Introduction

The Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc. (ECDC) is a national refugee resettlement agency funded by the Department of State to resettle refugees through its network of branch offices and affiliate organizations. Since 1991, ECDC has resettled more than 60,000 refugees across the United States. ECDC provides funding, oversight, training and technical support to its network of resettlement sites and is accountable for the successful implementation of resettlement and integration programs.

Co-sponsorship is when an organized group of community members formally partner with a local resettlement agency and provide essential services as well as financial and/or in-kind support over an extended period of time to a refugee family resettling in the community to assist them with integrating and becoming self-sufficient.

Co-sponsorship is a relatively new development in the resettlement field though certain resettlement agencies have been doing it successfully for some years. As interest has grown in having community members actively involved in welcoming and supporting the resettlement of refugees, ECDC has worked to develop a model for co-sponsorship that can be implemented across its network by learning from the work of others and pilot testing the concept with two of its branch offices.

This manual has been designed to prepare co-sponsor teams who have made a commitment to welcome and support a newly arrived refugee family. It is intended as a guide for teams to use as they begin the work of helping a family adjust to their new life in the United States. It is also designed as a tool for ECDC’s network of local resettlement sites when training co-sponsor teams so that messaging and expectations are consistent even though there are many additional details that local resettlement offices will provide to co-sponsorship teams, based on the local context.

Acknowledgements

The material for this manual has been inspired and largely borrowed from Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS)’s Community Co-Sponsorship Program Manual for Refugee Resettlement – February 2021 Edition as well as Church World Service’s Community Sponsorship Manual and related training and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service’s Circle of Welcome Volunteer Guide. ECDC is grateful for the leadership, training, and technical assistance these organizations provide to others interested in learning from their example and for the permission to make use of their materials.

Much gratitude also goes to the staff at ECDC’s African Community Centers—the DC Metro and Denver offices—that were the first to develop co-sponsorship programs and guided the national strategy with their questions, suggestions, and insights from their work on the ground. The first version of this manual and many of the co-sponsorship materials were in fact first drafted by the Denver team.

In addition, our special thanks goes to the Community Sponsorship Catalyst Fund whose round I and round II grants enabled ECDC to develop and pilot its co-sponsorship model at both branch office and national level. Without their support, this manual and related resources would not have been developed.
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Foreword

Thank you for your interest in co-sponsorship for refugee resettlement! Co-sponsorship plays a vital role not only in the successful resettlement but also the eventual integration of newly arrived refugees in the U.S. By providing wraparound forms of support, co-sponsor teams work alongside the local resettlement agency to help the family become self-sufficient and integrated as quickly as possible and provide continued mentorship beyond the initial 90-day resettlement program period.

Your team will be tasked with helping to meet the social, emotional, and material needs of newly arrived families by providing assistance with the sometimes overwhelming process of cultural adjustment and integration. Your commitment of time and energy will help to form potentially life-changing relationships and strengthen networks of support for refugees in your local community. The co-sponsorship program allows you to connect with a new family, to create shared experiences, expand your horizons, strengthen cross-cultural communication skills, and make lasting memories together. Your co-sponsorship team members will have a huge impact on the family with whom you are paired. Your contribution cannot be overstated, as you will be their primary point of contact and support system as they navigate many new aspects of life here in the U.S.

Being a co-sponsor is certainly rewarding, but is also challenging work. It is a serious responsibility that should be entered into thoughtfully. You must be prepared to deal with the unexpected and complex situations that are likely to arise. We want to ensure you feel prepared, ready, and equipped to participate in this program. This manual is a tool to help you gain an understanding of your role and how to maintain healthy boundaries. It is designed to be a resource in the preparation stage and throughout your co-sponsorship experience. It provides general information about refugee resettlement, the role and expectations of co-sponsors, guidelines for effective partnership, and answers to frequently asked questions. Throughout the manual you will find links to additional resources you can draw on to extend your learning.

Although we expect this guide to be very helpful, it won’t contain all the answers or information you will need. Your point of contact at the local resettlement office will provide additional guidance, clarifications and resources. You will also be expected to be a self-directed learner and take the initiative to find out information on your own from contacts in the community as well as ask for help when you need it from the resettlement office. Remember that you are not alone!
Section 1 – Overview of Refugee Resettlement

Who are refugees?
The 1951 Refugee Convention, a key legal document that protects refugees in international law, defines a refugee as: “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” War, tribal, ethnic or religious violence are all common causes for people to flee their country and seek humanitarian protection as a refugee. It is estimated that there are more than 26 million refugees worldwide; the highest number in recorded history.

The global focus on refugees arose in the period during and following World War II when ethnic cleansing and fear of genocide uprooted over 11 million people from their homes. The United Nations was thus created in the hope that a strong international organization could prevent global conflicts in the future. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established soon after to save lives and protect the rights of refugees and displaced people and is the primary point of contact for refugees hoping to be resettled. In order to apply for refugee status, an individual must be outside their country of origin and register with the UNHCR in the country to which s/he fled. UNHCR then goes through a determination process to see if the case meets the criteria and identify the best possible way forward for each individual.

There are three durable solutions that UNHCR considers:

- **Voluntary repatriation**: returning to their country of origin if deemed safe;
- **Local integration**: staying in the host country with opportunities to access economic and social opportunities and benefits; and
- **Resettlement**: beginning a new life in a different country from where they initially sought protection that has agreed to admit them as refugees.

Less than 1% of all refugees are selected to be resettled, and even if they are recommended for resettlement by UNHCR, there is no guarantee it will happen. Individual countries have their own process to admit refugees based on their own criteria and have the right to accept or deny cases referred to them. Individuals spend years in camps or crowded urban areas with limited access to basic needs during this waiting period, which can go on for a very long time.

How do refugees come to the United States?
The United States has been welcoming refugees since before its founding. Providing a beacon of hope and protection to those being persecuted is one of the nation’s founding values. After World War II and the Vietnam War, the U.S. admitted large numbers of refugees in response to global events. In 1980, Congress passed The Refugee Act with bipartisan support, which created the legal framework for the refugee admissions program that exists today. Historically, the U.S. has been a leader in refugee resettlement though is not the only country admitting refugees. Since 1975, Americans have welcomed more than 3.4 million refugees from around the world who have resettled in local communities across all 50 states.

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If UNHCR determines resettlement is the best durable solution for a refugee, it makes a referral to a specific country. If the U.S. is determined to be the preferred country, the case is referred to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Certain individuals may apply directly, without a referral, if they meet specific program criteria. Once the USRAP has received a referral, a second determination process begins, which may lead to either a denial or acceptance to resettle in the United States.

The process of selection and preparation generally takes at least two years and can be three years or more. During this time, refugees are thoroughly screened, receive medical examinations, pass through security background checks, and undergo extensive interviews to determine their eligibility for resettlement.

The steps, in summary, include:

- Initial screening is done by UNHCR to determine eligibility.
- Referral is made by UNHCR to a Resettlement Support Center (RSC).
- Applicants’ biographic and other information is collected and submitted to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
- Security checks are run through a variety of intelligence agencies (including the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, and others).
- If initial review of the background check does not turn up any red flags, an in-person interview is conducted with each refugee applicant before deciding whether to approve him or her for resettlement in the U.S. (conditional approval).
- Health screening is done to prevent those with contagious diseases from entering the U.S.
- Sponsorship assurance is obtained from a U.S.-based resettlement agency (such as ECDC) to determine where in the United States the refugee/refugee family initially will live and which organization will help orient them to life in the United States.
- The case is referred to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to arrange transportation to the United States. (Please note: The cost of travel is a loan that refugees have to repay to IOM.)
- Cultural orientation materials and programs are provided to help refugees learn about life and customs in the U.S. before they travel.
- Additional security clearance is performed prior to travel to check for any changes that might have occurred during the waiting period.
- At the airport, upon departure and arrival, the refugee’s identity is checked to ensure they are the same people that were screened and approved for admission.

Every year, the President, in consultation with Congress, determines the maximum number of refugees to be resettled in the United States, which is called the Presidential Determination. Part of the determination reflects priority areas of the world from which refugees will be admitted. Each year, the Presidential Determination is made publicly available, usually on both the White House and Department of State’s websites.

In addition to the regular USRAP process, called Priority 1, there are additional pathways through which individuals may be admitted to the United States that bypass UNHCR.
• **Special Immigrant Visa (SIV)** – This is a special pathway for Afghan and Iraqi nationals who worked with the U.S. Armed Forces mission in Afghanistan and Iraq as a translator or were employed on behalf of the U.S. government for a period of 2 years. The SIV program is separate from the USRAP, but applicants must go through significant processing and vetting steps. Once approved, SIV recipients are entitled to the same resettlement assistance as refugees. They may, however, book their own travel to the U.S.

• **Priority 2 (P-2)** – This pathway is opened up for groups that USRAP determines are in need of special consideration due to geo-political situations that put them at particular risk of harm. For example, a P-2 designation was recently opened for Afghan nationals who did not meet the time in service to qualify for a Special Immigrant Visa but also worked directly for the U.S. government. It also extended access to those who worked for U.S. government funded programs, U.S.-based nonprofits, or U.S.-based media organizations. Individuals need a referral from the U.S. agency they worked for to be considered. Once approved, these individuals are treated as regular refugees.

• **Humanitarian Parole** – This pathway is open for individuals who may not fit into any of the categories above but are deemed as being in urgent need of resettlement for humanitarian reasons due to an emergency situation. Individuals granted entry with humanitarian parole receive legal status to reside in the U.S. for two years during which time they must adjust their status through asylum or applying for any visa for which they might be eligible. Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, more than 70,000 Afghans were granted entry to the United States based on humanitarian parole. It is a temporary designation and does not guarantee permanent resettlement. The Uniting for Ukraine program opened in April 2022, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine also granted entry, through fiscal sponsorship, based on humanitarian parole.

• **Family Reunification (P-3)** – A refugee who has been resettled in the U.S. can submit an Affidavit of Relationship on behalf of a qualified family member. This expedites the process of resettlement to the U.S. for those who would otherwise follow the regular (P-1) determination process.

The pathways above are all legal means of entry, and the individuals who come through them are highly vetted. This is distinct from **asylum seekers** who flee danger and enter the United States without prior approval and later must legally prove their fear of persecution is real and that resettlement is the only option. Asylum seekers are not entitled to any government services and benefits until they are legally granted asylum through an immigration court and given permission to remain in the U.S.

**Please note:** All of these categories are distinct from **migrants** who voluntarily leave their countries seeking better economic or life opportunities.

**What services are provided to refugees upon arrival in the United States?**
The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) is the agency with the mandate to provide resettlement services to newly arriving refugees. They
contract with nine (9) national resettlement agencies on an annual basis and outline a specific list of services that must be provided during a 30–90 day period of time as part of its Reception and Placement (R&P) program. The Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc. (ECDC) has been one of the nine national resettlement agencies since 1991.

Each arriving refugee is assigned to a refugee resettlement agency that is responsible for welcoming and providing initial services to the refugee upon arrival. The national resettlement agencies all have a network of affiliates in designated locations where they resettle refugees. The agencies allocate cases to their local sites considering a variety of factors such as the refugee’s existing family ties in the U.S., availability of housing, language capacity, etc. There are more than 200 local affiliated resettlement sites across the country.

For a period of at least 30 days and no longer than 90 days after arrival, local resettlement affiliates are required to (1) ensure that each refugee receives the following R&P basic needs support and core services within the specified time frame indicated in the national agency’s Cooperative Agreement; and (2) that provision of such services is well-documented in case files, including ongoing case notes about services provided and client concerns:

- Sponsorship assurance;
- Pre-arrival planning (housing/furniture set up, clothing and supplies);
- Reception (airport pick up and transportation to furnished home);
- Basic needs support for at least 30 days, including the provision of:
  - safe, sanitary, and affordable housing; essential furnishings;
  - appropriate food, food allowances and other basic necessities;
  - necessary clothing;
  - assistance applying for social security cards;
  - assistance in obtaining health screenings and assistance accessing other needed health and mental health services;
  - assistance in obtaining appropriate benefits, other social services, and English language instruction;
  - assistance with enrollment in employment services;
  - assistance registering children in school; and
  - transportation to job interviews and job training.
- Conduct at least two home visits within the first 30 days and a third home visit to permanent housing if the refugee moves from temporary housing within the R&P period;
- Case management, including the development and implementation of individualized service plans during the initial 30-day period;
- Cultural orientation with appropriate language interpretation as needed; and
- Assistance to refugee minors resettled in non-parental family units, as required: initial placement suitability assessments; orientation to U.S. child welfare requirements; assistance regarding guardianship and legal obligations in caring for

The eight other national resettlement agencies include:

- Church World Service,
- Episcopal Migration Ministries,
- HIAS,
- International Rescue Committee,
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services,
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants,
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and
- World Relief.
the child; regular and personal contact; and follow-up assessments and suitability determinations.

The federal funds for the R&P program are distributed on a per capita basis. For each refugee resettled in FY 2023, the State Department provides a one-time grant of $2,375. The use of these funds is as follows:

- **$1,075** – to be spent on direct expenses for each refugee such as rent, furniture, phone, utilities, food, bus passes, car seats, etc. [for a family of four this equals $4,300] – only a small amount of cash is provided directly to adult family members as pocket money;
- **$200** – to be set aside from large families to be used flexibly for single cases or small families at the discretion of the local resettlement office; and
- **$1,100** – to be kept by the local resettlement office to help cover its operating costs.

Since these funds are extremely limited and do not cover the full expenses of newly arriving families, particularly considering the high cost of rent, resettlement agencies are expected to supplement the federal grant with privately raised funds and in-kind contributions to ensure individual and family case needs are met.

Refugees receive work authorization upon arrival and are assisted in finding employment as quickly as possible so that they can become self-sufficient. This is a primary goal of the R&P program but is still difficult to achieve because most refugees enter the U.S. workforce with entry-level jobs, which make it difficult to pay high rent and other living costs initially.

**What support do refugees receive after the R&P period?**

During the R&P period, refugees are enrolled in cash assistance programs for which they are eligible through local social service offices. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), a division of the Department of Health and Human Services, offers Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), which provides a monthly cash stipend for a period of up to eight (8) months, or until they find a job. ORR also has the Matching Grant (MG) program, which families might choose to be enrolled in after the R&P period. MG provides rent, utilities and spending money for family members (adults and children) and assistance in finding employment up to eight (8) months post-arrival. ORR has another program called Preferred Communities (PC) that supports refugee and ORR-eligible populations (including asylees, victims of trafficking, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Amerasians, and Special Immigrant Visa holders) with challenging needs that require special attention, including those with serious medical conditions, women at risk, and elderly refugees.

ORR services also enable refugee families to access mainstream public assistance programs managed by states such as:

- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** – available for families with children under 18 who are income eligible; families receive $300–800 per month depending on family size;
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** – provides monthly cash to meet basic need for food, clothing, and shelter for persons with disabilities, elderly, and those with little or no income;
• **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** – provides individuals and families who are income eligible with a card to be used like a debit card to purchase food at eligible retail food stores; and

• **Medicaid** – provides health insurance coverage for income eligible individuals and families for up to 8 months.

There are other programs that vary by state, which refugees may be eligible for such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Section 8 housing among others. Eligibility and benefits will vary per locality but the resettlement office will be aware of the best programs for individual cases.

The local resettlement office will also likely have additional programs to assist refugee and vulnerable immigrant populations with different aspects of their integration such as education, health, employment, etc. Generally, other community service providers will offer these types of programs, which are not dependent on refugee status or time bound, and refugees should be supported to access these services. The goal of the R&P program is to facilitate enrollment in these types of programs so that services and support can continue to assist newcomer refugees beyond the initial resettlement period.

After one year in the United States, refugees apply to become legal permanent residents and receive their green cards. After five years, they are eligible to apply for citizenship.

### How is the Afghan Placement and Assistance program different?

After the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent Taliban takeover of the country in mid-August 2021, hundreds of thousands of Afghans became in grave danger due to their affiliation with the U.S. mission and/or role as an activist, journalist, or other thought leader. Many SIV holders and applicants were still in the country as well. In what was called Operation Allies Refuge, evacuation flights were organized to bring these individuals to safety. Entry to the U.S. was granted to many of the evacuees through humanitarian parole. To serve these individuals, the Department of Homeland Security set up Operation Allies Welcome to temporarily house Afghan arrivals at Safe Haven military bases around the country while initial processing steps are taken, and individuals are connected to resettlement agencies.

To meet the resettlement needs of these Afghan allies, the Department of State created a new program called the Afghan Placement and Assistance (APA) program. The services APA clients are entitled to are similar to the R&P program, with some differences. While the program period is still not more than 90 days, there are more flexibilities with the APA program in terms of the timing of services delivered. The biggest difference between the R&P program and the APA program is that APA clients are not guaranteed long-term resettlement. Humanitarian parole only entitles them to two years of lawful residency. They must legally file for a change of status (SIV, P-2, asylum, or other) in order to be assured of permanent residency. Currently there is no clear legal pathway for the more than 70,000 Afghans who will need this support, but advocacy efforts are underway calling for an Afghan Adjustment Act, which could make the process clear and expedited for these individuals.

Another key difference with APA clients is that certain steps such as applying for a social security card and employment authorization card as well as completing health screening
and vaccinations should have already been done at the Safe Haven before final resettlement to a local community. Fortunately, legislation was passed at the end of September that enables individuals admitted via humanitarian parole to receive benefits and services from ORR as other refugees do.

The individuals and families who are being resettled through the APA program are different from other refugees in ways that are important to remember:

- Their departure from Afghanistan was extremely sudden and highly traumatic.
- Many family members and friends were left behind.
- In many cases, individuals held high level positions of status, which is what put them at risk. They were not intending to leave the country and were not mentally prepared for resettlement.
- In many cases, individuals have connections to Americans whom they worked with (in addition to Afghan family or friends).
- The experience of living temporarily at the Safe Havens has been difficult.

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<tr>
<th>Learning Resources - The Refugee Resettlement Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The U.S. Department of State</strong> – This website gives an overview of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, including the application and case processing steps that happen overseas and the reception and placement program provided upon arrival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The U.S. Refugee Processing Center</strong> – This website contains information about the nine national resettlement agencies and where they are located and provides updated reports on admissions and arrivals by nationality and state where they are resettled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</strong> – This website contains news about recent trends in global displacement as well as personal stories of refugees. They publish “The Refugee Brief” newsletter that supporters can subscribe to and receive weekly refugee-related media reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colorado Refugee Connect</strong> – This website contains a number of concise videos covering the definition of refugees and the process of refugee resettlement. It also has recommended books and movies that showcase the refugee experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding the Refugee Resettlement Process</strong> – This archived webinar on Switchboard contains links to an animated video, which explains the process using the story of a particular family from flight to arrival and integration.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Refugee Project</strong> – This website contains an interactive map that shows trends in refugee data from 2010–2018.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resettlement &amp; Asylum</strong> – Refugee Council USA’s website clearly explains the difference between refugee and asylum seekers and outlines the steps in each process.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Refugee Storytellers Collective</strong> – The Refugee Congress project features video and written interviews with refugees who tell their story of integration and community contribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salam Neighbor Documentary</strong> – This film provides a first-hand look inside Jordan’s Za’atari refugee camp where 85,000 Syrian refugees are located.</td>
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Section 2 – Responsibilities of Co-sponsors

How does the co-sponsorship program work?

The ‘co’ in co-sponsorship refers to the collaboration between your team and the local resettlement office in sponsoring and resettling a particular refugee family. Your co-sponsor team will take up some of the responsibilities that the resettlement office would normally do and also go beyond by providing additional layers and levels of support to the family. There are four main components to this collaboration:

1. Financial contribution of at least $3,000;
2. In-kind donations to furnish and equip the family’s home;
3. Delivery of core services and mentorship support to the family for 9 months;
4. Documentation and sharing of support provided, progress made, and challenges encountered;

To become a co-sponsorship team, you are required to intentionally self-organize a group of at least seven people, formally apply and submit background checks, attend training, and sign a written agreement specifying your commitment. There will be certain tasks that the assigned case manager or other resettlement office staff must perform (such as intake assessments, home visits, and filing reports) and others that are delegated to your co-sponsorship team (such as setting up the apartment, conducting community orientation, and providing transportation to job interviews). There will be other tasks that you do jointly such as creating a service plan, including a family budget.

Regardless of who performs a service, it is the local resettlement office that will be accountable to ECDC and the Department of State to ensure that all required services were provided to the required standard, completed within the required time frame, and well documented. This manual, the training, and the written agreement are all intended to guide you and clarify what is expected of your team and how you will work with your local resettlement office.

It is essential that there is excellent coordination and communication between your co-sponsorship team and the local resettlement office. Co-sponsorship team members need to be aware of who will do what, when, and how for each service that must be provided so that everyone who is interacting and assisting family members is on the same page. The local resettlement office will have an identified person who will be your primary point of contact for all questions, concerns, and logistical matters. Likewise, your co-sponsorship team must have an identified Team Coordinator who will be your group’s point person and is responsible for sharing information and concerns with the local resettlement office point person to streamline communication.

Co-sponsor teams are required to have a core team of at least seven (7) people (the Team Coordinator + 6 Committee Leads) but may also include additional individuals who participate in the various committees. Core members are defined as those who will have direct, in-person contact with the family your team is matched with whereas support members do work such as fundraising or research behind the scenes. All core team members must all submit background checks and complete all training.
Each committee focuses on key integration pathway. The required committees include:

- Housing and welcome
- Transportation
- Health
- Education
- Cultural adjustment
- Jobs and finance

Organizing the co-sponsorship team in this way ensures that the family’s holistic needs are covered, enables tasks to be divided, and allows team members to provide specialized support in an area that matches their individual skill set and availability. Many tasks, however, will require coordination across committees. That is why it is important that all core team members familiarize themselves with the roles and tasks of each committee so that all team members collaborate effectively. The Team Coordinator is responsible for keeping team members on track and setting up systems of communication and accountability within the team.

One of the greatest contributions that co-sponsors make is providing friendship, guidance, and support for the refugee family or individual well past the 90-day R&P period. Unless the family is enrolled in another program at the local resettlement office, the support provided by staff will formally end after the R&P period, but you, as co-sponsors, will still be expected to provide wrap-around support to help families integrate longer term. The resettlement office contact will continue to support your team and follow the family’s progress until the official end of the co-sponsorship period nine (9) months after the family arrives.

**How is the financial contribution of co-sponsors managed?**

Your co-sponsorship team will need to raise a minimum of $3,000.00, which will be turned in to the local resettlement office at the time when your team is matched with a family and you sign a written agreement. This cash contribution will be used to supplement the limited federal funds the resettlement office receives to help the family your team is matched with meet their basic needs before they become self-sufficient. The office staff use co-sponsorship funds on behalf of the family to pay security deposits, rent, legal fees and other critical expenses that arise after the federal funds are exhausted or for purposes that are not allowed by funders.

As a co-sponsor, your interest and attachment will primarily be to the particular family you are matched with, but it is important to remember that resettlement offices assist a large caseload of refugees who all have different needs and circumstances, and it is impossible to know which families will need additional financial support, and which families will achieve self-sufficiency more quickly. Keep in mind that not all resettled families will be matched with co-sponsorship teams yet all are deserving and entitled to receive the help they might need. This is why ECDC reserves $2,000.00 of your contribution for the matched family and pools the rest ($1,000.00 or more if a team is able to raise beyond the minimum amount) into an emergency fund for other refugee families in the area who have critical needs. This policy is to ensure equity and flexibility to use available funds to help those most in need.
Another important policy that ECDC has put in place to ensure equity, guard against potential conflicts, and protect the relationship between the family and co-sponsorship teams is prohibiting co-sponsor teams from providing money directly to the family or purchasing things/paying bills on their behalf once they arrive. All donations your team raises must flow through the local resettlement office, which will ensure that the cash contributions are spent on behalf of the family and strategically used to meet urgent needs for which there is not another funding source. As a co-sponsor, you must always aim to build the family’s self-sufficiency and be aware of how your power and privilege might affect your perspective. (This is covered more in Section 3).

Since co-sponsorship teams are required to submit their financial contribution as a lump sum at once, when matched with a newly arriving family, you should solicit commitments in advance from people in your network in the form of a pledge. This way you can be confident that you will be able to meet your financial contribution requirement by asking individuals to fulfill their pledge at the time when it is required. Each person who makes a contribution, either by check or online directly to the local office, will receive a tax receipt. Local offices may have specific suggestions or platforms for your team to use in your fund-raising efforts that makes it easy for them to track your team’s contribution in their financial system.

ECDC has created a pledge record template which your team may use to track pledges so that follow-up with donors at the required time is easy. This pledge sheet (or similar overview of all donations collected by your team) should be provided to your local resettlement office point person at the time when your team’s cash contribution is submitted in order to showcase your total contribution and help the finance staff allocate each donation correctly in their accounting system.

Throughout your work with the family, your team may become aware of specific needs that the family has or gaps in their financial capacity. Your team coordinator should raise these issues with the identified CS point of contact at the local resettlement office. The staff will then see what funds are available to help in that circumstance and may elect to use CS funds or not. Your point of contact will share with your team how CS funds have been used but staff ultimately decide on the best use of these funds. Because self-sufficiency is the goal that staff and CS teams are working together towards, it can happen that there is a balance of the $2000.00 at the end of the 9-month CS period. In that case, the balance will be placed into the pot of pooled CS funds and made available to other families for emergency situations. If your team is ready to take on a new match, however, this balance can be rolled forward towards your fundraising requirement for a new family. This is a discussion you will have with your CS point of contact at the local office as you transition at the end of your 9-month commitment.

It can also happen that the family your team is matched with exhausts all their CS funds early on and has other critical needs arise. The family will be eligible also to draw from the pooled CS funds or other emergency funds that the local resettlement office has available. It is important to remember, however, that as a co-sponsor you are not responsible for the family’s financial management. Maintaining healthy boundaries and reasonable expectations around this is critical to being an effective and successful co-sponsor.
What are the tasks that co-sponsors take on?

**Housing and Welcome Committee**

The CS Housing and Welcome Committee assists in gathering household and furniture items, setting up the home, providing ready-to-eat food upon arrival as well as appropriate clothing. They also welcome the family at the airport and support them in understanding how to stay safe and handle issues related to their home.

Currently there is a nationwide housing shortage, and low-income housing is particularly limited. Additionally, because many refugee families arrive without credit scores, prior residence history, or established incomes, landlords are often reluctant to take them on as residents. To address this challenge, and open up opportunities to accommodate the local resettlement office’s caseload, their staff work with a variety of organizations and landlords to secure housing options that would otherwise be difficult to find. Because the local resettlement office is looking for a large volume of units, and because of the numerous stakeholders involved in this process, they will be primarily responsible for securing housing for the arriving family and will manage all financial and contractual matters with the landlord, including signing the lease and paying the security deposit/first month’s rent.

This does not mean that your role is secondary or insignificant! If you have connections to potential landlords or housing arrangements, please share these leads with your contact at the resettlement office. You will also make significant contributions in terms of collecting household furniture and items as well as setting up the apartment. ECDC has a Housing Setup Checklist which indicates what items are needed as well as details about which must be new and which can be gently used. We encourage you to minimize spending on household items by maximizing collection of donations as long as the items are in good condition and with no tears or stains.

To ensure equity, please provide basic items (not too expensive or fancy) and refrain from going much beyond the required list. Remember that the in-kind donations you provide are in addition to your cash contribution. However, because the value of these donations is also significant, we do ask you to track and submit it to your resettlement office contact for reporting purposes.

Your team will typically be matched with a family one–two (1–2) weeks before they arrive. This is when your local resettlement office contact will be able to share specific information about the family in terms of number of members, ages of children, country of origin, etc. The average family typically has 4–5 members, so this can be used for initial planning purposes. It is best to wait to collect clothing items, food items, and items for children until you have met them and have more details about the family.

As noted above, it is important to have the full picture of activities that will be done relating to each integration pathway and who will do them. Be aware that the following activities are required as core services and will be done by staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing and Welcome Activities performed by staff</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrange safe, sanitary and affordable housing</td>
<td>Pre-Arrival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Evaluation and Safety Check conducted</td>
<td>Pre-arrival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-hour Home visit</td>
<td>1 calendar day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The important tasks for the CS Housing and Welcome Committee to handle are outlined below. Starred* items are considered core services. Please note: The list is not exhaustive but is meant to give you a place to start.

### Housing and Welcome Committee Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Arrival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Set up housing with essential furnishings.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Make a photo book with team members’ pictures and names.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Pickup from the airport (with appropriate interpretation).*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Provide culturally appropriate, ready-to-eat food on arrival including baby food as needed.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Provide appropriate seasonal clothing for work, school and everyday use.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Arrival – within 30 days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Help the family understand how to contact their landlord for maintenance requests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Help the family understand how their utilities work and are paid (electricity, gas, water, trash, internet).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teach the family safety features of the apartment such as smoke detectors (how to change batteries) and fire extinguishers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teach the family how to keep their apartment clean (what tools and products to use where).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Help the family learn how to use appliances and do laundry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Orient the family to other aspects of the apartment complex (mail boxes, trash/recycling, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teach family the difference between important mail and ‘junk mail.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Arrival – beyond 90 days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Help the family deal with issues that may arise with their housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Help the family search for other housing options, in case they want or need to move.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transportation Committee

The CS Transportation Committee coordinates transportation needs and shows the family how to access and navigate public transportation as well as apply for a driving license.

Newly arriving families have many vital appointments that they will need help to get to, especially during the first month. It is time consuming and logistically challenging for local resettlement office staff to provide all needed transportation so they often use a mixture of volunteers and Uber pickups to help. The Transportation Committee will take over this role completely, managing your team’s availability and scheduling transportation to specific appointments. The Transportation Committee Lead will work with the Team Coordinator in tandem with the local resettlement office point person to maintain a schedule of appointments ahead of time and line up drivers for each appointment. It is important to have enough drivers who are available during daytime hours to make this possible. Please note: Any team members who signs up to provide transportation are considered core team
members who must submit a background check and attend training. All drivers must also have a valid driver’s license and auto insurance.

A key role of the Transportation Committee is to assist the family in becoming self-sufficient with transportation as the family becomes more accustomed to living in the U.S. Therefore, the Committee’s role will change over time and includes teaching the family how to ride the bus and how to arrive at their appointments on-time. The local resettlement office may also provide initial bus passes through R&P money. Learning how to move around independently is a critical piece of the family’s adjustment and integration process. It is not expected or appropriate for Transportation Committee members to continue driving family members around after the initial 90-day period.

Many newcomers will also eventually want to learn how to drive. Once they are able to get their permit and start practicing, your help facilitating and supporting this process will be critical as the family works to become self-sufficient. Please note: Be careful to not push this too soon. Buying a car is a serious investment, and the cost and decision should be weighed equally with other important factors. However, one thing that you can definitely do is to help the adult family members apply for state IDs at the DMV.

The important tasks for the Transportation Committee to handle are outlined below. Starred* items are considered core services. Please note: The list is not exhaustive but is meant to give you a place to start.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transportation Committee Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Arrival</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Recruit transportation volunteers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Create a sign-up system to easily post and track client transportation needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Become familiar with local public transportation maps/routes, including Google Maps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Arrival – within 30 days</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Provide transportation to core service appointments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Health screening and immunizations*;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Social security card application*;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Public benefits application*;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o School enrollment for children and ESL for adults*;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Job interviews*; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Cultural orientation and employment orientation at local resettlement office*.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teach family how to use bus/public transportation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teach basic safety rules of the road and how to walk around safely (i.e. using crosswalks).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Assist in obtaining donated bicycles, if appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Help adult family members get appointments at the DMV and obtain state ID cards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Arrival – beyond 90 days</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teach family members how to read a map and follow directions to new places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Share information about how to obtain a driver’s license.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Assist with studying for driving test and arranging to take the driving test.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Health Committee**

The CS Health Committee assists the family in finding primary health providers, tracking and attending follow-up medical and dental appointments as well as teaching them how to stay healthy and safe in the American context (i.e., nutrition, hygiene, vaccinations, identity protection, etc.).

The local resettlement office is responsible for scheduling the two initial health screenings and enrolling those eligible in Medicaid and Medicare. Members of the Health Committee assist the family to follow up and understand the next steps after these initial health screenings and to care for their ongoing health. The health care and insurance system in the U.S. is complicated and can be overwhelming. From understanding the basics of their insurance to discussing preventative health, committee members help and support will enable the family to begin accessing needed services and advocating for their own healthcare needs and rights.

Members of this committee may accompany family members to medical appointments. **Please note:** It is critical to remember that health care providers should (1) use interpretation services and translated materials; and (2) all communication should be provided directly to the family members. Local resettlement office staff should be able to provide a list of preferred providers that have experience serving refugee clients.

In addition to tracking medical appointments and follow-up actions, Committee members should explain different aspects of health promotion in the United States that may be unfamiliar such as brushing your teeth and annual preventative screenings. This may involve potentially unfamiliar or awkward conversations, but hopefully it will ultimately lead to long-term health benefits. Similarly, addressing the affects and effects of mental health and potential trauma can be challenging and may be seen as taboo in some cultures, but it is likely something that family members will be dealing with in different ways and will need care. Attention. Members of the Health Committee need to have strong awareness of trauma-informed practices and the ability to maintain appropriate boundaries and maintain confidentiality, even more than other committees.

The important tasks for the Health Committee to handle are outlined below. **Starred** items are considered core services. **Please note:** The list is not exhaustive but is meant to give you a place to start.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Committee Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Arrival</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Find out the preferred providers for refugees (the local resettlement office will share) for different aspects of care (primary, urgent, dental, vision, mental health/trauma).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Learn the interpretation services and other support available at the preferred providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research Medicaid and Medicare benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Arrival – within 30 days</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Follow up health screening and vaccination appointments.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Help the family understand the basics of Medicaid or Medicare.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teach family how to call 911 in case of an emergency.

Show family members where the nearest urgent care facilities and hospitals are and how to get there.

Assist in scheduling and following through with ongoing medical appointments.

Help family understand their rights in a medical context such as interpretation.

Help family to set up a home first aid kit with basic items.

Explain the importance of preventative health practices such as teeth brushing and regular check ups.

Have conversations about mental health and provide referrals as needed.

Post-Arrival – beyond 90 days

Help family members track and keep medical appointments.

Do check-ins about health condition of family members to assess for additional medical needs or referrals.

Teach family about nutrition and how to make healthy food choices.

Encourage family members to be physically active and find safe and comfortable ways to get exercise.

Education Committee

The CS Education Committee assists parents/guardians in enrolling children in school and following up on children’s learning as well as supporting adults to access English language and job training classes.

Enrolling children in school and adults in ESL classes are core services that are required to be done during in first month. Please note: Registering children in school does depend on the health screenings and vaccinations being complete as well as the family being settled in permanent housing, which, if not in place, can at times delay the registration process. The resettlement office staff will have established providers and points of contact to facilitate these steps. Members of the Education Committee will help ensure that these processes are completed properly and assist the family with follow-up actions so that they start and continue in their educational activities. Members of this committee will help the family become familiar with how to transport themselves to school/classes, complete additional forms, use required technology, etc.

Learning English is a key skill that all family members will need in order to feel comfortable and self-sufficient with daily activities in the U.S. Education Committee members can support English language acquisition through conversation, vocabulary review and tutoring. Reinforce the lessons being taught in their educational programs and supplement that by helping family members practice words or phrases they need in daily life situations based on their needs (i.e., preparing for an upcoming appointment). Please Note: Keep your interactions fun and enjoyable. Focus on communication success and do not stress perfection.

Other tips for communicating across a language barrier include:

- Avoid using an interpreter except when it is critical.
- When using an interpreter, remember to still face and direct your communication to the person with whom you are speaking. Do not turn your attention and focus to the interpreter (i.e., “Tell her that...”).
- Avoid asking children to interpret.
• Do not speak about someone in front of that person, assuming s/he can’t understand. Often oral comprehension is greater than you might guess.
• Use appropriate body gestures and pictures to help make meanings clear.
• Speak slowly and clearly (not loudly).
• Simplify your language. Avoid slang and figures of speech.
• If you are not understood, try again using different words.
• Write messages down. For some people, reading is easier than listening due to accents and speed of speaking. Also, the person may have family or friends who can help them read and reinforce the message later
• Try using translation apps but be aware that they are not always correct.
• Avoid asking “yes” or “no” questions, especially “Do you understand?” Ask the person to repeat what they understood to check for understanding.

The education system in the U.S. and cultural expectations around parental involvement in education is something else the family will need mentorship to understand. In many cultures, it is seen as disrespectful or uncommon for parents to ask questions of teachers or to be involved in the dynamics of the school. It may be necessary to explain that parents are encouraged to be more involved here. You can also help teachers and school staff to be aware of potential language barriers, cultural differences, and specific needs of the family.

The list below outlines important tasks for the Education Committee to work towards. **Starred** * items are considered core services. **Please note:** The list is not exhaustive but is meant to give you a place to start.

### Education Committee Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Arrival</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn the process for enrolling children in the public schools and what support is available for new families.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for affordable childcare options for young children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify individuals who can help tutor children and adults.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Arrival – within 30 days</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assist with registering children for school.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help gather needed school supplies and identify low-cost sources for needed materials.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist adults to enroll in English classes.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help family members access transportation to get to their classes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help family understand children’s school meal options for breakfast and lunch at school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Arrival – beyond 90 days</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help family learn to track school calendar, meetings and events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for parents and coach them in how to partner with their child’s school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist children and adults with homework.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have regular conversations in English with family adults and children to build their language skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cultural Adjustment Committee

The CS Cultural Adjustment Committee assists the family in learning how to accomplish daily tasks and take full advantage of services in the community (i.e., finding the grocery
store, library, parks, etc.) as well as teaches elements of American culture and life that they might need help with (i.e., using appliances, accessing technology, etc.).

Cultural Orientation (CO) is a required early resettlement service. CO is provided at various stages during a newcomers’ resettlement journey. Overseas, Cultural Orientation is conducted at the Resettlement Support Centers. In the U.S., Cultural Orientation continues at a local Resettlement Agency and within the community. CO provides newcomers with the vital knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to adapt to their new lives and achieve self-sufficiency. The local resettlement office has an obligation to provide cultural orientation on a set list of topics within 90 days. The Cultural Adjustment Committee lead should accompany the family to these sessions in order to hear what is explained and able to reinforce and supplement this information. Some topics reviewed in these lessons include the role of the resettlement agency, public assistance, refugee rights and responsibilities, English and education. Throughout the 9–month sponsorship period, your team should supplement these lessons and reinforce key Cultural Orientation messages. The Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange (CORE) provides resources for these sessions. For more information on what topics are covered in Cultural Orientation, refer to CORE’s CO Objectives and Indicators.

CORE has recently developed additional resources specifically designed for co-sponsors and others, outside of resettlement agency staff to use when reinforcing cultural orientation messages with newcomers. CORE’s CO toolkit for community partners and sponsors teaches sponsors how to incorporate key CO messages while providing direct resettlement services to newcomers during their first 90 days. The toolkit provides guidance on how to incorporate CO messages into 25 early resettlement services. Integrating CO throughout the service period will help newcomers retain the information that is essential to adapt to their new lives and achieve self-sufficiency. Watch CORE’s webinar for more information on how to use the CO toolkit for community partners and sponsors.

The work of the Cultural Adjustment Committee cuts across all others because the family will be navigating culture in all integration pathways. As family members begin working, going to school, and adjusting to life in the U.S., they will inevitably experience some culture shock. Members of this committee will help the family with the transition by engaging in social activities that help explain and teach many of the nuances in American culture. Some examples may include visiting libraries, parks and museums. With time, Cultural Adjustment Committee members can also explain the norms of a typical workplace environment such as arriving on-time, appropriate communication with colleagues, and how to request days off. This committee’s list of tasks is the most flexible and will depend on the interests and needs of the family.

Please Note: Be patient when explaining cultural nuances and make it a two-way learning process. Ask family members to explain how things are done in their culture and compare. Remember that both you and the family you are matched with will make cultural mistakes so try to keep a sense of humor about it. Questions are likely to come up as family members navigate different daily life situations, but they will probably not always be confident or comfortable to ask, so try to be as proactive in explaining as much as possible. Many things that are automatic to you will be completely new and potentially confusing to the family.
Information should be shared in small doses and repeated to help the family from being overwhelmed.

It is important to note that your team’s role is to provide information to make the family more comfortable but not to push the family to adopt American culture. Remember that their culture is a huge part of their identity, just like our culture is for us, and may be the strongest link they have to their family and their past so treat these discussions with care. Also pay attention to your privilege and the socio-economic differences between your situation and that of the family with whom you are matched. Avoid taking family members to expensive events, places or activities that they would not be able to access with limited income. For example, when taking the family to the grocery store, consider where food stamps are accepted and prices are low, not your favorite store.

Transitioning to a new culture and community can be isolating and lonely. The family has left behind their home and social support network of family, friends and community. The co-sponsor team plays a big role in offering social support to newly arrived families. In the midst of all the appointments and tasks to help the family with, remember that your role is also to help the family relax, feel connected, and have fun through social activities.

The list below outlines important tasks for the Cultural Adjustment Committee to work towards. Starred* items are considered core services. Please note: The list is not exhaustive but is meant to give you a place to start.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Adjustment Committee Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Arrival</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research the culture and traditions from which the family comes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gather maps and other information about your state/local community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Find out about where details of free local events are publicized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Arrival – within 30 days</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attend cultural orientation session at resettlement office.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Give a ‘welcome to the community’ tour, pointing out local landmarks and places you can go together in the coming weeks/months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Schedule a fun outing or activity once a month – local park, museum, zoo, library, farmers market, sporting event, local event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Explain the importance of arriving on-time or early for appointments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Explain relevant dress code and workplace norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Arrival – beyond 90 days</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Help family prepare for changes in seasons and procure seasonally appropriate clothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Explain the meaning of different holidays celebrated in the U.S. and invite the family to participate in special events (i.e., parades, fairs) if they are interested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do art/craft projects together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Take turns teaching each other how to make traditional dishes from your respective cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Play different children’s games – teach each other your favorites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Listen to each other’s favorite type of music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Revisit favorite places and activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Jobs and Finance Committee**
The CS Jobs and Finance Committee supports employable individuals to understand how to apply for jobs, network for employment, maintain a job once employed, set up a bank account, pay required bills, establish good credit, and plan for future goals.

The primary goal of self-sufficiency is chiefly attained through employment. Refugees enter the U.S. with legal status that permits them to legally work. The process of obtaining their social security cards and Employment Authorization Documents (EAD), however, at times can delay their entry into the workforce. Even so, staff and co-sponsors should help work-eligible adults start looking and preparing for work right away. The majority of the family’s financial assistance will end after the 90-day (R&P) period with the exception of ongoing federal public benefits programs. Thus, in order for financial self-sufficiency to be attained, most adults in the family will need to find a job. The local resettlement office may have employment specialists, recommended job training programs, or existing relationships with employers that might be recommended for family members. Staff will also assist with following up with Social Security and EAD cards. Members of the Jobs and Finance Committee should collaborate to follow up on any referrals made and find additional resources or leads that could be a good fit.

It is important to recognize that even though refugees might come with a college degree, professional training and previous work experience, most overseas experience, and especially qualifications, do not easily transfer to the U.S. This can be very disappointing for family members, but they should be encouraged to start their first job quickly. This allows them to establish job history, engage with a workplace environment, and begin to develop financial independence. As such, the local resettlement office does not spend extended time searching for the ‘perfect job’. Instead, they focus on finding entry-level jobs, such as at a grocery store, gas station, restaurant, or in the service industry. Please note: It is important that co-sponsor teams understand and reinforce this message and help the family set both short- and longer-term goals for employment.

Members of the Jobs and Finance Committee should be aware that for many refugee families, the mother will not have worked outside the home. Additionally, it is also possible that she may have limited or no formal education. The male head of household may not want his wife to work. As a co-sponsor, it is important to emphasize that in the U.S. most women work outside the home and that the additional salary plays a role in becoming self-sufficient. (This is covered more in **Section 3**.)

Members of the Jobs and Finance Committee play a big role in assisting with job interview preparation, transportation to interviews, and appropriate workplace clothing. Remember to keep the goal of self-sufficiency in mind and teach him/her how to go about finding a job rather than doing that for the individual no matter how slow or frustrating it may be.

Newly arriving families will have different backgrounds and competence related to managing finances. Some might not have experience using banks, while others may have worked in a bank. Finance and Job Committee members will need to assess the family’s need for support in handling their finances. The family is responsible for paying off their travel loan to IOM and will need to learn to pay bills on time. You will play a role in building the family’s skills in financial literacy, including budgeting and setting financial goals, but
remember, start small as the family’s financial resources will be near the poverty-line for quite some time. The local resettlement office will likely have a budgeting worksheet and other resources to share that will help you. **Please note:** It is the team’s role is to provide guidance and advice but not to pay bills for the family or tell them how to spend their money.

The list below outlines important tasks for the Jobs and Finance Committee to work towards. **Starred** items are considered core services. **Please note:** The list is not exhaustive and is meant to give you a place to start.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs and Finance Committee Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Arrival</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify potential jobs and job training programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Arrival – within 30 days</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help adult members create resumes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice job interview skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist with job applications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide transportation to job interviews and/or job training.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure individuals know how to use public transportation to reach their place of work on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist with opening a bank account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach budgeting skills and how to track expenses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Arrival – beyond 90 days</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide mentorship related to employment and assist with researching next steps to advance career growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to build financial literacy skills – follow up on budgeting and expense tracking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the importance of credit history and how to build good credit.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**How does the role of co-sponsors change over time?**

The CS committee task lists above are divided into pre-arrival, 30-days post-arrival, and beyond 90-days post arrival to help you see what activities need to be done when and how the support will evolve with time. Remember that most of the core services of the R&P program are completed within the first 30 days, and at 90 days the case file is officially closed. This time is very busy and will pass quickly. Your Team Coordinator and the local resettlement office point person will be in frequent contact to make sure all goes as smoothly as possible. In the beginning, there will be many scheduled appointments and tasks to complete, but it is also important to include some social and fun activities as well. These facilitate cultural learning, social bonding, and also relaxation.

Below is an example of a family schedule during their second week in the United States. While this is certainly on the “busier” side, it provides a good example of the variety of appointments and tasks that need to be completed in the early stages of resettlement as well as cultural learning activities, like the ones highlighted in blue.
After 90 days, the core services will be complete, and the family should be able to accomplish many daily life tasks without assistance. It is important that everyone in your team encourages this independence and promotes self-sufficiency by assisting the family to use public transportation to reach appointments, for example. There may still be situations where CS team members may provide transportation, but it should not be every appointment. Additionally, do not tack on several errands after appointments as this can create an expectation for the future. Refugee families need to recognize that they also have to make plans in advance with your team and proactively ask for help when they need it, recognizing that your team members are not available 24/7. There may be fewer scheduled appointments, but it is still important to have regular time with the family to follow up on their progress and provide continued mentorship in all areas.

By the sixth month, there should be an even greater shift towards self-sufficiency as family members should have earned income. By supporting the family to carefully budget and be responsible for expenses from the outset, using their cash assistance wisely and benefits like SNAP, and eventual income will help prepare them for independence. Having regular conversations about managing finances are critical in this process. At this stage there will likely be much more opportunity for social activities, but it is also important to continue to focus on the family’s integration goals and prepare them for the official end of the co-sponsorship period.

In many cases you will form bonds of friendship with the family that will last beyond the nine-month co-sponsorship period. That is wonderful if it happens, but teams must be careful to keep such an expectation in check. It is important that there is an official end to the relationship that gives the family and co-sponsorship team members a choice about how they want to continue interacting. Boundaries and privacy are important on both sides.
of the relationship from the beginning, and having a clear end to the co-sponsorship relationship can enable a mutually chosen friendship to continue afterwards, if desired.

Throughout the process, the local resettlement office point of contact will be there to follow how things are going and support your team to stay on track. Please remember: You are not alone and be sure to raise questions or concerns as they arise. At 2 and 9–month milestones, staff from the resettlement office will visit with the family to check on their progress, get feedback on the co-sponsorship experience, and make revisions to the resettlement plans if needed. An online survey will also be sent to the co-sponsor Team Coordinator to collect feedback as well at these intervals.

**How do co-sponsors track and report their activities?**

The refugee resettlement program is highly bureaucratic and requires considerable documentation, which must be available to monitors from ECDC and the Department of State. This is why one of your key responsibilities as co-sponsors is providing the local resettlement office with case notes— with dates— about your activities, which will serve as evidence that the required services were delivered. The case manager also maintains a checklist that tracks the date that services were delivered.

Each local resettlement office will have its own way of requesting co-sponsors to submit documentation, and it is important that you follow the instructions provided related to tracking hours, sharing calendars, and submitting case notes. However, below is some basic guidance and examples of what should be included in case notes. You will be writing case notes in order to document activities and progress with the family. Case notes do not use first-person or pronouns like “I” or “me.” Instead, each sentence should begin with a past-tense verb. Please don’t document every detail, simply summarize the main points.

Case notes should include:
- Who was involved (Names of family members who were present)
- Date of interaction (phone call, home visit, appointment, etc.) and what was done that day

Case notes may include, if applicable:
- Things that were learned
- Challenges that came up or concerning behavior
- Things to remember or take care of before the next meeting
- Future plans

Case notes should NOT include:
- Names of other people who are not in the family. To protect their privacy, can say instead “Met with Danielle and her neighbor”

**Example 1:**
*Met with Danielle in her home. Practiced kitchen vocabulary.*

**Example 2:**
*Met Danielle in her home. Went together to the Museum of Nature and Science. Introduced vocabulary related to the museum. Practiced taking the bus. Used the public transport app*
together to find out which bus to take, and what time it would arrive. Noticed Danielle is unsure which stop to get off the bus at because of her limited English. She mentioned needing more school clothing for her kids. Encouraged her to contact her case manager regarding clothing. Next meeting will be 11/13/21.

ECDC has a template for case notes that we recommend your team use as a shared online document so that all team members can contribute and see that is happening. This will also make it easier for the notes to be shared with the local resettlement office. Regardless of the internal system your team uses, the Team Coordinator must take the responsibility of formatting the case notes and submitting them to the local resettlement office point person. Even though different team members will be taking the lead on various activities, the information should come to the resettlement office point person from only the Team Coordinator.
Section 3 – Partnering with Refugees: Tips for Success

A large part of being successful in partnering with refugees is about practicing cultural humility, setting healthy boundaries, using a strengths-based approach, being trauma-informed, and recognizing power and privilege. Many of the pitfalls that your co-sponsorship team could fall into are due to a struggle to uphold these frameworks. It takes conscious effort and accountability to guard against traps such as over-helping, leading on decision making for the family, or judging the family’s choices. A successful co-sponsorship team will need to discuss these issues beforehand and throughout the co-sponsorship period, staying alert for signs that that their actions might be having unintended consequences.

Practice cultural humility

It can be difficult to know all the ways that our behavior is influenced by the culture that we grew up in. It is often not until we step outside our own culture that we see it clearly. Often what we think of as “normal” is really just a reflection of culture. It can be helpful to start building awareness of key elements of American culture and how it differs from other cultures around the world.

Below are a few areas where you are likely to encounter cultural differences.

- **Time orientation:** Americans are very conscious about time and frequently use the expression “time is money.” Being prompt and respecting agreed upon appointment times is very important. In other cultures, time is more fluid and relationships are prioritized. This might mean that engaging in conversations, family activities or social obligations are more important than keeping appointments and that events do not have clear start and end times.

- **Gender dynamics:** Americans promote gender equity with both men and women often working outside the home and taking an active part in childrearing as well as household tasks like cooking. In many other cultures, gender roles are much more traditional, with the father responsible for providing for the family by working outside the home while the mother is expected to stay home and care for the children and household. Expected behavior and allowed activities for boys and girls are often similarly segregated with girls helping their mothers and boys being given more freedom to engage in sports and other play activities.

- **Independence:** American culture values the individual and expects individuals to be independent and self-sufficient. Other cultures value the collective and expect group members who are able to provide for others. For many refugees and immigrants, sending money back home to care for other family members is a priority even when they may be struggling with a limited income themselves. A collectivist value can also show up in refugees not outwardly showing the level of gratitude some Americans expect because they believe that those with more are obligated to help those with less.

- **Diversity:** The U.S. population includes people from many different racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. In many countries that refugees
come from, this is not the case. It can be unusual and uncomfortable for some newcomers to interact with groups of people with whom they previously had no experience and about whom they may have prejudices. Please note: Here are several definitions of the word prejudice: (1) preconceived judgment or opinion; (2) an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge; and (3) an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics.

- **Family status:** There is more acceptance in the U.S. of individuals making their own choices about whom to marry and if and when to have children than in many other countries. A person’s marital and family status are considered personal in American culture, yet it may be one of the first questions asked or information shared in other cultures when meeting someone new. Also, there are little to no rights for LGBTQ people in many countries around the world. Meeting openly gay individuals and gay couples with children may provoke strong reactions in individuals from countries where homophobia is common.

- **Hierarchy:** Americans value equality, and individuals are encouraged to speak up and express their views regardless of their position in society. This can be seen in how bosses and subordinates interact in the work place as well as how parents and children interact at home. In many other cultures, hierarchy is much more important, and there are rules about who is allowed to speak when and in what order. Respecting people in positions of authority and not questioning them is important in these cultures.

- **Honesty:** Americans place a high value on telling the truth and being honest. In other cultures, preserving relationships and avoiding shame are more important than telling the truth. People from these cultural backgrounds may not correct misunderstandings or say ‘yes’ to things that they don’t agree with to avoid embarrassing or hurting themselves or the other person.

When engaging cross-culturally, it is important to remember the concept of cultural relativism. This is the view that all beliefs, customs, and ethics are relative to its own social context. One culture is not “better” than another. They each come with their own unique historical perspective and should be understood on their own terms. By understanding others’ perspectives, you can learn to appreciate and respect differences.
**Cultural humility** is a term that was first used in the healthcare field and was later adapted for social work and other fields. It encourages personal reflection and growth with respect to cultural differences. The acronym HUMBLE can be used to remember the key elements of cultural humility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Humility (HUMBLE) Model</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H: Humble about the assumptions you make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U: Understand your own background and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M: Motivate yourself to learn more about the other person’s background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Begin to incorporate this knowledge into your work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: Life-long learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: Emphasize respect and negotiate service plans</td>
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</table>

When you encounter cultural differences when interacting with the refugee family with whom you are matched, remember that you need to allow the family to make cultural adjustments at their own pace. You might have a strong reaction to behavior that you perceive as sexist, homophobic, racist, or entitled, but try to maintain a less judgmental point of view. You can help the family’s adjustment by explaining how things are different in the U.S., inquiring about the family’s practices and beliefs, and simply exposing the family to different beliefs and practices by being yourself. With time, you might see some changes or you might not. Respect for the family, their culture, and their individual adjustment process is key.

**Please note:** Proselytizing is strictly prohibited. Religion is a core part of many peoples’ identities, and questioning or suggesting that they should change this aspect of who they are will be taken as being disrespectful and may negatively impact your relationship with the family. You may connect the family to others from their nationality and faith background, if they wish, but do not invite them to attend services or events at your place of worship. By doing so, the family might feel that your help is contingent upon joining your faith community. You must reassure them that, regardless of your religious affiliation, you will support and respect their own choices on how to worship. Some refugees will not practice any religion, and you also must not assume they will or imply that they should.

**Set healthy boundaries**

Even before beginning your active role as a co-sponsor, individually and as a team you should consider how you will set and maintain healthy boundaries. Your role is not to solve every problem for the family but rather to equip them with skills to be self-sufficient. It can be easy to fall into over-helping, and this can lead to burn-out on your part and dependency on the part of the family. This is why setting boundaries from the beginning is important. Any interaction or behavior sets a precedent for the future, and trying to impose a boundary later on in the relationship can cause conflict and frustration for both sides of the relationship.
You have agreed to be a co-sponsor because you have a compassionate heart and a desire to help. This motivation is critical, but it can also lead you astray if you lose sight of the bigger picture. Actions like preparing meals for the family, paying bills, doing house cleaning and/or shopping, and managing appointments with minimal family participation may meet an immediate need, but it creates an unhealthy reliance on the co-sponsor. It is okay and important to say “no” to the family sometimes. When considering what action to take, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this something that they could do themselves? (even if they will struggle)
- Is there a way I can prepare them to do this for themselves in the future?
- Is this really needed?

Keep in mind the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency and recognize that supporting the family to struggle through difficult processes on their own is in their best long-term interest. While this may be hard to experience, think of this like lifting weights and getting stronger. If someone lifts the weight for you, while getting over the immediate hurdle, you build the muscle strength you need to be able to independently lift the weight or become independent. Weight training and building muscle may be difficult, but over time it becomes easier as you acclimate and adjust. The same is true for teaching family members to do tasks themselves. They will struggle in the beginning but with time it will get easier and they will have greater skills and confidence.

Areas where boundaries are particularly important include the following:

- **Money** – Never lend, borrow from, or gift money to the family. All donations raised to be spent on behalf of the family should go through the local resettlement office. Avoid taking the family to expensive places that they would not be able to afford.

- **Time** – Be clear about when you will be available and the times that are off-limits (i.e., work and family time). Plan regular check-in times and put them on the family calendar so they know what to expect.

- **Communication** – Not all team members need to provide their phone number to the family. It is best to have requests for assistance come to the Team Coordinator who can make a determination about how to handle the issue and who might be available to help. It is not uncommon for a refugee family to make the same request to multiple people, and if they get different answers, this can create confusion and conflicts.

- **Home visits** – You do not need to give out your address and should think carefully before inviting the family to your home. It might reinforce your relative privilege and wealth and lead to feelings of discomfort on both side. Remember as well to respect the family’s privacy and do not assume you can just stop by unannounced. They need downtime without visitors to help them cope with the stress of the transition.
• **Child care** – Co-sponsors are not permitted to transport or be alone with children without an adult present. You must, therefore, say “no” to requests to provide child care or babysit.

• **Transportation** – As described in the Transportation Committee section, it will be necessary to set boundaries around driving the family to their appointments after the initial weeks and instead to promote independence by teaching them how to successfully use public transportation.

One of the common causes of boundary issues and burn–out is unrealistic expectations. You and your co-sponsor team members may have your own ideas on how events and activities will go and what success will look like for the family. For many different reasons, the work of supporting newcomers is often unpredictable and complicated. It is important to recognize that (1) the family will always have unmet needs; and (2) it is not your role as co-sponsors to meet all their needs. You are only asked to do what you can within the parameters of the program while maintaining a healthy balance with the rest of your life responsibilities. Remember, too, that newly arriving families will have different reactions to co-sponsors. Some may take all your advice and risk becoming dependent. Others may want to do everything on their own, even when things seem overwhelming. Some families will be open to genuine friendship and others will not be interested. The family may even decide to move out the area after a period of time. These outcomes are not signs of failure on behalf of the co-sponsorship team. Try to enter into this work with patience, openness, and flexibility, recognizing that you are not in control of the outcomes. Remember that your lifestyle and choices will be different from those of the family and do not to impose your view of “success” or “doing well.”

As a team, it is important that you collectively and individually put mechanisms in place to practice self-care and prevent burn out. Have regular meetings to discuss expectations and boundaries and honestly share times when boundaries have been challenged. Create space for discussing frustrations or difficulties so that they can be constructively dealt with. **Please remember:** Celebrate small successes. It will take time before a refugee family reaches their potential and achieves the level of economic success that you may wish for them. Take time to recognize small goals that have been accomplished and know that you are making a difference.

It may happen that your co-sponsorship team hears complaints from your family about the resettlement office staff or questions why certain actions are not taken by the staff. You and/or the family may have expectations of the resettlement office that are unreasonable. **Please note:** Respect the role and responsibility of the local resettlement office and recognize that their capacity is limited. If there are points of concern, encourage the family to speak directly to their case manager or raise it with your point of contact. Everyone has the family’s best interests in mind and needs to be on the same page and communicate consistent messages. **Please remember:** Co-sponsors should never do or say anything that would undermine the trust that the family has in the local resettlement office.

**Use a strengths–based approach**

Refugee families have been through extraordinary hardship and challenges, but are not to be pitied. Both adults and children in the family must be respected for who they are, their
lived experience, culture, and individuality. When they arrive in the U.S. not knowing the language, culture, and systems, they will need help but this does not mean they are helpless.

Sometimes co-sponsors like to use phrases like “adopt” or “my” that liken their relationship to the family they are helping to a parental one. This is strongly discouraged. It is disrespectful to envision refugees as children. Using a strengths-based approach means recognizing the capability and independence of the family. The co-sponsorship relationship - as a team and individually - should be viewed as a partnership.

- From a strengths-based perspective, look at refugees as resilient, hard-working, motivated, and capable of great success.
- Newly arriving refugees will need help to regain control over their lives after what may have been a long period of uncertainty.

Co-sponsors help refugees the most by showing confidence in their ability and insisting that they do what they are capable of doing. This might be counterintuitive, but it is really a sign of respect and a step towards empowerment. Please remember: Your words and actions can overtly or inadvertently send a message to family members about how you perceive them. If you always do tasks or speak for them, they will see that you do not believe they are capable to do it themselves and that can influence their own self-perception and growth. Try to consciously remind the family of their resilience and successes.

Empowerment is the process of helping individuals or groups become stronger and more confident to make choices that exercise control over one’s life and rights. Self-sufficiency is the goal of the resettlement program, and this involves much more than just being able to pay rent and bills. It means that a refugee family has the skills, knowledge and resources to accomplish daily life tasks and overcome challenges along the way. It is the role of co-sponsors and the resettlement office staff via deliberate and thoughtful mentoring to help the family gain the know-how to become self-sufficient.

It can be easy for co-sponsors to do things for the family instead of teaching and supporting them to do the things themselves. It takes more time and patience, but it is necessary for long-term success. Review the tips and the reflection questions shared in the previous section on boundaries. Remember that empowering others is difficult. You will not always get it right and might find yourself ‘doing for’ instead of ‘teaching to.’ When this happens, recognize it and try to correct it but offer compassion and grace to yourself, your teammates, and the family. Adopting and maintaining an empowering approach is not easy! Awareness is a great first step. Remember that learning and growing are characteristics of an effective co-sponsor.

**Be trauma-informed**
Most refugees have experienced some type of trauma due to the circumstances that caused them to flee, the grief over leaving others behind, or the experiences they had in refugee camps. While refugees demonstrate considerable resilience, it is important to be aware of
the long-term impact that trauma may have on their well-being. Trauma effects each person differently.

According to the Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care, “A Trauma-Informed Care approach strives to understand the whole of an individual who is seeking services. When trauma occurs, it affects an individual’s sense of self, their sense of others and their beliefs about the world. These beliefs can directly impact an individual’s ability or motivation to connect with and utilize support services.”

There are behaviors you might view as character flaws or intentional, which are actually the effects of trauma.

Such behaviors might include:
- Forgetfulness (poor memory, concentration, learning and focus);
- Inconsistent behavior or moods; and
- Mistrust or inability to form healthy relationships.

In daily life situations, these effects may manifest as being late to meetings, not answering calls, asking multiple people for help on the same problem, withholding information from someone who is trying to help, lack of interest in things, being easily frightened, displaying sudden anger, and having a hopeless view of the future. Trauma can also cause physical symptoms such as chronic exhaustion, difficulty sleeping, frequent illness, and physical pain (i.e., headaches and upset stomach).

As a co-sponsor, there are a few important things you can do to be trauma-informed.

- **Recognize the impact of trauma on health and behavior** – Show grace and compassion when observing these effects, recognizing they are not intentional. When you see symptoms worsening, talk to your local resettlement agency contact or a mental health professional about available services which might help and make appropriate referrals.

- **Help to provide emotional and physical safety** – Follow up to make sure that basic needs are met and pay attention to emotional well-being. Create an environment that is calm and comfortable.

- **Establish trust** – The individual needs to know that you are trustworthy, which you can affirm by establishing and consistently maintaining boundaries and providing clear and consistent information.

- **Collaborate** – The more choices an individual has, and the more control they have over their experience by participating in the process, the more effective services and support will be. Provide choices and make decisions together.

- **Empower with coping skills** – Recognize and focus on the individual’s strengths and build on them to develop greater coping skills.

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2 [https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care.html](https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care.html)
Avoid re-traumatization – Do not ask family members to speak publicly about their experiences unless they actively express an interest in doing so. They have had to tell their story of persecution many times in the determination process to qualify as a refugee and be admitted to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, and once they are in the U.S. they have a choice about whether or not to share the story. In case a family member does want to speak to you about his/her experience, listen compassionately and sensitively without asking questions. Thank the person for sharing his/her story with you.

Please remember: Your role as a co-sponsor working with the family is not as a professional social worker or therapist. You may play an important role by being a supportive friend, listening and providing referrals as needed, but you should not try to help the family process their trauma. Be mindful of how the experience of working with the family is also affecting you and be sure to practice self-care and boundaries so that you remain a positive and grounded source of support.

Recognize power and privilege

We all have multiple aspects to our identities, which affect the power and privilege that we experience in American society. Our race, socio-economic status, gender, age, educational background, employment experience, natural abilities, religion, and first language, among other aspects, impact the way that we see ourselves and how others see and treat us in society. There are socially dominant groups in each category of identity who experience unfair advantage, knowingly or unknowingly, over others. Oppression of certain groups and privilege of others is perpetuated at all levels in American society as well as in all countries around the world:

- Individual – personal feelings, beliefs and values;
- Interpersonal – actions, behaviors and language;
- Institutional – legal and educational systems, public policy, hiring practices, media images, and social media;
- Societal norms – collective ideas about what is acceptable behavior and what is “right”.

There will inherently be a power difference between you, as a co-sponsor, and the refugee family you are paired with most basically because the family is new to and unfamiliar with American culture and not yet established in the local community. Because aspects of your identity are likely to be different from theirs as well, the power difference may be even greater. In particular, white privilege and economic privilege are likely to create discomfort. At times, co-sponsors feel guilty about their privilege and want to do all they can for the family as a way of balancing the scales. But remember that this approach is actually disempowering and can keep the family dependent. This “savior” mentality should be avoided. To effectively partner with refugees, it is important to acknowledge that you are in a position of greater power and enter into the work thoughtfully, aware of when and how your power and privilege show up.

It takes conscious effort to become aware of one’s own relative privilege, experience of race and potential unconscious biases related to race. Without thoughtful consideration, implicit biases are often present in one’s thoughts and actions, causing people to act in
certain ways or say certain things without quite realizing where they are coming from. We often make assumptions about what is “true” or judgements about what is “best” based on our assumptions and world view.

For example, it can be quite easy for co-sponsors to take over making decisions or act for the family because they do not see how the family can manage independently or because they believe it can fast track the family’s progress. As a co-sponsor, even assuming that you will be friends with the family or that they will express considerable gratitude for your support are signs of expectations rooted in cultural values. Please note: Sharing power with the family means respecting their differences and supporting them to meet their own needs and choices. This is what will level the relationship over time.

Remember that because of the power imbalance, it can be hard for the family to say ‘no’ to members of the co-sponsor team or go against your advice. It might also limit what they share. Be mindful of what you say, what you ask, and the situations you create with this awareness in mind.

Learning about U.S. history of racism and how systemic racism continues to impact policing and access to housing, education, healthcare, support services, and business opportunities is another important step to take to effectively partner with refugee families. It will not only help you gain understanding of some dynamics about which you might be unaware, but it also will help you prepare the family for barriers they may face living in the U.S. Many refugees experience discrimination in their home or host countries and will benefit from being gently prepared through honest conversations about how they may experience racism and discrimination in their new community. Preparing for and engaging in these conversations is not easy, but it is important. There are additional resources below that can help you on the journey.

**Continued Learning Resources – Partnering with Refugees**

**Trauma–Informed Approach** – This guide published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines trauma and provides guidance for implementing a trauma–informed approach. It is designed for service providers but is useful for anyone wanting to better understand the framework.

**The Institute on Trauma and Trauma–Informed Care** – This research institute based at the University of Buffalo is committed to providing information to the public about the effects of trauma and how trauma–informed principles can be applied. There is basic information and links to additional resources.

**Talking about Race and Racism** – This series of blog posts published by ECDC are geared to preparing resettlement agency staff to talk about race with refugee clients, but the content is helpful for anyone looking to build awareness of privilege and inequity. Links to many additional resources are included.

**Test Yourself for Hidden Bias** – Shared on Learning for Justice’s website, this is an interactive survey by Harvard’s Project Implicit which measures unconscious biases. Examining implicit bias is an important step in dismantling all forms of discrimination.
**Anti-Racism Basics** – This is a webinar created by Church World Service specifically for community sponsorship groups to build awareness and skills around anti-racism.

**Social Justice Standards** – Created by Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance), these standards are a guide for anti-bias education from grades K–12. The standards are divided into four domains – identity, diversity, justice, and action.

**Racial Equity Resources & Referrals** – The Interaction Institute for Social Change provides a list of other organizations who provide consulting and training services as well as links to other toolkits.

**Racial Equity Tools** – This website has tools, research, tips and curricula for people who want to increase their understanding and work toward racial justice.

**The Danger of a Single Story** – This TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian–American woman writer, describes her personal experiences with stereotypes and bias.

## Conclusion

By making a commitment to co-sponsor a refugee family, you are stepping up to make a difference. Thank you!

It is not an easy task, and ECDC and its local resettlement offices hope that this manual, together with the training and additional resources you will receive from your local resettlement office will help you feel prepared to be an effective member of your co-sponsor team.

Be prepared to keep learning along the way. The journey is sure to have unexpected twists and turns but remember that you are never alone. Keep calm, show grace to yourself and others, and reach out for help as needed.

Your contact person at the local resettlement office is there to support you and help you through difficult situations. We are grateful for your contribution!