

Important Information for refugees and co-sponsors

- 1. FOCAS is a community service agency. Our work focuses on supporting communities in multiple ways. One way we do this is by assisting families to privately sponsor their extended family members, relatives and/or friends. As a local SAH, our co-sponsors (refugee's relatives in most cases) can only be from Edmonton and the destination for the refugees we sponsor must also be Edmonton. However, we are working hard to help our members in different cities through creating constituent groups (CG) in their localities.**
- 2. We can sponsor only refugees outside of their home countries. Only individuals who cannot return to their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, political opinion, nationality, and/or membership in a particular social group (examples: gender, sexual orientation, etc.) can be sponsored by FOCAS.**
- 3. As a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), FOCAS gets a quota (maximum number of refugees that we can help sponsor), once a year, from IRCC. The number is very limited and we can't exceed this allowable number. Applications open once a year. If you would like to get notified once the application opens, please either follow us on Facebook or subscribe to our mailing list so that you receive the most current information. Our application form is online. Meeting any of our staff will not help fast-track any applications. Once the application deadline is closed, the review panel will select qualified applicants and only qualified applicants will be contacted for further processing.**
- 4. It is an absolute responsibility of the sponsor/co-sponsors to provide all the necessities of life for refugees for one year. FOCAS cannot financially support a privately sponsored refugee. However, FOCAS makes sure a fund is available for the refugees at its restricted account and fully utilize the funds for the proper resettlement of the refugees.**
- 5. Once the application is accepted, the sponsor is required to deposit their one-year financial sponsorship contribution into a bank account managed by FOCAS. FOCAS will provide the refugee, when they arrive, with monthly income support from this account. Sponsored refugees are not allowed to access Alberta Work for financial assistance throughout the first year of sponsorship.**
- 6. FOCAS will not be involved in filling out refugee sponsorship applications. Although we at FOCAS make sure that the concerned refugees we sponsor must live out of their country of origin and provide necessary documents as such, it is the responsibility of overseas visa officers to ultimately decided their refugee status to resettle in Canada.**

7. As a community service organization, FOCAS can inform you where you can get the application packages for other types of sponsorship such as Group of Five, Community Sponsorship, Family class etc. but unfortunately, we don't offer counseling or advice on the process of these applications. You need to contact immigration consultants for that kind of service.

8. Upon arrival, refugees are legally entitled to work. However, if they don't speak English, the first step is to enroll in English classes to gain the language skills required to work, learn, and integrate into the community. We have the responsibility to make sure newcomers do get documentation that proves that the refugee is registered in certified English language classes. Refugees will be able to work once they obtain sufficient English skills. They are able to work part-time, once enrolled in full-time English training classes. Refugees working during their first year of sponsorship are still eligible and entitled to sponsorship funds from their sponsors. This is a government regulated guideline to protect refugees and ensure sponsors uphold their responsibility.