



Empowering refugees and immigrants since 1983

Do you desire to make a difference and ensure that your community is welcoming to newcomers?

Consider partnering with ECDC and co-sponsoring a refugee family!



What is the role of co-sponsors?

The Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), as one of nine national refugee resettlement agencies, contracts on an annual basis with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and agrees to resettle a certain number of refugees into communities where it has affiliate organizations and branch offices. ECDC implements the Reception and Placement (R&P) program, which is designed to meet refugees' immediate needs upon arrival and ensure a list of core services are provided during their first 30-90 days in the U.S. The goal of the program is to help refugees achieve economic self-sufficiency through employment and linkages to service providers as soon as possible.

This is a big task to complete in a short amount of time, with limited funding. That is why co-sponsors in the local community are needed! Co-sponsors help newcomers over a longer period of time and offer a more diverse range of community experiences than resettlement agency staff can offer alone. Co-sponsor teams, partner with ECDC's affiliate to do the following:

- **Collect in-kind and financial donations** in order to supplement the one-time government grant amount allocated to each refugee
- **Welcome and mentor the refugee family** so that they can feel comfortable and confident moving around and accessing services in the local community
- Assist ECDC affiliate agency's assigned case manager to **ensure that the required core services are delivered on time and well-documented**

Who qualifies to be a co-sponsor?

Co-sponsorship is important and intensive work and therefore Teams must meet certain criteria to qualify. This includes:

- Have **at least 7 individuals** who are willing to take on leadership roles, with 1 person identified as the team coordinator who will liaise closely with ECDC's affiliate
- Be capable of **raising and holding at least \$3000** which will go to supplement rent for the family until they can become self-sufficient as well as **collecting furniture and other items** families need
- Be committed to accompanying the family, **devoting several hours every week**, for 9 months post-arrival (approximately **12+ months total of involvement** including pre-arrival planning)
- Be willing to enter into a (non-legally binding) **written agreement** with ECDC which outlines the duties the Co-sponsorship Team commits to perform and the conduct team members agree to uphold
- Be **open-minded, flexible, and persistent learners** who are willing to attend training and provide as well as receive feedback from ECDC's affiliate before, during, and after being matched with a refugee

What types of tasks are co-sponsors asked to take on?

ECDC's co-sponsorship program allows Co-sponsorship Teams to choose a minimum number of core services they are prepared to provide for the refugee family with whom they are paired. ECDC recommends that Co-sponsorship Teams organize themselves into committees to divide up the work and allow members to specialize on a particular type of support, based on their individual interests, expertise, and time availability.

Committees should be organized around different key **integration pathways**, which include:

-  1. **Housing & Welcome:** Assists in gathering household and furniture items, setting up the home, providing ready-to-eat food upon arrival as well as appropriate clothing.
-  2. **Transportation:** Coordinates transportation needs and teaches the family how to access and navigate public transportation as well as apply for a driving license.
-  3. **Health:** Assists the family in finding primary health providers, tracking and attending follow-up medical and dental appointments as well as teaches them how to stay healthy and safe in the American context (i.e. nutrition, hygiene, vaccinations, identity protection, etc.).
-  4. **Education:** Assists parents/guardians in enrolling children in school and following up on participation as well as supports adults to access English language and job training classes.
-  5. **Cultural Adjustment:** 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.).
-  6. **Jobs and Finance:** Supports employable individuals to understand how to apply for jobs, network for employment, maintain a job once employment, set up a bank account, pay required bills, establish good credit, and plan for future goals.

The weeks leading up to the family's arrival plus the first 90 days post-arrival are particularly intense with lots of activities to complete and document, to comply with the R&P program. After the family gets settled, they will progressively become more independent and rely less on the Co-sponsorship Team members for daily tasks but still need regular social and cultural support.

What are the benefits of co-sponsorship?

Co-sponsorship creates opportunities for ordinary people to play a key role in supporting refugees as they settle into their new homes within local communities in the U.S. ECDC recognizes that co-sponsorship is a significant commitment, but it is also an extremely rewarding one. Not only does it **build powerful bonds** between sponsors and refugees, it **strengthens the host community** by sparking new connections and enhancing those already existing. It can also help to **foster positive attitudes towards refugees and resettlement**. When new arrivals receive a warm welcome and support to integrate, it helps them feel at home and **improves the likelihood that they will become empowered, contributing members to the community** in a shorter period of time. Integration is a two-way process, and ECDC expects that sponsors learn and benefit from the experience almost as much as the refugee family.

What are the next steps to pursue co-sponsorship?

If this sounds exciting and feasible to you, that's great! To get started, first **organize your team**. Review the criteria above and find like-minded people that are willing to join you. Next, reach out to ECDC to **indicate your interest**. They will share additional resources for you to read and use for **internal reflection and planning**. You can also request ECDC to present to your group. When you are ready, ECDC will ask you to formally **submit an application**. After reviewing your application, your team members will be invited to **attend training**. Following training you will continue to fundraise, collect in-kind donations, and prepare other logistics as you wait for ECDC to receive notification that a refugee family is arriving soon (2-3 weeks' advance notice) which would be a good match for your team. After further discussion, if your team accepts, you will **sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** which outlines your commitment. After that, you will work closely with the assigned Case Manager to **welcome and mentor your assigned family!**

Thanks for your interest! We are excited to partner with you to create welcoming, vibrant and diverse communities across the U.S.