

SPONSOR CIRCLES FAQs RELATED TO END OF SPONSORSHIP

What should the sponsoring group consider when the sponsorship period is coming to an end?

- There are three areas to consider as you approach the end of the sponsorship period:
- What were your experiences as sponsors? What were your successes, challenges and lessons learned?
- Are there outstanding needs of the newcomer(s) you need to attend to? For example, do you need to help them connect with services in the community? The [Transition Checklist](#) can be helpful to guide this discussion.
- What will your relationship with newcomer(s) in the post-sponsorship period be like?

When do we begin preparing the newcomer(s) for the post-sponsorship period?

- Because the official sponsorship period is short, it is important to think about the post-sponsorship period from the time the newcomers arrive in your community. Include in your planning the goals you and the newcomers have and map out where you expect to be at the end of the sponsorship period. It is recommended to revisit and reflect on goals and expectations throughout the sponsorship period. However, it is advisable to be more focused on the timeline for these goals in the last 2-4 weeks of the sponsorship.
- Keep in mind that you may need to be flexible with these goals. Some things will likely be unfinished or not fully formed at the end of the sponsorship. In those situations, it is important to map out your plan and what that looks like in the post-sponsorship period

What essential information should be communicated to the newcomer(s) before the sponsorship period ends?

- Sponsors are advised to talk with the newcomer(s) about the length of sponsorship as soon as possible after arrival. The newcomer(s) should know that the sponsoring group is not obligated to provide financial and settlement support beyond the agreed upon sponsorship period. Sponsors are strongly advised to communicate this clearly to newcomer(s) and ensure that the newcomer(s) are aware of the exact date when the sponsorship ends.
- Before the end of the sponsorship period, sponsors are advised to use the [Transition Checklist](#) to ensure that the newcomer(s) have the information they require, as well as necessary skills, knowledge and services for the post-sponsorship period. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Access to affordable housing
2. How to pay rent and other household bills.
3. How to budget and transfer money electronically
4. Access job search services and resources
5. How to contact emergency services

Information that sponsoring groups should provide to newcomer(s) about transitioning to the post-sponsorship period includes, but is not limited to:

- Social assistance (including eligibility, how to apply, and how to maintain).
- Eligibility for subsidized housing (including when and how to apply).
- Services offered by local resettlement agencies.
- Taxes (including how and when to apply, assistance available when completing tax returns and entitlement for tax benefits).
- Educational programs and subsidies offered by local schools and colleges for further education (including further ESL).
- Changes in healthcare coverage.

Is there a checklist that sponsoring groups can use to ensure that all essential information is communicated, and all tasks are completed before the sponsorship period ends?

- Sponsors are strongly advised to use the [Transition Checklist](#) to assist them with ensuring that all essential information is communicated to the newcomer(s), as well as ensuring the newcomer(s) have the necessary skills, knowledge and services, for the post-sponsorship period.

When and how should self-sufficiency be assessed?

- Self-sufficiency should be continually assessed throughout the sponsorship period by sponsors. Some benchmarks of self-sufficiency include, but are not restricted to:
 1. employment/self-employment with sufficient income to cover living costs, in addition to any government benefits for which the newcomers are still eligible.
 2. the ability to conduct day-to-day tasks (e.g. paying rent, bills, independently checking balance on SNAP or cash assistance cards, budgeting, knowledge of local area and transportation etc.)
- Self-sufficiency in the context of immigrant newcomers is not defined as living without government benefits or community member's guidance. Instead, self-sufficiency is defined as the newcomers knowing how to independently manage their lives, their government assistance (if still needed), community resources, and who they can ask for help as they move forward.

What services are available, and what steps should be taken, when it appears that the newcomer(s) are not self-sufficient?

- It is important for sponsors not to feel disheartened or discouraged if the newcomer(s) they have sponsored are not self-sufficient by the end of the sponsorship period. Sponsors must recognize that integration is a long-term process which can take many years and is influenced by a number of factors. Sponsors have an important role at **the start** of the integration process, and it is unrealistic to expect the newcomer(s) to be fully integrated into their community by the end of the sponsorship period.
- If newcomer(s) are not self-sufficient by the end of the sponsorship period, it is important to help them understand other resources in the community they can turn to. This in fact can be part of the integration process as they learn to find their own solutions to their settlement and integration problems.
- Sponsors are advised to see what services are available to newcomer(s) within their state or community, as some services may be restricted, or additional services may be available based on location.

When, and how, should newcomer(s) that are not self-sufficient move forward, beyond the initial sponsorship period?

- Sponsors are advised to research what social assistance or income assistance programs are available within their state or town for the newcomers **beyond the initial 90 period**, what the average processing times are if the newcomers need to re-apply, and the specifics of how to do so. Sponsors should ensure that the newcomer(s) know how to continue their SNAP, Medicaid, RCA, TFA or re-apply, as applicable.

Are newcomer(s) entitled to subsidized/low-income housing once the sponsorship period has ended?

- Sponsors are advised to research whether their local government offers any subsidized or low-income housing and assist the newcomer(s) with applying for the program or provide them with the information on how to apply. Sponsors must consider processing and waiting times, as waitlists may be longer in some areas compared to others. Sponsors may also want to consider whether or not the newcomers might be advised to join a waitlist, even if it seems long, as sometimes these lists move faster than they would appear. Speaking with a town or city social service provider will be helpful in understanding the waitlist “realities” of subsidized housing in each location.

What kind of relationship should sponsoring groups have with the newcomer(s) in the post-sponsorship period?

- Sponsors are welcome to continue providing financial and/or settlement support after the end of the sponsorship period, however, sponsors are not obligated to do so. If sponsors do decide to provide financial support after the official period of sponsorship, they must research how this support may affect any social assistance or income assistance the newcomer(s) may be receiving from the state or local governments, as it may result in them not being eligible for social assistance, or having their payments reduced.

Sponsors may also wish to keep in contact with the newcomer(s) they sponsored to see if they could be of any assistance in the post-sponsorship period. However, sponsors should respect the newcomer(s)' right to self-determination in the post-sponsorship period, as they did during the sponsorship period.

How do we mark the transition?

- It is important to mark the end of the official sponsorship in some way. Gathering over food from both the newcomer(s) and the sponsors can be an important way to build bonds. Ideally both newcomers and sponsors can work together on planning the event. Like any time of transition, it can be a time to celebrate the successes, but also a time to think about the future. During that time, some things to consider talking about are:
 1. How have your hopes and dreams changed during the sponsorship period?
 2. What have you as sponsors and newcomer(s) learned and how have you changed because of this experience?
 3. Feelings of uncertainty that both sponsors and newcomer(s) may have.
 4. How you see your relationship may not necessarily be ending but rather changing.

TRANSITION CHECKLIST

Integrating into a community is an ongoing process. There is no clear endpoint of when a person is truly integrated into their new community. As the newcomers you are sponsoring approach the 90-day mark, it is important to have a discussion about this and how things will change. While your official commitment will end, some relationships may continue.

After 90 days of being in a new place, this is an opportunity to identify any remaining Sponsor Circle responsibilities or activities and see if the newcomers have all the tools and information they need to continue this journey. The below checklist may help you with this transition.

Health

- Do the newcomers know how to contact emergency services in cases of emergency?
- Have the newcomers secured available health insurance (Medicaid, CHIP, RMA, Health Insurance Marketplace, etc.)?
- Is the newcomer registered with a primary care physician?
- Have you provided the newcomers with relevant information on vaccinations?
- Have newcomers been connected with mental health services if desired?
- Do the newcomers have any remaining medical needs that need to be addressed? If so, have you made a referral or provided them with the relevant information on how to access the necessary services?
- Do the newcomers know how to navigate the medical system?
- Have the newcomers been connected with a dentist?

Legal Assistance

- Are the newcomers connected with qualified legal counsel who is assisting them in making their asylum claim or applying for another appropriate adjustment of legal status in the U.S.? Do newcomers have legal assistance contact information and are they aware of any next steps?

English Language

- Have the newcomers been enrolled in English Language classes?
- Do the newcomers wish to continue with English Language classes?
- Do the newcomers know how to access English Language classes if they need them at a later date?
- Are the newcomers aware of any language learning resources for short and long-term employment goals?

Education

- Are all of the children of primary or secondary school age enrolled in school?
- Do the newcomers wish to pursue further studies (e.g., higher education, vocational training, GED etc.)? If so, have you provided them with the relevant information on courses and institutions?
- Are there any specific educational needs that need to be addressed before the end of the sponsorship period?
- Do the newcomers need your support to find volunteer opportunities in their field?

Employment

- Are the employable newcomers employed?
- If not, what can be done before the end of the sponsorship period to assist the newcomers with finding employment or self-employment?
- Are the newcomers aware of any relevant vocational training opportunities?
- Are newcomers aware of professional licensing requirements for their long-term employment goals?
- Are newcomers aware of their rights as an employee, or their responsibilities as an employer?
- If they are interested in starting a business is there someone in the community who can mentor them in the process?
- If newcomers are working or will work in the future, have they considered possible childcare options?

Housing

- Have the newcomers accessed affordable permanent housing? Are they able to pay their rent ?
 - If not, how will you support them in accessing affordable permanent housing before the end of the sponsorship period?
 - Do the newcomers need/want to relocate to another house or apartment, or another town or city?
 - If yes, are they aware of the pros, cons, and expenses of relocating?
 - Are the newcomers aware of their rights as tenants?
 - Have the newcomers registered for relevant utilities under their own names?
 - Do the newcomers know when and how to pay their rent, and any other household bills (e.g. utilities, phone, internet, cable etc.)?
 - Are the newcomers aware of any available subsidized housing options?
- Do the newcomers understand the terms of their housing lease including landlord contact information, lease end date, and termination or renewal requirements?

Finances

- Have the newcomers opened a bank account?
- Do the newcomers need any further assistance with budgeting or banking? For example, are they comfortable taking care of their finances on their own? Do they know how to transfer money electronically?

Transportation

- Do the newcomers know how to travel within the city? Are they comfortable taking public transportation? Do you need to provide further explanations or accompany them?

Interpretation

- Do the newcomers know how to access interpretation provided at schools or healthcare providers?

Community and Cultural Orientation

- Do the newcomers require more support to find community activities or events?
- Are they aware of the USAHello app and CORE (Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange) website to find community and cultural information and resources?
- Do the newcomers want your help connecting them with specific programs or groups in your community related to their interests?
- If the newcomers plan to move are there any community resources for which you can provide contact information?

Documentation, Benefits, and Services

- Are newcomers receiving all the benefits they are entitled to?
 - Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP / food stamps)
 - Refugee Cash Assistance
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

Documentation, Benefits, and Services (cont'd)

- Matching Grant Program (employment services accessed through refugee agencies)
 - Local Energy Assistance Programs
 - Additional benefits available via local government
 - Public local services (e.g., public libraries, local faith communities, community centers, etc.)
- Do newcomers have all the documents that they require? Do they require your assistance with the application process for any remaining documents?
 - Employment Authorization Document social security cards
 - I-94
 - State ID or driver's license
- Have the newcomers connected with, or do they know how to reach local social services providers and the State Refugee Coordinator, as applicable?
- Do the newcomers know how to contact the nearest refugee resettlement agency?
- Have you helped the newcomers complete the required change of address with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and with the U.S. Postal Service?
- Have you assisted any newcomer males 18-26 in selective service registration?
- If the newcomers have moved, do they need your further help to change their address with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and with the U.S. Postal Service? Do they have the information needed to do this in the future?
- Do the newcomers need your help in making changes to any identity or other formal documents to reflect their new address?
- Have the newcomers opened a bank account?