

Associated Gospel Church of Canada

Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR)
Blended Visa Office Referral Program (BVOR)

The AGC is working with Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA) under their Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) “umbrella” with Customs and Immigration Canada

A Sponsorship Agreement Holder is an incorporated organization that has signed a Sponsorship Agreement with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. A SAH can authorize Constituent Groups to sponsor under its agreement and provide support to the refugee(s).

The SAH or Constituent Group may also choose to formally partner with an individual (for example, a family member of the sponsored refugee living in Canada) and/or another organization in carrying out settlement duties. The partner is herein termed the “co-sponsor”.

What does that mean?

Any AGC church in Canada can sponsor refugees as a “Constituency Group” because of our agreement with C&MA and their SAH status.

Who facilitates and supports the Sponsorship Agreement Holder responsibilities?

Alliance Justice and Compassion, located at C&MA National Ministry Centre, is the primary contact office that will help facilitate the process with our Constituency Groups. As a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, the NMC has a pre-screening process in place to determine if someone will qualify as a refugee under the private sponsorship program. Any AGC Church that is interested in refugee sponsorship can contact the NMC for assistance.

The C&MA’s SAH Representative will

1. Pre-screen sponsorship applications to determine whether they meet Canada’s sponsorship eligibility and admissibility criteria;
2. Be responsible for the selection and authorization of sponsoring groups;
3. Provide organizational assistance, advice, information and support to the AGC’s Constituent Groups.

What are the responsibilities of a sponsoring Constituency Group (CG)?

When an organization signs a sponsorship agreement, it becomes fully accountable for assuming the responsibilities that are detailed in the sponsorship agreement. These include:

1. Providing basic financial support (e.g., for housing and food) and care for the sponsored refugee during the sponsorship period (generally a period of one year), or until the sponsored refugee no longer requires assistance, whichever comes first;
2. Ensuring it has sufficient resources and expertise to carry out its responsibilities;
3. Remaining jointly or solely liable when the CG has signed a sponsorship undertaking.

What settlement assistance is required from a Sponsoring Constituency Group?

At the outset of the sponsorship process, a CG has an obligation to provide a settlement plan that outlines the settlement assistance it will offer to the sponsored refugee(s).

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During the sponsorship period, what does a sponsoring AGC Church group do?

1. Welcome the refugees at the airport, and provide an orientation to life in Canada;
2. Provide suitable accommodation, basic furniture and other household essentials;
3. Provide food, clothing, local transportation costs and other basic necessities of life;
4. Help the refugees:
 - Complete any required forms, including health insurance, social insurance and child tax benefits;
 - Learn English or French (e.g., help with getting into an English-as-a-second-language or French-as-a-second-language class, provide tutoring);
 - Understand the rights and responsibilities of permanent residents;
 - Find a job and make friends;
 - Learn about and access services that are available in the community;
 - Register children in school and guide them in dealings with the school system;
 - Locate a family physician and dentist; and
 - Become independent.

A Sponsoring Constituency Group (an AGC Church) is expected to prepare a settlement plan that outlines, in as much detail as possible, how it will divide the responsibilities of settling the newcomers; who will provide money; which in-kind support is available; and what the back-up plan is in case the original settlement plan does not work out.

How long will the Sponsoring Constituency Group have to provide support?

The sponsoring group is responsible for financial and settlement assistance, counselling and support for the sponsored refugees for the duration of the sponsorship period. This is usually for one year from the date of the arrival of the refugee but can be up to three years in exceptional circumstances.

How much does a sponsorship cost?

The sponsoring group must show that they have sufficient financial resources at least equal to social assistance rates available to support the sponsored refugees for the duration of the sponsorship period. The sponsorship application kit includes a sponsorship cost table that provides the assistance rates which a group can use as a guide for support levels. For instance, if a group plans to sponsor one person, the sponsorship costs amount to \$13,500. See Table 1 below for the sponsorship costs.

Table 1: Sponsorship Costs (2018)

Family Size	12 Months of Income Support	Start-up Costs	Estimated Total Annual Settlement Cost
1	10,700 = \$892/mo.	2,800	13,500
2	18,000 = \$1500/mo.	4,400	22,400
3	18,900 = \$1575/mo.	5,300	24,200
4	21,200 = \$1770/mo.	7,000	28,200
5	23,700 = \$1975/mo.	7,200	30,900
6	25,700 = \$2145/mo.	8,000	33,700
Additional member	1,550 = \$130/mo.	1,000	2,500

A group should always take into account that the actual cost of the sponsorship may be higher than the amounts outlined in the sponsorship cost table. In calculating the overall budget, the sponsoring group can

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factor in any in-kind donations they have received (e.g. furniture or housing) which can reduce the overall sponsorship costs as well see Table 2.

Table 2: Sponsorship Costs reduced by gifts in kind

Several factors may reduce the amount of financial support that the sponsoring group must provide. Examples of these factors may include in-kind donations and financial resources the sponsored refugee brings to Canada. The In-kind Deduction Table below is based on annual costs.

Family Size	Shelter	Clothing	Furniture	Start-up Costs (Household Needs)	School Start-up Costs	Food Staples
1	\$6,000	500	1,500	325		175
2	\$7,100	1,000	2,000	350		250
3	\$7,800	1,375	2,500	375		325
4	\$8,400	1,750	3,000	400		400
5	\$9,600	2,125	3,500	425		475
6	\$9,600	2,500	4,000	450		550
For additional member, add	\$900	375	500	25	150/child (ages 4-21)	75

Start-Up Costs

Sponsoring groups might find it useful for their own planning purposes to be aware of the estimated costs that Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) uses to establish the amount for the initial start-up cheque for government sponsored refugees. Start-up Costs include: bedding, linens and household items. These are approximate rates only and should be used as a guideline.

Individual start-up costs with established maximums:

Clothing: a one-time basic clothing allowance is provided.

- \$375 per adult
- \$250 per dependant child

Winter Clothing: winter coat, winter boots, mittens, scarf, snow pants for children, etc.

- \$175 per adult
- \$125 per dependant child

Basic Household Needs Allowance: Suggested items include: beds, table and chairs, bed linens, basic window coverings and common household products such as kitchen utensils, pots, pans, brooms, mops, detergents and cleansers. The following maximum allowance rates apply:

- Per single without accompanying dependants \$1,550
- Per single plus one (1) dependant \$2,440
- Per single plus two (2) dependants \$2,880
- Per couple without accompanying dependants \$2,280
- Per couple plus one (1) accompanying dependant \$2,560
- Per couple plus two (2) accompanying dependants \$3,185

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- Per couple plus three (3) accompanying dependants \$3,885
- For each additional dependant \$420

Food Staples: flour, sugar, rice, spices and condiments, etc.

- \$210 for the first person in each household
- \$90 for each additional dependant (no maximum)

School Start-Up Allowance: an allowance of \$150 for children and young adults attending school between the ages of 4-21 to defray costs for school activity fees, gym clothing, etc.

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What is the Blended VOR Initiative?

The Blended Visa Office Referred initiative is a program designed to resettle refugees identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and submitted to Canadian visa offices abroad. It is referred to as a "blended" program because it is a cost-sharing arrangement whereby Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) both contribute to financially supporting the refugees.

Refugees under this program have already met eligibility and admissibility criteria, making them travel - ready. However, they must be matched with a sponsor before they can travel to Canada.

How does the "blended" model work?

Refugees resettled under the Blended VOR initiative will receive income support during the first 6 months after their arrival through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). They are also fully covered under the Interim Federal Health (IFH) program in addition to provincial health coverage.

For the duration of the sponsorship period, sponsors are required to provide:

- reception upon arrival
- initial housing setup
- basic necessities after the first 6 months of RAP income support.
- settlement assistance (including arranging for language classes, enrollment in school, finding health care providers, job search, etc)
- psychological and emotional support.

How is this different from the regular Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program?

Under the Blended VOR initiative, refugees are referred to Canadian visa offices abroad directly by the UNHCR. For

2015, the Canadian Government has decided to focus on specific refugee populations and sponsoring groups are encouraged to sponsor refugees from these populations. CIC will provide income support for the first 6 months of the sponsorship period and sponsors are responsible for remaining costs through the sponsorship period (usually 12 months).

Under the PSR program, sponsors are able to submit a sponsorship application on behalf of a Convention Refugee

Abroad or a member of the Country of Asylum Class. These persons would be assessed under those specific criteria. When approved, the refugees travel to Canada and the sponsors assume all costs associated with the sponsorship.

Can refugees be referred to the Blended VOR Initiative by sponsoring groups?

No. Refugees chosen under this program can only be referred by Canadian visa offices.

How soon will the refugees arrive?

These cases (Blended VOR) are normally ready to travel to Canada within 1 to 4 months of being matched with a sponsor.

What happens after the refugees arrive?

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These refugees are considered permanent residents once they arrive in Canada. This means they are legally entitled to work, go to school, receive health care and access free services for newcomers to Canada such as language classes, employment counseling and other support services. Sponsored refugees are eligible for provincial health care immediately.

How do refugees access Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) support?

Upon arrival, sponsors schedule an intake interview with the local CIC office as soon as possible in order to register sponsored refugees for RAP support and IFH program coverage.

What happens after the first 6 months?

RAP income support ends and sponsors assume the costs for the remainder of the sponsorship period. All other services including IFH coverage remain the same.

What are the expected costs of sponsorship under this program?

Sponsors are expected to provide refugees with assistance equivalent to the 6-month RAP income support.

What is expected of refugees under this program?

Sponsored refugees are expected to work with their sponsors to become independent and self-sufficient after the end of the sponsorship period. Refugees are expected to remain in their sponsorship community for the duration of the sponsorship period and will not need to access social services during the sponsorship period since they will receive sufficient support from their sponsors.

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Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Joint Assistance Sponsorships (JAS)

What is a Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS)?

JAS is a joint refugee resettlement undertaking by a Canadian sponsoring group (a SAH and/or their CG) and the Government of Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada). The JAS program has been created to enable the resettlement of vulnerable refugees who require special assistance and whose admissibility to Canada depends on the additional support of a sponsor. Refugees sponsored under the JAS program are identified as having special needs that will likely result in a longer or more difficult period of integration in Canada due to:

- trauma from violence or torture
- medical disabilities
- effects of systemic discrimination, or
- large family unit (i.e.: higher number of family members).

Sponsorship under the JAS program means giving refugees a welcoming environment, helping them integrate, helping them access services for their needs and giving moral and emotional support. Under a JAS, the government provides financial assistance to the refugee while sponsoring groups provide community and emotional support and orientation, and ensure access to appropriate services.

Frequently Asked Questions about JAS:

Who can sponsor refugees under JAS?

Only Sponsorship Agreement Holders and their Constituent Groups.

Who qualifies for JAS?

Someone who is a Convention Refugee Abroad or a member of the Country of Asylum class AND is expected to require greater settlement assistance due to the serious nature of personal circumstances such as large/unusual family configuration, trauma due to violence or torture, medical disability, and/or effects of systemic discrimination. The person must be referred to the JAS program by either Canadian visa office abroad or a RAP Service Provider Organization in Canada.

How are JAS cases identified?

The visa officer determines during the eligibility interview which refugee applicants require a JAS. Sponsoring groups cannot designate cases to the program. The visa officer sends the details of JAS cases to the Matching Centre, which posts a JAS profile on a secure website accessible to Sponsorship Agreement Holders and local CIC. This website can be accessed here: [Refugee Profile Directory](#). Alternatively, refugees resettled under the Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) program to Canada, can be identified and referred to a SAH by the RAP organization.

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How long is the processing time?

Refugees under the JAS program who are still overseas arrive on average within 12 weeks of the sponsorship approval date.

How long are JAS refugees supported?

Most refugees under the JAS program are provided support for 12 to 24 months after arrival, depending on the individual circumstances and needs.

Who are the major players in JAS?

Since sponsorship under JAS is a joint endeavour, SAHs and their CGs must work closely with the local CIC office, the Resettlement Assistance Service Provider Organization (RAP SPO), settlement and other community agencies to meet the needs of the newcomers.

What is the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)?

RAP provides income support and immediate essential services to Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) and humanitarian cases for which the federal government has undertaken a financial commitment. Financial entitlements under RAP are based on prevailing social services rates.

How can our group find a JAS case to sponsor?

Your group can visit CIC's [Refugee Profile Directory](#) to see if any JAS profiles are available for sponsorship. If you are a Constituent Group, contact your SAH Representative for information on how to access this website. You can also request a refugee profile through CIC's Matching Centre. Complete the [Request for a Refugee Profile \(IMM5438\) form](#) and make sure you consult the [Instructions Guide \(IMM5496\)](#) before submitting the request. Note that submitting a request is for information only and does not commit your group to the sponsorship.

We want to commit to a JAS case; what now?

- 1. Contact your SAH representative**

The AGC SAH will send you some profiles to consider for sponsorship.

- 2. Complete the sponsorship undertaking paperwork**

Once you have received and reviewed the profile of a JAS case, your SAH representative will help you to understand how to complete the Undertaking/Application for a Joint Assistance Sponsorship (IMM1324), the Sponsor Assessment form (IMM5492), Settlement Plan – Joint Assistance Sponsorship (5494), and Document Checklist (IMM5495) before submitting them to the Centralized Processing Office in Winnipeg (CPO-W).

All forms can be downloaded

from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/ref-joint.asp>.