



235 Nicoll Street
Second Floor
New Haven, CT 06511

TELEPHONE: (203) 562-2095
FAX: (203) 562-1798
e-MAIL: info@irisct.org

GETTING STARTED – Co-sponsorship

*Co-sponsorship is a shared commitment between IRIS and a community group to help a refugee family resettle to Connecticut and become self-sufficient. After doing an IRIS information session, **prospective co-sponsors need to do an application** (provided by IRIS) and begin organizing a Core Team (of **at least ten** dedicated members), assigned to the following responsibilities:*

CONTACT PEOPLE (1 to 2)

- Serve as primary contact between your group, IRIS, and the refugee family. We've found that having 2 contact people works best for communication and coordinating your group's efforts.
- Ensure that the co-sponsoring group utilizes interpreters for important meetings with the refugee family (e.g., the arrival, the initial intake, employment, and financial meetings)

The contact people will coordinate the overlapping activities of the other team members and will check in with the refugees regularly until they are securely established in their surroundings. Team members will make regular reports to the contact people who will be responsible for maintaining contact with the IRIS Co-Sponsorship Case Manager.

SAFE HOUSING

- Secure an apartment or house rental: Safe, Clean, Affordable (ranging from \$900-\$1400, depending on the size), Appropriate Size & Location. Please see the Co-Sponsorship Manual for more guidelines
- Set up housing with furniture, household goods, and other basic necessities
- Connect utilities

IRIS will provide a list of required furniture, appliances, and other household items, and a list of culturally appropriate food for the kitchen. Note: IRIS requests that co-sponsors co-sign the lease with the refugee family, if required by the landlord. Do not sign a lease until you're assured of the family's arrival.

WELCOME

- Meet family at designated arrival point (in New Haven or at an airport: JFK or Newark)
- Bring appropriate clothing for weather
- Arrange for a language interpreter to accompany you
- Arrange for the preparation of a culturally appropriate hot meal for the day of arrival

IRIS will give you the place, date, and time of arrival as soon as we get it. We will give you a menu of culturally appropriate dishes or introduce you to a family who can cook the hot meal.

TRANSPORTATION

- Drive family from designated arrival point home
- Drive to appointments: Medical; Department of Social Services (DSS); Social Security office; DMV; Job interviews; Cultural Orientation at IRIS (3 consecutive days)
- Locate public transportation options and teach family how to navigate them

HEALTH CARE

- Ensure that each refugee receives a Refugee Health Assessment (RHA) within 30 days of arrival (required by State Department for each refugee). IRIS can provide a list of RHA providers.
- Identify primary-care and mental-health providers in your area who are accepting new patients with HUSKY/Medicaid. Bring refugees for first appointments with primary care providers and any specialists necessary for follow-up.

The Health point person of the co-sponsoring team would be responsible for helping refugees make appointments and assisting with transportation as necessary. In the case of any urgent or special medical needs, IRIS can provide guidance and should be consulted.

EDUCATION & CULTURAL ORIENTATION

- Bring family to IRIS for a federally required orientation program (3 consecutive days)
- Register children in school and adults in English language classes
- Teach the family the basics about living in the US: clothes laundering, grocery shopping, banking, navigating public transportation, etc.
- Provide acculturation support and coaching: serve as a helper, friend, and advocate

This point person should learn how to navigate the school registration process and school resources for English Language Learners before the family arrives. For cultural orientation, IRIS can provide the committee with the basic cultural tips for working with a refugee family. The Education point person should find local ESOL classes for adults and help to arrange childcare and/or early childhood education programs for toddlers.

EMPLOYMENT

- Help adults find jobs and become economically self-sufficient as soon as possible
- Assist with job application process and interview process

This point person should identify potential employment opportunities before the family arrives, especially by tapping into your group's network. Soon after the family arrives, this person should ensure that all employable adults do an employment assessment and make a resume. (IRIS can provide guidelines, resources, and templates.) The Co-Sponsorship Manager can give advice on the kinds of jobs that might be attainable and suitable for the family and the best strategies for finding such jobs.

FINANCE

- Oversee resettlement fund-raising and disbursements

Note: Funds that are specifically for a co-sponsorship should not be sent to IRIS; checks should be made out to the entity holding funds for the of the Co-sponsorship group.

- Coach family on household budget, managing resources, building credit history
- Help family access all possible sources of funding, including applying at DSS for food stamps (SNAP) and Temporary Family Assistance (TFA); identify local food pantry

The finance point person will be responsible for developing a budget for the co-sponsorship, including all income (State Department Reception & Placement (R&P) "welcome" grant of \$925 / person, Temporary Family Assistance from DSS, Food Stamps, and employment income) and all other expenses. This point person will also help the family with budgeting and accessing local food pantries.