



INFORMATION FOR SPONSORS AND FAMILIES
THE UNACCOMPANIED INDO-CHINESE MINOR REFUGEE PROGRAM

1 - INTRODUCTION

The Government of Canada, in consultation and cooperation with the Province of Ontario, has introduced a program to admit unaccompanied Indo-Chinese minors from refugee camps in Southeast Asia to Ontario. It is intended that 500 of these minors will be resettled in Ontario before the end of 1980, through the Refugee Sponsorship Program of Employment and Immigration Canada.

II - MINOR'S SPONSORSHIP

The minors to be sponsored are Indo-Chinese refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea, between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, who are at present living in refugee camps. INFORMATION FOR SPONSORS AND FAMILIES

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These minors are part of a family unit, but they are not considered to be 'unaccompanied'. In some cases, their parents are known to be alive in their home country; in others, the parents' whereabouts are unknown, or they are presumed to be dead.

These teenagers have had difficult, traumatic experiences. Yet, they have survived on their own, and have been assessed by Immigration officers overseas as being capable of adjusting to Canadian life with the help of sponsors.

Some speak a little English or French. Most speak only Vietnamese and/or Chinese. Some are the oldest of a sibling group, for whom they have assumed responsibility. Given the conditions in which they have been living, and the length of time that they have been on their own, the health of these adolescents may be poor, even though they have passed all the necessary medical examinations overseas to be eligible for immigration to Canada.

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In this program, sponsorship of Indo-Chinese minor refugees can be undertaken by either of two different groups:

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THE UNACCOMPANIED INDO-CHINESE MINOR REFUGEE PROGRAM

I - INTRODUCTION

The Government of Canada, in consultation and cooperation with the Province of Ontario, has introduced a program to admit unaccompanied Indo-Chinese minors from refugee camps in Southeast Asia to Ontario. It is intended that 400 of these minors will be resettled in Ontario before the end of 1980, through the Refugee Sponsorship Program of Employment and Immigration Canada.

II - WHO CAN BE SPONSORED?

The minors to be sponsored are Indo-Chinese refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea, between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, who are at present living in refugee camps in South East Asia.

Until recently, most of these youngsters have been part of a family unit, but they are now considered to be 'unaccompanied'. In some cases, their parents are known to be alive in their home country; in others, the parents' whereabouts are unknown, or they are presumed to be dead.

These teenagers have had difficult, traumatic experiences. Yet, they have survived on their own, and have been assessed by Immigration officers overseas as being capable of adapting to Canadian life with the help of sponsors.

Some speak a little English or French. Most speak only Vietnamese and/or Chinese. Some are the oldest of a sibling group, for whom they have assumed responsibility. Given the conditions in which they have been living, and the length of time that they have been on their own, the health of these adolescents may be poor, even though they have passed all the necessary medical examinations overseas to be eligible for immigration to Canada.

III - WHO CAN SPONSOR?

In Ontario, sponsorship of Indo-Chinese minor refugees can be undertaken by either of two different groups:

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a) Local groups of at least five Canadian citizens or permanent residents (landed immigrants), 18 years of age or older, and/or local legally incorporated organizations;

or

b) Constituent groups of national organizations with a humanitarian tradition that have signed a comprehensive agreement with the Minister of Employment and Immigration, covering all their member groups across the country.

In either case, primary and back-up families will be designated by the sponsoring group, as being interested in assuming responsibility for the care of the teenager.

The reasons for this arrangement are the following: the placement of any teenager is not easy, let alone one from another culture who has experienced the trauma that these minors have; the cost involved in the support of a growing teenager over a number of years could be quite substantial as well. Therefore, it was decided that both the individual families who are prepared to assume responsibility for the adolescents until they reach the age of majority (18) as well as the minors themselves, would benefit from as much assistance as possible from a larger support group, that is the sponsoring body.

IV - WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS OF SPONSORSHIP?

- a) The sponsoring group or organization must designate a primary and back-up family who are prepared to assume responsibility for the minor.
- b) The head of the household of the primary family as well as another member of the group must sign the sponsorship application and agreement with the Government of Canada.
- c) Together, both the sponsoring group and the designated family must have financial and other resources available to undertake the care and maintenance of the minor to the age of majority (18).
- d) The designated family must be declared suitable after a Homestudy has been completed by the Children's Services Division of the Ministry of Community and Social Services of the Province of Ontario.

- e) The designated family must obtain a court order which will give formal legal status to their relationship with the minor, after the family has been matched with a minor by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. The Official Guardian of the Province of Ontario is prepared to assist in this application and should be notified of the application and subsequent order.

V - WHAT ARE THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE SPONSORING GROUP?

The sponsoring group assumes responsibility to:

- a) Repay the interest-free loan of \$750 per minor over the age of 12, to cover the transportation cost from the refugee camp overseas to the minor's final destination in Ontario.
- b) Financially support the minor until the age of majority, in co-operation with the designated family.
- c) Provide whatever back-up assistance and support possible, to the designated family to facilitate the integration of the minor to the community, and to the family itself.

VI - WHAT ARE THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE DESIGNATED FAMILY?

The family assumes the following responsibilities:

- a) Participates in the financial support of the minor until the age of majority.
- b) Obtains a court order for the purpose of legalizing its relationship to the minor in a way acceptable to the Province.
- c) Applies to the Ontario Health Insurance Plan for the coverage of the minor in its care, and contributes to the cost of coverage if necessary.
- d) And most importantly, provides the day-to-day care and maintenance necessary, to assist the minor in his/her integration to a new way of life. Making this commitment is a serious responsibility that should not be taken lightly.

VII - WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

1. The point of contact is the local Canada Immigration Centre. There, the sponsoring group will be provided with an application form to be completed, depending on whether it is applying as a local group or as a constituent group of a national organization. The head of the household of the designated primary family should be one of the signatories to this initial application. In addition to the basic information requested on the form, sponsors will be asked to submit the following:
 - a) i) Local group: proof that the group is capable of providing the necessary financial support to care for the minor until the age of majority. Employment letters for members of the group indicating salaries, and length of employment; bank letters indicating savings or funds available would be appropriate.
 - ii) Constituent group of a national organization: A letter of approval from the parent body of the national organization which has signed a sponsorship agreement with the Minister of Employment & Immigration.
 - b) A brief description of the designated primary family and its financial status. Employment letters indicating salaries and length of employment as well as a bank letter indicating savings and assets would be appropriate.
 - c) If financial responsibilities are to be shared between the sponsoring group and the designated family, a brief statement indicating the division of financial and other responsibilities should be attached.
 - d) A brief description of the designated back-up family and a general description of its financial situation.
 - e) Plans for the settlement and integration of the refugee minor to the community, indicating how language barriers, differences in religion and culture, differences in the educational system, etc. will be handled.

f) A provincial Homestudy application form completed by the designated primary family which will be available at local Immigration Centres.

2. When the application forms and additional documentation have been received and processed by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, the information will be transmitted to the Provincial Government. The designated family will then be contacted by an official of the Children's Services Division of the Provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services to arrange for a Homestudy. The Homestudy involves a series of interviews and/or group meetings whereby the designated family and the "Homefinder" mutually evaluate the suitability of the family to care for and maintain a refugee teenager, and to come to a mutual decision as to what kind of adolescent (ie. age, sex and so forth) would best fit into this family. It is also an educational and evaluative experience designed to help designated families realize fully what they are undertaking, and to provide the information and support necessary to allow the families to be successful in their commitment.

The designated back-up families should also be included in part of the Homestudy so that they can be provided with information regarding this program.

A summary of the Homestudy findings and recommendations, once discussed with the family, will be transmitted to the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

3. The local Canada Immigration Centre will notify the sponsoring group and designated family of the status of their application. If approved, the sponsoring group will complete a second form called "Notice of Intention to Sponsor". One of the signatories should be the head of household for the designated primary family.
4. The information regarding the most appropriate minor(s) for the designated family, determined by the Homestudy, will be communicated to Immigration's overseas office, which is responsible for locating suitable adolescents for this program.

5. When a suitable minor is located overseas, the information is relayed to the designated family by the Canada Immigration Centre, and the family's concurrence to the match is sought. Although every effort will be made to locate the most suitable minors, this may not always be possible, and designated families should be prepared to be flexible when deciding if they will accept a particular minor.
6. If the match is agreed to, a third form called "Undertaking of Support" is completed by the sponsoring group and again one of the signatories should be the head of household for the designated family.
7. As soon as possible after the match has been agreed to, the designated family should approach the Official Guardian of Ontario to formalize by law, its relationship to the refugee minor. The Official Guardian will advise the family of the procedure to be followed to gain either legal custody or guardianship of the minor.
8. The time needed to identify and transport unaccompanied minors to Canada will vary depending on the situation in the country where the refugees are and whether immigration officers must travel to remote camps to interview them. From the time the sponsorship application is submitted it is expected that a period of one to three months will be necessary for the minors to be processed and brought to Canada.
9. Approximately one week before the minor is scheduled to leave the refugee camp overseas, the Canada Immigration Centre will notify the sponsoring group and the designated family of the scheduled date of the minor's arrival at the staging area in either Montreal or Edmonton.

At the same time, the sponsoring group and family will be asked about their reception plans. Arrangements can be made for the family, at its own expense, to pick up the adolescent at the staging area. Alternatively, transportation arrangements for the minor will be made by Immigration staff, from the staging area to the Canada Immigration Centre closest to the final destination where the family will be introduced to the minor by a local Immigration Officer.

10. There will be two separate follow-up procedures which will be undertaken:

a) The local Canada Immigration Centre will monitor the financial aspects of the sponsorship agreement and will maintain an ongoing interest in how the sponsorship is progressing. Visits will be conducted after the first, fourth, and twelfth month of the minor's arrival and once yearly after that, until the minor has reached the age of majority.

b) The "Homefinder" assigned by the Provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services will monitor the social aspects of the sponsorship agreement, and will provide the counselling support necessary to both the family and minor to assist them in the integration process. She/he will be involved in the placement of the adolescent in the family and the post-placement support. At least two visits will be made following placement, more if necessary, and the "Homefinder" will be available for advice. The services of the local Children's Aid Society may also be used at this time for advice about placement difficulties and local resources.

VIII - OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Legal Responsibility

Until children in Ontario reach 18 years of age, they are considered "infants" and are unable to do certain things, such as make a legal contract or, in some cases, consent to medical treatment on their own behalf. In addition, in order to have young persons registered in the public school system without paying non-resident fees, the person with whom the child resides must have a legal obligation to provide care and education for the child. A condition of the sponsorship agreement to be signed with Immigration will be an agreement that the family with whom the child will reside will obtain a court order giving them these legal responsibilities and powers. A court order must be obtained to ensure that this legal obligation is a binding and clear one. There are several court orders that may be obtained that will fix the designated family with the legal responsibility to care for the child.

Although adoption is the most permanent and all-encompassing order possible, it is not a feasible alternative at this time, because of the age of most of these children and because most of them have hopes and expectations of being re-united with their own families.

A custody order fixes the person or persons named with the responsibility for the care and control of the child and indicates the manner in which the child is to be raised.

Guardianship of an infant includes the custody and care of infant including caring for his or her property and the provision of education. A guardian may also act for the infant in legal actions or suits and may apply to the court which made the appointment for directions in caring for the infant. Letters of guardianship allow the guardian to register the infant in school without the payment of fees and to consent to medical treatment for the infant. The responsibilities and rights under a custody order or letters of guardianship continue until the young person reaches 18 years of age or until terminated by a court.

The Official Guardian for Ontario has agreed to assist in making the necessary applications to court. After the designated family has been notified by Immigration that a match has been made between the family and a young person in Indo-China, the family should immediately get in touch with the:

Official Guardian
180 Dundas Street West
Toronto, Ontario
Phone: 416-965-1857

That office will explain what process should be used in each case and will prepare the necessary documentation for presentation to the court. It should not be necessary for the family to retain its own lawyer in this matter.

Families should be able to register the child in the school system without the payment of fees pending obtaining the necessary court order. Until that court order arrives however, it may not be possible to obtain full medical treatment for the child except in serious emergency situations or unless the child is old enough to consent on his/her own behalf to that treatment.

2. Health

All minors will have been medically examined overseas. This examination includes a complete medical history and physical, chest X-ray, urinalysis, stool test, and a blood test for syphilis for those over the age of 15. Only those who pass this medical screening are eligible for immigration to Canada. At the staging areas in Montreal and Edmonton, acute conditions, such as scabies and lice are treated. It is however advisable, given the conditions in which the minors have been living, to arrange for an appointment with the family's general practitioner as soon as possible after the adolescent's arrival. The family doctor should contact the Medical Officer at the local Health Unit as well, who will have the minor's Immigration medical report, and will advise the family physician of procedures and tests appropriate to this refugee group.

It is also quite likely that many of the minors coming to Canada may never have had dental care. This should be another priority area. Costs incurred for dental treatment are the responsibility of the family and/or sponsoring group.

As soon as the minor has arrived, the designated family should apply for individual Ontario Health Insurance Plan coverage on the adolescent's behalf. Coverage will be made retroactive to the date of the minor's arrival in Ontario. If there are any additional premiums, these will be paid by the sponsoring group and/or family.

3. Education

When the family has been notified of the minor's pending arrival, the local school should be contacted to make arrangements for the enrollment of the adolescent, and for any additional services required to ease his/her entry.

4. Contact with the Minor's Community

Wherever possible, efforts should be made to allow the refugee minor to have contact with members of his/her own ethnic and national group. Chinese and Vietnamese organizations exist in the larger urban areas in Ontario and

they should be tapped to assist the minor's integration to Canada. Families should try to locate an interpreter who speaks the minor's language, or other local sponsors who can provide useful guidance in easing the cultural transition of the minors when they first arrive.

5. Family Allowance

The designated family is eligible for family allowance benefits for the refugee minor and should submit an application as soon as the minor arrives.

6. Income Tax

The designated family can claim the refugee minor it is caring for, as a dependent once its relationship to the child has been formally legalized through a court order.

7. Citizenship

Upon arrival at the staging areas, all the minors will be granted landed immigrant status. Once the minor has established a three-year residence in Canada, he/she is eligible for Canadian Citizenship. If 18 or over, the minor should apply on his/her own. If under 18 years of age, the designated family may apply for citizenship on behalf of the minor.

8. Family Re-Unification

It is foreseen that in some cases the parents of the refugee minors may eventually surface in Canada or elsewhere. If that should occur, the legal responsibility for the minors would normally be transferred back to the natural parents. Designated families will be required to apply to terminate the court order which gave them this responsibility, if the natural family of the minor is located and is able to take over his/her care.

9. Special Problems

If the designated family is experiencing problems, it is expected that the back-up family and sponsoring group will provide whatever assistance possible to resolve the situation and that local community resources will be utilized. The family may want to approach the local Children's Aid Society for help or referral to the appropriate services. If the problems are severe, the Canada Immigration Centre should be contacted so that arrangements can be made for the consideration of the back-up family to assume long-term responsibility for the minor.

10. Background Information and Resources

During the Homestudy, the "Homefinder" will provide the designated families with background information and with a listing of local community agencies and resources which may be of assistance. After the sponsoring groups and designated families have been approved, additional materials will be sent to them by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the Ministry of Culture and Recreation. The following short bibliography, prepared by the Ministry of Culture and Recreation, lists a number of books available at local libraries, on the Vietnamese, their way of life and experiences:

Getting to Know the Vietnamese and their Culture: by Vuong Gia Thuy, Praeger, New York, 1976. Originally intended as a guide for Americans working with the Vietnamese.

Giai Phong, the Fall and Liberation of Saigon: Terzani, Tiziano, New York: St. Margin Press, 1976.

Reports on Vietnam Series (7 articles) Fraser, John - Globe and Mail, Nov. 24-Dec. 1, 1978.

For more information regarding the program, please contact your local Canada Immigration Centre:

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470 Dundas Street East
BELLEVILLE, Ontario
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45 Second Street East
CORNWALL, Ontario (613) 932-2201
K6H 5V3

P.O. Box 1001, Station 'B'
FORT ERIE, Ontario (416) 871-6960
L2A 5N8

204 First Street East
FORT FRANCES, Ontario (807) 274-3815
P9A 1K5

Room M10
2 Quebec Street
GUELPH, Ontario (519) 822-0471
N1H 2T3

Stelco Tower, 9th Floor
100 King Street West
HAMILTON, Ontario (416) 523-2787
L8P 1A2

Federal Building, Room 241
P.O. Box 726
KINGSTON, Ontario (613) 548-8513
K7L 4X6

Room 232
15 Duke Street East
KITCHENER, Ontario (519) 744-4161
N2H 1A2

Thousand Island Bridge
LANSDOWNE, Ontario (613) 659-2313
K0E 1L0

7th Floor
451 Talbot Street
LONDON, Ontario (519) 679-4113
N6A 5C9

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165 Dundas Street West
MISSISSAUGA, Ontario (416) 270-7400
L5B 2N6

4867 Victoria Avenue
NIAGARA FALLS, Ontario (416) 354-2741
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21-25 Peter Street North
ORILLIA, Ontario (705) 326-9421
L3V 6H8

Bond Towers
44 Bond Street West
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(This Brochure is also available in French.)