

# Co-Sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding

between



Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services

and

This memorandum of understanding clarifies the roles of, the responsibilities of and the relationship between the resettlement agency, Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS), and the community co-sponsorship group with whom IRIS will place a newly arriving Reception & Placement (R&P) client.

IRIS is an affiliate of Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM) and is allocated resettlement cases through the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) on the basis of a contract between EMM and the Department of State. IRIS chooses some cases for placement with a co-sponsor based on availability, need and specific factors related to each case.

In order to be eligible for a co-sponsorship placement, at least 5 members of the community group must go through IRIS' orientation and training program. Their self-assessment must be approved by IRIS and they must submit a green light form stating that they can be ready to resettle a family with 2 weeks' notice. The group must be an incorporated entity and must have liability insurance that covers its volunteers.

Within the IRIS Community Co-Sponsorship model, many required R&P tasks are delegated to the community co-sponsorship group. While IRIS remains directly accountable to both Episcopal Migration Ministries and the federal government, once the co-sponsorship placement is confirmed,

**the community co-sponsorship group agrees to take responsibility for the following:**

- Housing:** Acquire suitable housing in accordance with the R&P Home Safety Evaluation Checklist. Provide a security deposit for initial housing and/or second home at end of initial lease. Provide lease guarantee if necessary.
- Rental Assistance:** Follow the IRIS Financial Assistance Policy and provide continued rental assistance according to this policy once the R&P grant has been spent.
- Furnishings and Supplies:** Collect furnishings, kitchen and household items, hygiene and cleaning items in accordance with the R&P Home Supply Checklist. Ensure that these items are available to the family upon arrival.
- Seasonal Clothing:** Ensure that each member of the family has adequate seasonal clothing and footwear for work, school, and everyday use in accordance with the guidance provided in the IRIS Co-Sponsorship Manual. Provide whatever they do not bring with them including diapers for infants and toddlers.
- Stock the Pantry:** Purchase culturally appropriate groceries for the family, enough for 4-5 days until they can buy their own groceries.

- **Arrival:** Pick up the family from the airport or the IRIS office in New Haven and welcome them to their new home and community.
- **Welcome Meal:** Provide a culturally appropriate meal, ready for the individual or family to enjoy immediately upon arrival at their new home.
- **Pocket Money and Food Allocations:** Upon arrival, provide clients with pocket money (\$50 per adult, \$25 per child to be split evenly among parents if relevant) as well as food allocations (in accordance with guidance provided in the IRIS Co-Sponsorship Manual) so that they are able to purchase groceries until SNAP benefits are received.
- **Public Benefits:** Ensure that clients apply for social security cards and enroll in public assistance programs (TFA/RCA, SNAP, HUSKY/Medicaid) shortly after arrival.
- **Health:** Ensure that Refugee Health Assessments are conducted within 30 days of arrival. Accompany the family to medical appointments and assist as an advocate for the individual or family's healthcare access. Teach family to navigate healthcare system independently.
- **Education:** Ensure that children are enrolled in school as soon as possible and that school provides adequate ESOL assistance.
- **English Language Acquisition:** Ensure that adult family members are enrolled in ESOL classes as soon as possible. Focus on developing English skills in conversation with the family.
- **Financial Education:** Facilitate financial education for the family. Help establish budget and support financial literacy.
- **Job Development:** Help all employable individuals within the family with employment preparation in order to work towards self-sufficiency. Prepare resumes. Help identify employment opportunities. Provide interview preparation. Liaise with employers to facilitate communication.
- **Transportation Assistance:** Teach the family to use public transportation and other independent transportation options as soon as possible to work towards self-sufficiency. Arrange for transportation of family in situations where public transportation is not possible/practical.
- **Community Orientation:** Ensure that family learns of local resources and opportunities that will help facilitate their transition and integration into their new community and promote self-sufficiency.

- **Administrative Compliance:** Ensure that all federally required documentation is completed in a timely manner. Submit reimbursement requests in accordance with IRIS policies. Provide case notes according to the designated instructions and timeline.

**IRIS is both supporter and supervisor of the community co-sponsorship group.** IRIS will seek to ensure the best possible resettlement experience for both client and co-sponsor by clearly communicating regulations and expectations, providing training and continuing support, and facilitating the resolution of any conflicts.

**IRIS will ensure compliance** with federal and internal expectations through regular (at least weekly) communication and at least 3 home visits during the R&P period. Co-sponsorship group leaders are expected to communicate any difficulties to the IRIS case manager so that they can be rapidly addressed.

#### **Disbursement of R&P funds:**

It is generally expected that co-sponsorship groups will provide financial and material assistance directly to the clients or on their behalf and later seek reimbursement from IRIS for eligible R&P expenses. If in a given circumstance it is more efficient for IRIS to provide the assistance directly then IRIS may decide to do so, but it is expected that in most cases reimbursement to the co-sponsor is most efficient.

Community co-sponsorship groups must have 501(c)3 status or a 501(c)3 partner organization that accepts to act as a fiduciary. IRIS will only provide reimbursement to an organization with a 501(c)3 designation.

Community co-sponsors must prepare reimbursement requests as specified in the IRIS Co-Sponsorship Manual using the required form and attaching copies of all expenses signed by all parents within the client household. These will be submitted to the IRIS Community Co-Sponsorship Program Manager and reviewed by the Director of Case Management before being processed according to the IRIS R&P Disbursement Protocol.

Reimbursement requests must be submitted in a timely manner so as to ensure that all funds are spent by the client's 90th day after arrival. IRIS expects to receive requests for all expenses to date at the first and second home visits (approximately 10 and 45 days after arrival) if not before.

## Termination of Co-Sponsorship Agreement

Both IRIS and the community co-sponsorship group are committed to making efforts to preserve the co-sponsorship agreement even if the co-sponsorship proves to be difficult due to unexpected circumstances. However, the community co-sponsorship group also has the right to end the agreement for whatever reason if they feel that they cannot continue. Likewise, if at any point IRIS feels that the co-sponsorship group is unable to meet the expectations set forth and that it is in the best interest of the clients to end the co-sponsorship, IRIS reserves the right to do so. In this case, IRIS would decide whether to directly support the resettlement of the family in their initial placement location or to move them to a new location.

Under normal circumstances, it is expected that community co-sponsorship groups will continue to support the clients that have been placed with them at least through the duration of the rental assistance period (3-6 months, as assigned shortly after arrival). Groups can continue to assist beyond this period but should stop financial assistance and all actions that promote dependency. They should instead encourage all efforts toward financial and functional self-sufficiency. If the community co-sponsorship group has co-signed the client's lease they will remain financially liable for the duration of the lease. If the client has been placed in a location where rents are high (above the "New Haven Standard" as defined in the IRIS Co-Sponsorship Manual) then it is also expected that the community co-sponsorship group will assist the client to move to a more affordable location at the end of the lease should this be necessary or desired by the client. It is not expected that the community co-sponsorship group will continue to support the clients in order to help them stay in a location that they cannot afford independently.

Barring unforeseen circumstances and with certain exceptions, our expectation is that **the formal co-sponsorship period comprises one year from the date of arrival**, as illustrated in the supplement to the IRIS Co-Sponsorship Program Manual, "Co-Sponsorship Timeline and Trajectory". Gradual decreases in assistance over time, as highlighted in the above paragraph, are expected. While IRIS will continue to serve the refugee family for an additional 4 years, as well as liaise with the co-sponsor group for troubleshooting and other forms of assistance, the co-sponsor group's direct involvement with the family after the co-sponsorship period has ended is understood to be purely voluntary while assuming all liability for any group members' activities and actions.

**Commitment of the co-sponsorship group:**

We enter into this partnership thoughtfully and prepared to perform the activities indicated above to the best of our ability. We have been trained in our role and know whom at IRIS to contact with questions or concerns. We understand that IRIS is ultimately responsible for the provision of all core resettlement services, and that this memorandum of understanding is not a legally binding agreement. However, in the best interest of the clients, we enter into this partnership committed to our responsibilities and to respecting the regulations and guidelines set by the federal government and by IRIS.

Community Co-Sponsorship group representative

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*Signature*

*Date*

**Commitment of IRIS:**

We enter into this partnership confident that the community co-sponsorship group has been adequately trained and is fully committed to the mission of refugee resettlement and self-sufficiency. We will provide oversight and support during the resettlement period and remain accountable towards EMM and the federal government for the resettlement services received by the clients placed with this community co-sponsorship group.

Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services representative

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*Signature*

*Date*

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For Resettlement Office Use Only:

Principal Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Case Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate completion with a check mark:

- Community co-sponsorship group self-assessment has been approved by IRIS.
- Community co-sponsorship group has received in-person training on the resettlement process and their responsibilities for activities indicated above. Date(s) of training: \_\_\_\_\_
- Community co-sponsorship group has provided green light form.