

Sponsoring a Syrian Refugee

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program?

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program is a resettlement program, in which private groups or organizations apply to sponsor refugees to come to Canada. In the PSR program, private sponsors provide financial support for all of the refugees' basic expenses (including rent, food, transportation, etc.), usually for one year or until the refugees become self-sufficient, whichever comes first. Sponsors are also responsible for providing settlement support to the refugees for one year. This entails supporting them throughout the entire settlement process, including helping the newcomers apply for necessary documents and services, find a doctor and dentist, open a bank account, learn how to use public transportation, enroll in English classes, find a job, and connect with a local settlement agency.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) is the government department that processes refugee sponsorship applications.



Syrian refugees outside a UNHCR camp (Photo: MSNBC)

How much money do I need to sponsor a refugee?

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) created a *Cost Table* that outlines the **minimum** amount of money that a group must have before sponsoring a refugee. In reality, it may be more expensive, so you should research and calculate the cost of living in your area (including rent, food, public transit pass, etc.) to ensure that you are providing enough financial support for the refugees when they arrive to pay for all of their basic expenses.

You can pick up a copy of the *Cost Table* at the RSTP table today, or you can visit the following website:

http://www.rstp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Fact_Sheet_7_3_Sponsorship_Cost_Table_Sept2014.pdf

What is the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program?

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program is a cost-sharing program between private sponsors and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). The private sponsors provide the refugees with 6 months of financial support for their living expenses (plus "start-up" costs), and CIC provides refugees with 6 months of income support through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). All settlement support is provided by the private sponsors for the full 12-month sponsorship period.

Refugees that are resettled under this program are referred to CIC by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Therefore, if you are applying to sponsor a specific family member or friend, you cannot sponsor them through the BVOR program, but you can apply to sponsor them through the above-mentioned PSR program.

For more information, please contact the RSTP at fponce@rstp.ca.



How can I sponsor a Syrian refugee?

In Canada, there are three ways that refugees can be privately sponsored:

1. Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs)

SAHs are incorporated organizations that have been approved as sponsors by CIC and have signed an agreement with CIC to sponsor refugees. Most private sponsorship is conducted by these groups. There are currently 96 SAHs across Canada. SAHs can work with Constituent Groups and/or Co-sponsors, which are groups of people or individuals that a SAH agrees to work with to sponsor refugees under their Agreement with CIC. The list of SAHs is publicly available here: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/list-sponsors.asp>

2. Groups of Five

Groups of Five consist of five Canadian citizens or Permanent Residents who are 18 years of age or older who apply to CIC to sponsor a refugee or refugee family. All five group members must reside in the same community that the refugee will be settling in.

3. Community Sponsors

A Community Sponsor could be any organization, association or corporation. The organization, association or corporation has not already been pre-approved by CIC, and it does not have to be incorporated. Community Sponsors can also work with co-sponsors.

What should you do if you want to sponsor a specific Syrian refugee?

If you want to sponsor a family member, friend, or any specific Syrian refugee or refugee family that you are aware of, you can sponsor them by using any of the three types of sponsorship groups mentioned above. Once you have created or found a sponsorship group, discussed the details of the settlement tasks that each person will be responsible for, and gathered the money required (or in some cases gathered financial documents that prove that you will be able to afford the sponsorship when the refugees arrive), you can start to fill in the application forms. The application forms can be found here: <http://www.rstp.ca/en/processing/the-refugee-sponsorship-application-forms/>

What should you do if you want to sponsor a refugee, but do not know of a specific refugee to sponsor?

- A) There are many families here in Canada whose relatives are Syrian refugees. If they would like assistance, you could work with them to raise the necessary funds to sponsor their relatives and help with the application forms. If you do not already know of a family here in Canada that wants to sponsor their relatives, perhaps you can approach a local organization, church, mosque, SAH, or project (such as Lifeline Syria: <https://lifelinesyria.ca/>) and ask them if they can connect you with a family in the area that is trying to sponsor their relatives.
- B) Contact the RSTP to ask if there are any Syrian refugees available through the BVOR program (fponce@rstp.ca).

Where can I get more information?

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP): <http://www.rstp.ca/>

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program

Tel: 416.290.1700, 1.877.290.1701

Fax: 416.290.1710

E-mail: info@rstp.ca, Website: www.rstp.ca