

Community sponsorship is an experience in teamwork and collaboration. Given the array of welcoming activities a group takes on, it can be helpful to organize your group members into specific focus areas and roles. In addition to a group leader, having specific people or teams focusing on key areas such as housing and transportation ensures all-around support for newcomers and lessens the likelihood of confusion and group member burn-out.

The below introduces common roles and focus areas in sponsorship groups, as well as associated knowledge and skills so that you can organize your group. However, no two community sponsorship groups are exactly alike. Group roles or focus areas can be adjusted according to the unique goals of the newcomers and the capabilities and interests of group members.

## Group Leader

The group leader or co-leader's role is to use collaborative leadership skills and to delegate work to other group members. The group leader maintains clear, thorough, and open communication between the resettlement office staff and the community sponsor group. They set boundaries, model patience and respect, communicate effectively, and solve problems. The group leader is often the main point of communication between the community sponsor group and resettlement staff. They provide oversight for background checks, paperwork compliance, and financial accountability.

- Enjoys collaborating with others.
- Approaches challenges with patience and curiosity.

## Housing

The housing team works with resettlement staff to make identified housing a welcoming home. They may also help with the housing search. They often collect furniture and household items, stock the kitchen, and provide a culturally appropriate welcome meal. They may also offer assistance and guidance for apartment home living.

- Ability to find and mobilize donations of furniture and household supplies including pickup, storage, and delivery.
- Interest in discovering foods from other countries.
- Enjoys setting up a new home.

“We all focused on areas where we thought we could provide the greatest value-added, and we tried to be flexible on who did what and when depending on schedules. I think this not only benefited the family, but also helped to maintain a cohesive and functioning sponsorship group.”

— Mark, community sponsor

## Transportation

This team supports family transportation and community navigation needs, especially in the early days after arrival. This team arranges transportation for airport arrival, initial healthcare appointments, grocery shopping trips, or for public benefits appointments. Most importantly, they provide public transportation orientation, accompanying individuals to key locations on public transit.

- Knowledge of community's public transit or interest in exploring.
- Some team member access to own car for initial appointments and tasks.
- Varied availability within team with some availability for weekday appointments.

## Health

The health team supports health and mental health needs in active collaboration with resettlement office staff. In coordination with the transportation team, they will assist the family in attending any initial health screening appointments. They support the family in setting up a calendar for healthcare appointments and making initial contacts. The health team introduces individuals to healthcare resources including the

nearest hospital, pharmacy, urgent care, and local mental health services or refugee-related support groups.

- Knowledge of community health care resources or interest in exploring.
- Varied availability within team with some availability for weekday appointments.

## Education

This team helps families access English learning programs and supports their knowledge and comfort with communication. This may include helping with sign-up for local English learning programs. Team members may practice English conversation with individuals and connect them with resources such as the local library, picture or bilingual dictionaries, and translation apps. This team may also assist families with children with school enrollment and orientation to the K-12 school system.

- Experience in education or the K-12 school system.
- Interest in researching language learning opportunities and resources.
- Attitude of patience and fun for English language practice.
- Ready to learn a few new words in a new language.

## Employment

This team supports employable individuals in looking for and securing safe and dignified employment. Once employment is secured, they may assist with practicing public transportation and ensuring refugees have necessary clothing or supplies for their work.

- Interest in exploring local employment opportunities.
- Willingness to help practice job transportation and job-specific skills.

## Finance

The finance team applies their knowledge of personal finances and budgeting. Important tasks may include setting up a bank account and supporting the family in using SNAP benefits or other public benefits cards.

- Interest in budgeting and personal finance.
- Basic experience paying your own bills.

## Orientation

This team supports the newcomers in acquiring the needed knowledge, skill, and attitudes for life in the US. They will help them orient themselves to their new hometown. They will locate and map the nearest grocery store, library, park, laundromat, bank etc. If the family is of a certain faith tradition, they may help connect them with their preferred community of faith such as an area mosque, church, or temple. They, and other teams, will connect family with relevant resources available to refugees through the Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange.

- Likes to visit local community spots – and share them.
- Curiosity to find local resources and experiences that align with family's interests and goals.

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Community sponsorship groups provide more effective support to newcomers by organizing their group thoughtfully. While group members coach and help with specific resettlement tasks within their focus area, all group members provide social and emotional support to the newly arrived family. To those who have been through loss and displacement, this social and emotional support from the whole group provides welcome, inclusion, and belonging.

