



### Priority



This is a HIGH priority task and should be regularly examined by the group.

### Timing



This task must be done within the first week of arrival.

### Group Participation



The entire refugee sponsoring group should understand what will be said at “the talk”, but only a few members of the group should take part.

### Budget Conversations with Newcomers:

Sponsors must organize a series of meetings to discuss financial matters within the first weeks of arrival.

- Revisit this discussion periodically throughout the sponsorship.
- We recommend using a professional interpreter, if required.
- These conversations may not be comfortable, but are absolutely necessary.

### Every effort must be made to ensure the following points are clearly communicated and understood:

- Role of sponsors as it relates to money.
- Where the money came from, what it is meant to be used for, what it is not for (such as, resettlement in Canada vs supporting family abroad).
- How much, from whom and how they will receive money, expected expenses.
- How the numbers in the budget were calculated.
- Creating a chart of the budget with income and expenses may be a useful.
- Strive for a situation where monthly money goes directly to the newcomers so they can administer it themselves, paying their rent and bills directly etc.

### Phones/Internet:

- Explain costs related to phones and internet such as data, long-distance, phone cards, calling online, etc.
- Research affordable phone plans, internet plans, and cost of phone cards before arrival. You will then be able to discuss the alternatives together to decide the best option.
- Post-paid cell phone systems common in Canada are uncommon in other countries and can cause confusion and frustration (and very high bills!).

### Housing and Rent:

- Explain that utilities are often charged in addition to rent, electric heat etc.
- AURA requires that tenant/renters insurance is provided.



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Toronto ON M4B 1M8

Connect with AURA:



### Employment:

- Explain the requirement of ESL, and that the sponsorship should be viewed as a job – the newcomers' job is to learn English and you are supporting them.
- Explain that you will help them develop job skills/access employment at the end of the sponsorship but that their focus must be on ESL.
- If a newcomer wants to start working, contact the AURA office for approval.

### Banking:

- Tell newcomers you will help them set up a bank account in the first few days.
- Confirm beforehand what documents are needed.
- Explain ATM fees, debit cards, additional charges, non-sufficient funds, bounced cheques etc.
- Cheques, direct deposit or automatic withdrawals may be new for some.
- Involve the newcomer(s) in any decisions made to set these up.

### Credit Cards:

- Do not encourage the acquisition of credit cards.
- If newcomers show interest in credit cards, explain the risks. Explain that as sponsors you are not responsible for any debt incurred.
- If they decide to get a credit card, explore options such as secured accounts or low limits.

### Living on a Budget:

- Explain how to pay bills and the importance on paying them on time. Help with this in the beginning if need be, but ensure that over time they learn to do it independently.
- Public transportation and different options for payment such as monthly pass, tokens, weekend family pass etc... and how this fits in to the budget.
- Discount, second-hand and bargain stores. Help them compare prices between different stores so that they get an idea of where they can save money.
- GST/HST.

### Other Sources:

- You can view all of AURA's info sheets online at: [www.aurforrefugees.org](http://www.aurforrefugees.org), topics include: Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) and Canada Child Benefit (CCB).
- Sources they cannot access: E.g. Social Assistance, Food Banks (if sponsored refugees have to access a food bank it means the sponsors are not fulfilling their responsibilities).

### Additional Considerations:

- **In the first days and weeks, sponsors set the tone for how the sponsorship will proceed. Be consistent from the very beginning.**
- Every individual/family is different, it may be best to talk through basic budgeting principles with the newcomer(s) keeping in mind that they are independent adults who have been managing their affairs for a long time.
- **Complete financial freedom with no accountability could prevent sponsors from fulfilling their responsibilities if problems arise. On the other hand, forcing newcomers to keep every receipt may seem insulting and invasive, leading to unnecessary conflict.**
- Explain which immigration program the newcomers are part of, and the difference in financial assistance between Government Assisted Refugees, Blended Visa Office Referred Refugees, and Privately Sponsored Refugees.

1. Newcomers may gratefully accept even an unreasonably low budget, or may have unrealistically high expectations about the amount of money they will receive.

Communication is key!

2. Consider connecting newcomers with multicultural groups that offer financial literacy services in their own language in addition to your support.

3. Newcomers may wonder why they cannot receive their money in a lump sum. Explain that sponsors are liable to the end and therefore monthly systems are in place.

4. Avoid a dictatorial approach. Develop a system together.