



Priority



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

Timing



This task should be started before the refugee arrives.

Group Participation



The entire refugee sponsoring group should understand the housing situation.

Housing Options:

Housing is one of the most challenging and important of the sponsor group's many responsibilities. Sponsors are contractually bound to provide safe, adequate housing, along with basic furniture and household essentials.

Sponsors should not rent an apartment before a family arrives:

1. The timing of travel is never guaranteed and could change with little notice.
- 2- Family composition may change.
- 3- The newcomers should be involved in the decision of where they will live.

It is understood that in specific circumstances this is not always an option, when that is the case it needs to be discussed with AURA.

Temporary Housing:

- Sponsors must have flexible temporary housing organized so they can respond quickly.
- Temporary housing is often in a community member's home, an unused apartment, or a short term rental.
- Newcomers must have immediate internet access to communicate with family/friends abroad, and an introduction to their new home.
- Every situation is different, but the search for permanent housing post-arrival should begin as soon as possible.
- To provide proof of address needed to access services while newcomers are in temporary housing, create a document entitled 'Rental/Lease Agreement' which includes the complete address, dates, names/contact information of the owner and the 'renters', signed by all adults.



Permanent Housing:

- Do extensive research before arrival so you can rent housing quickly.
- Housing must be within a reasonable distance of the sponsor group and sponsoring parish, so that sponsors can easily provide support.
- Strive to secure housing where sponsored newcomers will be able to remain once the sponsorship period ends.
- AURA highly recommends tenant insurance.
- Explain that utilities are often charged in addition to rent, electric heat etc.
- If possible, have newcomers pay their rent directly.

Signing a Lease:

- Some landlords will require a guarantor to co-sign the lease.
- Sponsor group members should never co-sign a lease, but instead provide a letter from the church stating the guaranteed financial support throughout the year in numbers.
- If the newcomers receive funds from the government, you can provide a print out of their RAP entitlements.
- If a guarantor is required and all other options have been exhausted, contact AURA.

More Guidelines:

Many newcomer families that come to Canada, especially people who have lived in refugee camps, are used to living in close quarters with each other. For them it might not be a problem if several people share one bedroom, especially if that can lower the rent.

Children's Aid Society does not have specific regulations about how many children and which ages/genders can or cannot share rooms.

The sponsorship contract calls for the provision of reasonable housing, meaning that sponsors must ensure that there is sufficient space for a family, even if they are willing to squish.

Contact AURA if you have questions about a specific housing arrangement.
Housing Resources:

Toronto Municipal Code. Occupancy Standards:

http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/1184_629.pdf

Residential Tenancies Act for Ontario:

<http://www.ontario.ca/laws>

Community legal aid clinics for Housing issues:

<http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=cl>

City of Toronto Online: Housing Help Centres:

<https://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=62add4b4920c0410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

If you live outside of Toronto you can check with your local municipality if there is a by-law addressing this issue.

1. If the refugee newcomers are to be settled outside of the sponsoring group's neighbourhood, it must be cleared by the AURA Executive Director.

2. Whenever possible DO NOT rent any housing before the refugee newcomer(s) are scheduled to arrive in Canada.

3. Subsidized housing lists are very long (up to a decade!). If your group anticipates that newcomers will benefit from subsidized housing in the future, help them register as soon as possible.