

Overview

This document is intended to help you and your sponsorship group manage the expectations of the sponsoring group as well as the newcomer and covers the following topics:

- Managing Expectations of the Sponsoring Group
- Managing Expectations of Newcomers
- Good Communication
- Visits and Privacy

Expectations of the Sponsoring Group

As a sponsoring group you may have certain expectations about how the sponsorship should be done and what you imagine the results of the sponsorship will be like for the newcomer(s).

It is really important to remember that things do not always go as planned and this might not be a negative outcome. It is good to always keep an open mind as well as to be flexible in doing things differently than what might have been planned from the beginning.

Some things to consider:

- It is very important for the sponsoring group members to be conscious of their own expectations of the newcomer(s), especially when it comes to attending events. When inviting the newcomer(s) to events, you must ask them if they would like to attend the event and not assume so. It is up to the newcomer(s) how much they would like to be involved in social gatherings.
- When it comes to faith based events, it is important to explain freedom of expression of religion to the newcomer(s). They might have been persecuted for their religious beliefs and are afraid to express their beliefs openly. Explain the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (specifically freedom of religion, belief and expression) in an easy to understand way with an interpreter present if needed.
- You can invite the newcomer(s) to talk about their religion, but it should never be forced and it is up to them if they feel comfortable enough to do so. Do not assume that the newcomer(s) have any specific religious affiliation. You can describe what church you belong to and that it is open to people from other religions as well.
- One important aspect of events and social gatherings is to not single the newcomer(s) out or ask them to speak in front of a group of people. This can be a very uncomfortable experience and may make them feel less as if they belong and more as an outsider.
- In all, be conscious of your own expectations. Always ask the newcomer(s) before taking them out to a social event and be aware of the power you hold as a sponsoring group and how it can be seen from the newcomer(s) perspective. They might feel as if they have to attend events since you are helping them with their new life in Canada.
- Even if you might not be able to remove it, try to minimize that power difference by asking questions, explaining things clearly and simple and make sure they understand their right to say no.

Managing Expectations of Newcomers

It is necessary to discuss expectations and responsibilities with the newcomers soon after arrival. This is important so that everyone involved have the same understanding of who is responsible for what. If there is a language barrier it is necessary to have an interpreter present in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Things to be explained and discussed are, but are not limited to:

Finances

- Monthly allowance including, if applicable, Child Tax Benefit etc.
- Living expenses – who pays rent, food etc., and what 'living expenses' include.
- Who pays for what (newcomers vs. sponsoring group).
- Bills – understanding of who pays the bills, how much, etc.

- Travel loan – what is it, how much do they pay each month, when do they pay, how do they make the payments.
- Savings – if possible.
- Banking – understanding of bankcard, bank accounts, bank fees, cheques, bank machines, etc.

Schooling/Employment

- LINC/ESL – importance and requirement to learn English, when to sign up etc.
- Register children for school – how to register, vaccinations, legal requirement for children 6-16, etc.
- Employment/Work experience – importance of Canadian work experience, possibility of part-time or evening work etc.

Emergency

- What to do in case of emergency
- How to call 911
- Non-emergency options – walk-in clinics, local police etc.

Phone, Internet & TV

- Different cell phone plans
- Cost of cell phone, internet and TV
- How to call abroad in the most cost effective way

Medical & Dental needs

- Provincial Health care cards (i.e. Alberta Health Care)
- IFH-Interim Federal Health coverage
- Dental

It is beneficial to have the above points discussed and written down and provide a copy for the family; if possible it is good to provide an extra copy of the document in the newcomer(s)' native language.

One suggestion is to draft a “basic contract” which lays out the most important requirements and that the family to confirm that they understand what was discussed. If they agree to sign the document, make sure that they understand exactly what is written down and that they agree with the information. This document is not legally binding but is a good tool as it can be used in case of doubts or uncertainties of what was discussed.

It is also a good idea to do a follow up on everything discussed after a few months, as a reminder of their responsibilities.

Good Communication:

Good communication among members of the sponsoring group as well as with the newcomers is significant for a successful sponsorship. Spoken as well as written communication and documentation is important to avoid misunderstandings and to make sure that everyone is on the same page.

The sponsoring group needs to work as one unit, and not as separate individuals, to create the best possible sponsorship. Therefore, clear communication and documentation will help keep everyone in the sponsoring group updated on what has been done and what needs to be done in the settlement.

Structured Communication

A structured way of sharing information among the sponsoring group members is important in order to work together as a group and keep everyone informed.

While communicating through email is efficient, we do not recommend that it is the only online communication tool as it can easily become disorganized and confusing, and it is important to have a record to go back to.

Some alternative suggestions include:

Drop Box

- One way of sharing information within the sponsoring group is through **Dropbox**, a free file hosting service where the group can create a secured account with a login where you can share documents, pictures etc.
- Dropbox allows users to create a special folder on each of their computers, which Dropbox then synchronizes so that it appears to be the same folder (with the same contents) regardless of which computer is used to view it.
- Every member can therefore access all files in all folders as they will have the same content. Files placed in this folder are also accessible through a website and mobile phone applications. To sign up go to: <https://www.dropbox.com/>

Google Docs/Google Drive

- Another way of sharing information is through **Google Docs/Google Drive**. Google Docs/Drive is a free, online service offered by Google.
- It allows users to create and edit documents online so it can be accessible on any computer. This is a step-by-step guide on how to access Google Drive: <http://www.gcflernfree.org/googledriveanddocs/2/print>

Written Updates

- We recommend that the sponsoring group members involved with the newcomers do write-ups on their visits, conversations and other necessary information about the newcomer(s)
- These updates can be shared with the other members on a web-based portal. This will help to keep everyone up to date on what is going on.

Answering Questions

- When receiving questions or requests from the newcomers, it is a good rule of thumb not to give promising answers without consulting with the rest of the sponsoring group members.
- Not saying yes or no in the moment will help to make sure no promises will be made that the sponsoring group members may not be able to fulfill later.
- Instead of saying a direct 'yes' or 'no' you can give answers such as "I will look into that and get back to you as soon as I have an answer for you" or "I will check with the other sponsor group members and talk to you once we have an answer".
- It is important that the newcomer(s) don't get mixed messages or lose trust when people are not able to follow through on promises.

Check Understanding

- When explaining things for the newcomer(s) it is important to make sure that what you have explained has been understood.
- Even though people may be nodding, responding 'yes' to your questions or giving a general response this does not mean that they have actually comprehended the message clearly.
- Here are some tips for creating better communication:
 - Write down key points in both English and the newcomer(s)' language, or if possible ask them to write down the key points themselves.
 - Ask the newcomers to repeat key points back to you.
 - Review key points together, both orally and by reviewing the settlement plan.
 - Invite them to ask questions.

Visits and Privacy

During the settlement process it is important to remember your role as a sponsoring group in relation to the newcomer(s). It is important to respect the privacy of newcomer families, especially in their own home. Think about how you would like people to treat your privacy if you were in the newcomer(s) situation. It is important to continuously reflect on the power differentials that exist between the sponsoring group and the newcomers.

One of the more important points related to visits and privacy is the visits with female refugees. Due to the power imbalance between a sponsoring group member and the refugees, no men from the sponsoring group should be alone with sponsored newcomer women, especially in their home. The women may have a history of abuse or have experienced other situations, which have led to the lack of trust in men; therefore it is important to be extra conscious about this. The women may also feel uncomfortable being alone with a man for religious or cultural reasons. Make sure to always have a woman from the sponsoring group present when a man visits newcomer women. This is out of respect for the woman.

Here are some guidelines on what you can do to guard their privacy:

- Call ahead of time to make an appointment before going to visit the newcomer(s) in their home. This shows them that it is common practice to call before a visit as well as respecting their privacy.
- If people wish to contact the newcomer(s), let the newcomers know who is going to contact them and why.
- Avoid sharing unnecessary private information about the newcomer(s) within the sponsoring group such as information that you would not like to be shared about yourself. Only discuss matters about the newcomer(s) with people who are directly involved with the settlement support.
- Do not publish or forward the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of any member of the newcomer(s) to anyone or any organization outside of the sponsoring group without the newcomer(s)' specific permission.
- Do not discuss the newcomer(s)' private issues with anyone without their permission. This includes discussions with other members of the sponsoring group as well as settlement organizations.
- Make sure to include the newcomer(s) in conversations when they are present, especially conversations that is about them. This is important to do even though their English is not very strong to make them feel included, listened to and understood.
- Do not expect settlement agencies and other organization to keep you completely informed on their work with the newcomer(s), the workers are bound by privacy legislation.