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PRIVATE
REFUGEE
SPONSOR
Ontario
NETWORK

STRIVING TOWARD BEST PRACTICE

Engaging in Community

Sponsorship involves more than necessities of life; it involves building relationships that establish a sense of belonging. Engaging in community makes newcomers feel welcome especially when they get to know others and can begin to contribute to the communities in which they are now living. In addition, there are immense benefits from this engagement that lead to newcomer confidence in meeting new people from different backgrounds. And, there is an opportunity to practice English in an informal setting. Sponsors have identified all kinds of activity – recreation, sports, arts, community visits to historic sites, tours of government buildings, etc. What works best? Do you need to raise extra money to do this, or should you only look for free activities? How many events are enough? Remember all this kind of activity include teachable moments. Begin by making suggestions to those you sponsor with respect building trust that leads to participation in community activity and engagement.

Key Guidelines:

How to Start

- **Determine what the family would like to do** – start with the kids and their interests; ensure parents approve and make the decision; try not to do too much too soon; honour their decisions
- **Trust** – do some work first around building trust so the family is confident in allowing the children to participate; consider emotional state, stress in settlement
- **Ensure budget** – when creating your settlement plan, ensure you allow for some funds for special activities that may have a cost associated with them
- **Identify community opportunities** – research what is available in your community through your recreation department; there may be offerings you can access at no cost
- **Make recommendations** – determine activities based on age, gender, family background and what your sponsor group can accommodate

- **Transportation** – keep in mind that using public transportation is a teaching tool, but you may, from time-to-time, have to provide transportation and need booster seats, car seats or room for a stroller

Some ideas

- Organize a picnic to introduce family to a neighbouring community
- Take the family on a day trip to Niagara Falls, or other Ontario venue such as a beach or waterfront area
- Plan tours of historic sites
- Explore a tour of the CN tower or the Zoo or the Science Centre, if in Toronto or GTA
- Plan walks in a park with a sponsor group member
- Encourage and organize swimming lessons for those who want to learn to swim
- Plan a hike in areas near where the family lives
- Explore soccer games, hockey leagues for kids; dance classes, gym classes, etc.
- Visit a farm at harvest time, or farmer's markets in the summer
- Identify free outdoor concerts, movies and weekend festivals
- Try a Saturday afternoon bowling experience
- Introduce skating, tobogganing, sledding in winter
- Visit a sugarbush in Spring to learn about maple syrup
- Check out programs at your local public library, story time, plays, arts & crafts
- Organize a board games night in a sponsor's home
- Invite the family to one of the sponsor's homes for a meal
- Celebrate Canadian holidays – Thanksgiving, Canada Day, Victoria Day, Halloween; prepare newcomers for events involving fireworks
- Celebrate birthdays, baby showers
- Celebrate the family's culture through food events where they contribute
- Encourage participation by parents in children's school activities
- Introduce mothers to community groups for Moms and toddlers

Reference:

- PRSN Lunch & Learn, Community Engagement, March 2023