

JIAS TORONTO

Welcome Circles:

A RESOURCE GUIDE



Updated in April 2022

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The information provided in this booklet is to help volunteers better prepare for all that is involved in providing supports for vulnerable newcomers in a Welcome Circle. We hope to help you better understand what services are already in place. It is a guideline and resource book and does not address every issue or concern that will come up. The JIAS Toronto team is here to support you, the volunteers, and we will try to address issues and concerns as needed.

Thank you for taking part in this *mitzvah* (good deed). We look forward to working together!

THE ROLE OF THE JIAS TORONTO SETTLEMENT WORKER

When a family or individual arrives in Canada, a JIAS Toronto settlement worker will meet with them to conduct a full needs assessment, create an action plan and start the process of helping them orient to life in Canada. The settlement worker will continue to meet with the family in their first year in Canada and beyond to provide them with continued support throughout their settlement process.

As volunteers helping to support the client, you will work together with the settlement worker to implement this plan and help the family start their new life in Canada.

The following is a list of tasks that the settlement worker will do:

- Provide orientation to Canada and daily life
- Perform an in-depth needs assessment
- Arrange for family to complete English Assessment test in order to register for LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)
- Make referrals to community and government agencies for additional services and supports
- Complete the Canadian Child Tax Benefit and HST forms with the family
- Prepare and discuss budget with family
- Discuss employment and education options
- Make an inventory of all items that the family brought with them and create a list of needed items
- Address urgent housing/accommodation needs and begin planning for long-term housing solutions
- Identify any other urgent needs
- Establish short and long-term settlement goals

The orientation session and needs assessment may take place over one or more sessions. After these sessions, additional meetings will take place with the family to reassess and offer additional supports. The newcomer(s) can include members of the Welcome Circle in these meetings, if they would like to. That can enable Settlement Worker, newcomer(s), and volunteers to collaborate. Even if Welcome Circle members do not attend the meetings, the Settlement Worker can be in touch with the Welcome Circle to share needs that they can help to address with the newcomer(s).

A note on confidentiality and privacy

JIAS Toronto will not disclose personal information about the family and their budget to volunteers. We understand that volunteers may be intimately involved in the client's settlement and implementing the settlement plan; however, it is the client's decision if they want to share that information with you.

TASKS FOR VOLUNTEER Welcome Circle MEMBERS

The following is a list of tasks that the volunteer groups may fulfill. Please note that some of these tasks may have already been completed, depending on when the family arrived and their specific needs.

- Prepare a Welcome package for the client/s when they arrive (details on the next page)
- Teach client(s) how to use public transportation, explore transportation options to necessary destinations
- Help explain the medical system, walk-in clinics vs. medical appointments. Arrange for appointments with a family doctor and dentist who speak the client's native language (or with use of a translator)
- Assist them if they need help with their cell phone plan, best ways to communicate (texting, whatsapp, etc....)
- Assist client(s) with shopping for clothing, groceries, appliances (see "Clothing and Other Items" page for a list of places that offer free clothing and household goods); explaining that prices vary depending on what's in season; etc...
- Arrange fun activities, play dates with children, social outings. Remember to limit the number of volunteer group members who attend these events so that the client(s) do not feel overwhelmed;
- Checking in occasionally: Have the primary contact for the group call (or depending on communication abilities, use google translate to text, what's app, etc...) the client to see how they are doing and adjusting
- Accompany client(s) to reception centres, help them identify schools, arrange English language assessment test
- If you identify a need of the client, please bring it to the attention of their settlement worker;
- With the client's approval, help to alleviate budgetary strain by meeting simple material needs through the collection of donations (ex. Furniture, clothing, household items, school supplies, etc.).

There may be some tasks that the client/family wants to do alone. It is best to create a dynamic between you and the client where they feel free to decline your help for some tasks and ask your help with others. Saying "no, thank you" is difficult for newcomers. Please provide the option.

WELCOME PACKAGE

It is a nice idea to provide the family with a welcome package when you first meet. Some suggestions of what to include:

- Names and contact information of constituent group members. You could also include a picture of each member.
- Weather appropriate clothing (if applicable)
- Emergency numbers (you may need to explain how to use these)
- Telehealth number (see page 16 of this guide for more details)
- A map of the public transit system
- A friendly note written by your group. You could even try and translate it!
- Colouring books or toys for young children (if applicable)
- Car seat for transporting (if applicable)
- Anything else you want to include!

FLOW OF COMMUNICATION:

Understanding when to contact the JIAS Toronto Settlement Worker

The JIAS team is experienced in all matters of immigration and community integration. We provide expert information, outreach, support, counselling, consultation, referrals, as well as a range of services and programs to promote newcomer social and economic integration.

As volunteers, you may have questions that you want to address to the JIAS Settlement Worker. Likewise, you may have questions or concerns based on your interactions with the client that you want to bring to the attention of the Settlement Worker. Here are some guidelines about when you should contact the JIAS Toronto Settlement Worker:

- Concerns for the well-being of the client – physical health, mental health
- Unusual behaviour
- Financial issues of any kind
- Issues in the family dynamic
- Suggestions for programs or services that may be beneficial for the client
- Questions relating to settlement

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS FOR VOLUNTEER GROUP MEMBERS

As volunteers you may have certain expectations about how volunteer work should be done and what you imagine the results of the volunteering will be like for the newcomer(s). It is important to remember that things do not always go as planned and this is not necessarily a negative outcome. It is good to always keep an open mind as well as to be flexible in doing things differently than what might have been planned from the beginning. (Alexandra Kotyk, Olga Radchenko, Aaron Berhane, Teri Hoang, Giovanna Riccio. (November 2015). Sponsorship Handbook. *Lifeline Syria*, p. 43-44.)

- It is very important for the volunteer group members to be conscious of their own expectations of the newcomer(s), especially when it comes to attending events. When inviting the newcomer(s) to events, you must ask them if they would like to attend the event and not assume so. It is up to the newcomer(s) how much they would like to be involved in social gatherings.
- When it comes to religiously affiliated events, it is important to explain freedom of expression of religion to the newcomer(s). They might have been persecuted for their religious beliefs and be afraid to express their beliefs openly. Explain the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (specifically freedom of religion, belief and expression) in an easy to understand way with an interpreter present if needed.
- You can invite the newcomer(s) to talk about their religion, but it should never be forced, and it is up to them if they feel comfortable enough to do so.
- One important aspect of events and social gatherings is not to single the newcomer(s) out or ask them to speak in front of a group of people. This can be a very uncomfortable experience and may make them feel less as if they belong and more as an outsider.

In all, be aware of your own expectations. Always ask the newcomer(s) before taking them out to a social event and be aware of the 'power' you hold as a volunteer group and how it can be seen from the newcomer(s)' perspective. They might feel they have to attend events since you are helping them with their new life in Canada. Do try to minimize that power difference by asking questions, explaining things clearly and simply, and making sure they understand their right to say no.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Health Care

Newcomers with Permanent Residence status as well as newcomers arriving under the CUAET visa for Ukrainians are eligible for provincial health care coverage: OHIP. Ideally, the clients have already been helped to find doctors who speak a language they are comfortable in. If they do not already have a doctor, the goal is to find one. The client(s) may need assistance arranging appointments with their doctors and travelling to and from these appointments.

Dental care is sometimes required when the client(s) arrive. It is a good idea to start asking your networks for any dentists who can volunteer their time to help the client(s) when they arrive, as they likely do not have dental care coverage. Please speak to the newcomer and settlement worker about any estimated costs before consenting to the work.

Employment and Learning English

While many newcomers will want to start looking for work right away, it may be important that they spend the months in Canada acquiring skills that will help them have a successful future in Canada. We recommend that you do not rush employment with the family (unless they are eager to start working) and that the focus in the first months is on learning English and updating any qualifications that can help them find employment. If the newcomers want to find part-time jobs, this can be helpful in building a network, providing additional financial support and in finding a full-time job. Of course, some newcomers may be immediately job-ready, in which case, your networks may help them to find meaningful employment.

Pace

Be aware that these newcomers are arriving to Canada after living through stressful situations. Many have left behind family and friends who are in danger. Give the newcomers the time and space that they need to feel secure and settled. Do not rush any non-urgent settlement related tasks or appointments and let them set the pace for their settlement.

Space

Introduce members of your group slowly and choose one or two people that will be the primary contact with the family. If you want to have a large gathering with all volunteers and their families, wait until the family feels comfortable, settled, and ready to meet everyone, as this will be overwhelming for the family. It is also good practice to not show up at the family's home unannounced.

Gender Sensitivity

It is important to be aware of gender differences between cultures. It is good practice, especially at the beginning, for male volunteers to not be alone with female newcomers until you have a better understanding of what the client(s) are comfortable with. It is also important to be sensitive about other gender differences. For example, newcomers may have specific beliefs and concerns about woman in the workplace. Volunteers should be open to approaching the topic sensitively and periodically trying to have an open dialogue about financial realities and Canadian cultural attitudes around working women.

Sensitive topics

Feel free to ask the client(s) about their lives in their home country and about their culture, however, do not ask them for details regarding their experiences during the war. Client(s) will share this information with you when/if they feel comfortable. You do not want to bring up topics that the client(s) may not be ready to deal with as this could impede their settlement process. At the same time, the client(s) may want to share personal information because they want you to know where they come from and what they have been experiencing. It will depend on the individual(s).

Trust

The client's ability to trust others may have been impacted by living in precarious situations and suffering trauma. One way to gain their trust is by being reliable and following through with any promises you make them. It is good practice not to make any promises before you know whether you are capable of fulfilling those promises. Make sure the client(s) feel that they are being listened to and answer their questions in a timely manner.

Choice

The ability to make choices has been taken away from the newcomers. It is important that they begin their new life in Canada with choice and freedom. Give the family choice whenever and wherever you can.

Sustainability and Empowerment

Remember that while you want to help the client(s), you also want to set them up with a lifestyle that they will be able to sustain and/or improve upon for the following years. Choose activities that the newcomers can continue doing in the years to come and make purchases according to what they will be able to sustain.

The goal of your volunteer support is to help set the family up for success in Canada and you do not want them to become dependent on your assistance. For example, even though you might have a car to drive the client(s) to different activities, consider taking the public transportation to help them learn how to navigate public transportation in the GTA.

Separation between parents and children

Upon arriving to Canada, parents may feel uncomfortable about being separated from their children. It may take them some time before they are ready to enrol their children in school or until they are prepared to register them for activities such as camp. At least one parent or guardian should be with the children for all activities that you do with the family.

INTERPRETATION/TRANSLATION

If client(s) speak some English, speak in simple and clear language and avoid jargon. Communication with the clients will almost certainly be a challenge. We will continue to seek new and innovative ways to address this challenge, such as the following resources for communication:

- Tarjimly <https://www.tarjim.ly/en> -- Tarjimly is a Facebook Messenger bot that connects volunteer translators to refugees & immigrants in dire need of translation services. Tarjimly alerts the translator of requests that are routed to fit them. If they are available, the connection is instantly made for them (text, audio notes, video, etc). More about Tarjimly: <http://mashable.com/2017/02/03/tarjimly-app-refugees-translators/#1.EUJILXQmqE>
- Basic translation apps like Google Translate <https://translate.google.ca/> or <https://instttranslate.com/> and speak & translate apps (I am looking on my phone and there seem to be multiple!) such as http://www.apalon.com/speak_and_translate.html , <https://www.itranslate.com/> and <http://itranslatevoice.com/>
- There are some vocabulary apps designed specifically for refugees that assemble important phrases for refugees trying to resettle in foreign countries. For example, <http://dilmajdict.com/refugees/>. Likewise, the Refugee Phrasebook Open Source Project is a crowdsourced project that seeks to translate useful phrases for newly arrived refugees and those assisting them. It's an open Google Doc that anyone can contribute to.
- When in meetings with JIAS Toronto, we will make sure to have appropriate interpretation services available. In general, we are not able to provide these services outside of the office; however, we do have some Russian and Ukrainian speaking volunteers who may be willing to join a call to help with important conversations (if your Welcome Circle group does not have a Russian or Ukrainian speaker in the group).
- Language itself may be a sensitive issue. While most Ukrainians speak Russian, some are uncomfortable speaking Russian right now (associating the language with the trauma of war). This will depend on the individual(s).

Also remember to communicate as a group. Keep each other updated on what you're doing with the family and keep the group informed on needs that arise. Communication with the family's settlement worker is also important so that they can provide their expertise in helping the family settle successfully and to avoid "too many cooks in the kitchen".

HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

Ukrainians with the CUAET visa are eligible for provincial health care coverage OHIP immediately upon registration after their arrival in Canada. If you are accompanying the client(s) to register for OHIP, please be firm with the agents about the rights of these newcomers to receive OHIP (as some agents are still unsure about the new CUAET eligibility) and if necessary ask to speak with a manager about this issue. The CUAET visa is entirely new and some agents may not yet be aware when the newcomer arrives to apply for OHIP.

While the children's dental care will be covered under the Healthy Smiles program, finding sufficient dental care for clients 18 years and older may be a challenge because simple procedures like cavity fillings are not covered under IFHP. Consider reaching out to your network before the client(s) arrive to see if there is anyone who can help with providing pro bono dental services.

ADDITIONAL HEALTH SERVICES:

Telehealth Ontario:

If the family has a medical question (non-emergency) they can call Telehealth Ontario and a Registered Nurse will try to help them over the phone. This service is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week and is free of charge. The number is: 1-866-797-0000

LINC & ESL INSTRUCTION FOR ADULTS

All adults living in the GTA are eligible to receive free English as a Second Language instruction. The client's settlement worker will direct them to a language assessment centre close to the client's accommodations. At the center, their level of English will be assessed and they will be directed to the closest LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) school near them. If there is a long wait time for these classes, the settlement worker can help them find another school close to them and with a shorter wait time. Please ensure that the client(s) are being referred to LINC classes, as opposed to ESL classes. The curriculum differs between the two service providers - LINC classes include information specifically designed for newcomers about Canada.

There are special programs for different needs. There is a program for seniors where they learn at their own pace, and many LINC schools offer child-minding programs so that the parents do not have to worry about their children during that time. There are also more advanced programs specialized for different fields and occupations. The settlement worker will discuss these options with the client(s) if applicable.

SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN

York Region District School Board (YRDSB)

Elementary age children should enroll in their local YRDSB school near their permanent housing. Schools will either provide ESL support or will help the family find the appropriate support.

High school age students will first go to the York Region School Board's Reception Centre to complete an Initial Language Assessment and an assessment of their mathematical ability. After the assessment, they will be referred to take either ESL (English as a Second Language) or ELD (English Literacy Development) courses.

ESL is designed for students who have had the opportunity to develop language and literacy skills in their own language at the appropriate level for their age/grade. There are five ESL courses that are based on proficiency level and not on grade level.

ELD courses are designed for students who have not had the opportunity to develop age-appropriate literacy skills and need additional support to catch up to their peers. There are five EDL courses that are based on proficiency level and not on grade level.

Toronto District School Board (TDSB)

Children should be registered in the local TDSB school near their permanent housing. All schools will offer ESL support.

High school students will first have to visit one of the Newcomer Reception Centres to have their English and mathematic proficiency assessed. This assessment will last one full day. There are two Reception Centres for the TDSB:

Eastern Half of Toronto

Name: Georges Vanier Newcomer Reception Centre
Location: 3000 Don Mills Road East, 2nd floor
Contact: 416-395-9440 (call to book an appointment)

Western Half of Toronto

Name: West End Reception Centre
Location: 777 Bloor Street West, 4th floor (Bickford Centre)
Contact: 416-393-0542 (call to book an appointment)

CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS

Brands for Canada

- Provides **new** clothing, personal care items, and housewares to newcomers (ex. Coat, clothing, shampoo, toothpaste/toothbrush, diapers, cleaning supplies) etc.
- May also provide cell phones and plans. Need to check with them.
- Items are unsold merchandise from brand name stores.

JF&CS Family Resource Centre (FRC) Clothing Cupboard

- The clothing cupboard (inside the FRC at Promenade Mall in Thornhill) has women's and children's clothing available for JIAS clients
- We are working with the FRC team to ensure that appointments will be available for newcomers who want to find adequate clothing for themselves and/or their children

Salvation Army

- Provides clothing and other items
- Contact one of their Thrift Store locations for more details: <http://thriftstore.ca/>.

Furniture

- We recommend asking your personal networks to see if anyone has furniture and other household items to donate.
- There are also number of furniture banks in the GTA, such as the JRCC Furniture Bank, the Furniture Depot, but referrals must be made through the client's settlement worker.

CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

MAP (Museum & Arts Pass)

MAP is a program through Toronto Public Library that lets families (2 adults and up to 5 children) explore some of Toronto's cultural treasures for free. You can find more information here:

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/museum-arts-passes/>

Different libraries have passes to different venues. Some of the participating venues include the AGO, Casa Loma, Ontario Science Centre, Toronto Zoo and ROM. To access the pass the family must have a valid Toronto Public Library card. Passes are limited in quantity and must be picked up at a Toronto Public Library branch. There are certain rules and conditions that apply so make sure to read up on them before heading to the library. You can find them here: <http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/museum-arts-passes/conditions.jsp>

On the same website you can also find pickup timing and branch location information. Make sure to get to the library early because the passes go quickly!

Experience Vaughan

Experience Vaughan offers free passes to educational and recreational activities around the GTA through the Vaughan Public Libraries. To access these passes, the family must have a valid Vaughan Public Library card. Passes are limited in quantity and are given out on a first come first serve basis. Passes can be picked up from three libraries: Woodbridge Library, Kleinburg Library, and Dufferin Clark Library. You can find more information here: <http://www.vaughanpl.info/experiencevaughan>

For More Information

1. *Discover Ontario* - This website invites newcomers to learn more about their new home. It has information about arts and culture, history, tourism, geography, fun facts and more.

http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/about/OI_ABOUT_DISCOVER_ONTARIO.html

2. *Ontario Heritage Trust* - This website has information about hundreds of historical museums, buildings and sites across Ontario.

<http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/Home.aspx>

3. *Toronto Public Library Programs, Classes & Exhibits.*

To check out classes and exhibits go to:

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/>

To find your library local location:

Toronto: <http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/hours-locations/>

Vaughan: <http://www.vaughanpl.info/libraries>

It is also a good idea to look up special event and celebrations in the city, such as Canada Day. Inviting the clients along to these celebrations can help them feel part of Canada!

APPENDIX A: HELPFUL RESOURCES

211:

Dial 211 for information and services in Toronto. They are able to provide services in many languages.

<http://www.211ontario.ca/>

Community Health Care Centers:

Community Health Care Centers can be an alternative to finding a family doctor. Community Health Care Centers are able to provide services in many different languages.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/community-health-centres>