent separation of families.

#### If Applicable, Ensuring Refugees Are Aware Of Their Interview And Appear For The Interview

If the sponsoring group is aware of the interview date, it should notify the refugee applicant as soon as possible and verify that the applicant is aware of the interview date, place and other details about the interview. The group should not assume that the refugee applicant will be informed of the interview day.

To avoid a "no show" at the time of the interview, sponsors may need to make phone calls, send emails, letters, fax or other communication through relatives, family, NGOs, UNHCR or other bodies to ensure that the refugee applicants are aware of the interview and come prepared.

#### Preparing Refugees For An Interview

### POST-ARRIVAL DUTIES

The sponsoring group has a set of responsibilities related to meeting the basic settlement needs of sponsored refugees upon their arrival in Canada. These duties are:

#### Lodging

Provide suitable accommodation, basic furniture, and other household essentials.

#### Care

Provide food, clothing, local transportation costs and other basic necessities of life.

#### Settlement Assistance and Support

Assist in the completion of required forms including health insurance, social insurance, child tax benefits registrations, etc.;

- opening a bank account;
- facilitating access to English or French language classes;
- understand the rights and responsibilities of permanent residents;
- facilitating access to employment;
- facilitating access to community support groups, settlement services, and other resources in the community;
- registering children in school and facilitating access with the school system;
- locating and assisting in accessing a family physician and dentist; and supporting empowerment and independence.

#### Monitoring

For those sponsoring groups that work with co-sponsors and constituent groups or other subsidiary bodies, monitoring and ensuring that settlement needs are met are important responsibilities.

Any sponsoring group should either fully implement the settlement plan itself or ensure that those who are sponsoring under its auspices are properly implementing the settlement plan.

Assisting the refugee applicant with preparing for the interview is an important task that sponsoring group should try to do. If possible, doing practice interviews through phone or Skype or other means of communication will go a long way to assist the refugees prepare for the interview especially if there are no language barriers or if interpreters are available to help. If that is not possible, sending an interview instruction guide such as RSTP's Guide for Preparation to an Interview, which is translated into the most popular refugee languages, will assist refugees to prepare for the interview.

### **Working Jointly With Refugee Applicants To Avoid Any Delay Or Complication In The Sponsorship Process**

The sponsoring group should work with the refugee applicant to ensure that the sponsorship process goes smoothly. This may include attending to email and letters communication that are sent by the visa post or CPO-W office such as requests to submit additional document or update the completed forms or re-doing the applications forms.

### **Updating CIC with any changes in the financial or other conditions of the sponsoring groups**

If there are any changes in the financial, human resources or other aspects of the sponsoring group which will negatively impact the capacity of the groups to carry out its sponsorship responsibilities, the group should let CIC know. Ideally, the group would recruit new volunteers and reconstitute its resettlement committee or fund-raise to collect the required financial resources that will enable it to continue with the sponsorship process. If this is not possible, the group should let CIC know and perhaps withdraw the submitted sponsorship application.

### **Reception**

Meet the refugee upon arrival at the airport and welcome them in the community; provide orientation to the new neighbourhood and life in Canada.