

# HOW CAN OUR CONGREGATION SUPPORT A REFUGEE FAMILY?

## TALKING POINTS ABOUT “CO-SPONSORSHIP” AND “COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP”

In 1975, when Saigon fell, thousands of Vietnamese siblings or neighbors were welcomed by the Lutheran community in the United States. Co-sponsorship and community sponsorship played key roles in the work of resettlement then and continue to be essential to the work being done today.

Co-sponsor teams play a critical role in helping refugees thrive in their new home here in the United States. Your friendship and financial support can ensure a warm welcome and a strong start to their life in your community.

### Co-Sponsorship Requires Commitment:

- Commit to **one year of walking alongside a refugee family**
- Sign a written commitment with your local resettlement agency to **provide friendship, encouragement, and support**
- **Raise between \$3,000 and \$7,000** to help meet a family's needs

### **CO-SPONSOR TEAMS:**

- Are made up of 5-10 people from your faith community, neighborhood group, company, or alumni association.
- Work with staff (case managers) from the local resettlement agency to help the family navigate opportunities available to them and offering relational support to extend care beyond what they would otherwise receive.
- Support case managers who take point on official paperwork, schedule initial medical appointments, and enroll refugees in public benefits.
- Provide financial support and work in partnership with the local resettlement agency and the family to decide how funds will be spent to best support the needs of the family.
  - Refugee family size and history can affect housing needs, medical treatments, and special provisions such as cribs or car seats as well as miscellaneous costs (such as volunteer background checks, apartment items that were not donated through in-kind drives, including gas, pre-paid phones, etc.).

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## Community Sponsorship Requires Action:

Community sponsorship differs from co-sponsorship in that it doesn't require as formal of a commitment. If your community group isn't ready for co-sponsorship or doesn't quite meet the requirements of being an established community group, there are still many ways to get involved!

- Financial Support: Commit to raise money to pay for rent for a refugee family for a set amount of time.
- Apartment Set-Up: Arrange new apartments for arriving families.
- Mentorship: Partner with refugee families to practice English, job readiness training, school preparation, adjusting to U.S. culture.
- Community Connections: Become a welcoming community and helping to connect them to their new city.
- Conversational English: Be a conversation partner, practicing English.
- Transportation: Take refugees to occasional appointments or take them shopping in their first month. You can help teach them to ride the bus and may find it useful to practice with them a few times.
- Tutoring: Assist refugee youth and adults who are enrolled in classes with their assignments. You may find that the area where they need the most help is in adjusting to a new method of learning and teaching—rather than the content itself.
- Expand the Welcome: Share the work you are doing with your friends, family, and community! Encourage them to get involved.

*\*Opportunities vary based on the local resettlement office.*

### **ROOTED IN FAITH:**

Our faith calls on us to welcome the stranger. Co-sponsorship is a direct response to neighbors seeking concrete and transformative ways to welcome refugees and migrants through love and service.

**EMMAUS: Congregational Discernment** is LIRS' invitation for congregations to consider how they can respond to the biblical call to welcome the stranger. Through the three sessions of the Discernment Guide, faith communities will meet to pray, discuss, and discern how they can accompany refugees and migrants as they rebuild their lives.

Visit [lirs.org/EMMAUS](http://lirs.org/EMMAUS) for more information.

To sign up or download additional resources:  
[lirs.org/circle-of-welcome](http://lirs.org/circle-of-welcome)



Lutheran Immigration  
and Refugee Service