

what we know...

COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP INSTITUTE

Introduction and Research Goals

This handbook is a hands-on guide for groups in Guelph-Wellington who are sponsoring or are considering sponsoring refugees under Canada's Private Refugees Sponsorship Program. It was created to provide detailed information on the steps the sponsoring group should take before the arrival of the newcomer(s), on the first day of arrival, during the first week, and the first month. It also seeks to connect sponsoring groups with the various services and resources available in Guelph-Wellington to support the resettlement and integration process.

Background

This project came from discussions between the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute and the Guelph Refugee Sponsorship Forum, the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership, Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington and the County of Wellington Settlement Services identifying a need to provide local information to sponsoring groups in the process of welcoming Syrian refugee families to Guelph-Wellington. The resulting handbook was developed with this audience in mind, but is relevant to sponsoring groups supporting refugees from all origins.

Methods

The handbook builds extensively on two similar documents produced in Toronto and for a national audience. These were combined, adapted and supplemented by research on resources and supports available in Guelph-Wellington.

The handbook begins with a set of checklists, followed by a more detailed list of tips and information on local services. It concludes with a list of organizations and resources available to support sponsoring groups and the newcomer(s) during and after the resettlement process.

Topics include: orientation, immediate medical needs, settlement services, government documents and services, recreation, finances, education, accommodation, employment and job training, cultural adjustment, health and mental health, long-term integration.

Limitations

This handbook is intended to offer information to sponsoring groups and others; but it does not offer legal advice or counseling.

While the content reflects the resources available at the time of its development, readers are encouraged to contact specific organizations for current information.

"Newcomers may be experiencing a wide range of feelings and emotions—they may feel upset, scared, exhausted, overwhelmed, relieved, or excited, and these feelings are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Your feelings might not match theirs..."

SPONSORING A REFUGEE

Tips & Local Resources to Support Sponsors in Guelph-Wellington

Key Content:

Before Arrival

- It is important to prepare well in advance for the arrival of the newcomer(s) you are sponsoring.
- Make sure to: discuss your group's expectations for the sponsoring process, arrange temporary housing, furnish home, prepare a welcome kit with staple items, prepare a translated orientation binder, and plan the first meeting with the newcomer(s).

1st Day

- At the airport/hotel, be mindful of how you greet the newcomer(s) and introduce yourself and your role as a sponsor. Collect and verify relevant documentation.
- Provide a basic orientation, check for immediate medical needs, and take time to get to know each other.

1st Week

- This is a critical time for the newcomer(s). It's important to address the necessary practical issues, but also to be aware of emotional needs.
- Discuss: settlement services, health coverage, applying for government identification, shopping (food, clothing, etc.), transportation, places of worship, finances, childcare and school for children.

1st Month

- Once the newcomer(s) immediate needs have been addressed, build the basis for their longer term integration.
- Involve them in decisions about: permanent housing, language training, further education, employment and job training, community involvement and volunteering.
- Support and seek services regarding culture shock, family difficulties, mental health or dental health.

Checklist: First Day			
	Assigned to	Done?	Comments
At the Airport			
Greet newcomer(s) at airport/hotel			
Introduce group and discuss role of sponsors			
Collect confirmation of permanent residence forms and verify information			
First 24 Hours			
Present and go through orientation binder			
Discuss basic safety information in the new home			
Provide small amount of cash to newcomer(s)			
Provide a map of surrounding neighbourhood			
Set up newcomer(s) with a phone			
Bring newcomer(s) to family doctor, walk-in clinic or the Guelph Community Health Centre if immediate medical assistance is required			

Table 1. Sponsor checklist for newcomer(s)' first day.

Checklist: First Month			
	Assigned to	Done?	Comments
Find permanent accommodation			
Have newcomer(s)' language assessed			
Enrol in English language classes (if applicable)			
Consider opportunities for informal language practice			
Discuss educational and employment goals			
Explore employment services and register for training (if applicable)			
Learn to recognize and support newcomer(s) going through culture shock or integration challenges (if applicable)			
Provide supports and references related to mental health (if applicable)			
Plan visit to family doctor (if it hasn't taken place earlier)			
Find dental care provider			
Help newcomer(s) identify and participate in community activities and volunteer			
Visit the local library			
Find opportunities for adults and children to engage in sports and other activities			

Table 2. Sponsor checklist for newcomer(s)' 1st month.

Conclusions:

- Sponsor groups should start preparing well in advance for the arrival of the newcomer(s) they are sponsoring.
- Sensitivity is crucial through the resettlement process, as newcomers may be experiencing a wide range of emotions.
- There are a number of practical issues to address over the first days; however, be mindful to give newcomers time to adjust, form their first impressions, and get to know you.
- Once the newcomer(s) immediate needs have been addressed, support them as they work to adjust to their new environment and make important decisions about their integration goals and process. Don't make decisions for them, but provide them with information and support in making their own choices.

Access the full handbook at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10210/10044>

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