



## **AFGHAN PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE (APA) Important Information for Co-Sponsors**

### **Introduction**

APA is an emergency program created in response to the evacuation crisis in Afghanistan. It allows for the provision of initial resettlement support services for Afghan evacuees who are admitted to the U.S. Initial support services under the APA will be broadly similar to the core services provided under Reception and Placement (R&P) for refugees whose resettlement applications are processed overseas.

### **Application**

If your group has not co-sponsored a family in the last two years, an updated co-sponsorship application must be completed and submitted. Veteran groups may use their previous application as a template to provide updated information.

### **Background Checks**

All co-sponsor volunteers, including interpreters, who will have access to family members and/or their information must complete a background check through IRIS's vendor, Sterling Volunteers (SV). This requirement cannot be waived if members of your group have been background checked for their employers or other organizations. If, however, a group member has previously undergone a background check as a volunteer for IRIS, or has had a background check done through SV for another organization, the group member's check can be transferred to your group's roster.

#### ***Veteran Groups with SV Sub-Accounts***

Groups who already have active accounts from previous co-sponsorships can simply move forward with checking new members. Those who had checks more than three (3) years ago must submit to another background check.

#### ***New/Veteran Groups without SV Sub-Accounts***

Once your group's application has been approved, a sub-account on IRIS's SV master account will be set up for your group. A group member must be designated to distribute and monitor completion of the checks in her/his group. The IRIS Volunteer Coordinator will approve checks readily unless a check(s) contain adverse outcomes.

For more information about how Sterling Volunteers works, click here for FAQs:

<https://www.sterlingvolunteers.com/about/faqs/>.

### **Training**

All co-sponsor volunteers must be trained either via live Zoom training or by taking quizzes following recordings of training. Training should be completed before the green light form is submitted.

### **Green Light**



Once your group has met all the requirements listed on the Green Light Form, through which your group is certifying readiness to receive a family, your group leader needs to submit the completed and signed form to IRIS.

- If your group wishes to co-sponsor an Afghan APA family, *you must certify that you have sourced interpreters for both Dari and Pashto.*
- By greenlighting, your group must be prepared to accept an offer of co-sponsorship within 24 hours of receipt and understand that a family could arrive in as little as 48 hours from the date of offer.

### Temporary Housing

Because of the tight time frame in which we are operating, it is possible that you may not have either secured a permanent apartment or house, or the housing you have secured is not yet ready. It is important that temporary housing is located near the co-sponsor or in the town where the family will be resettled as onboarding must begin within 48 hours of arrival. The following options are acceptable:

- A private home\*
- An in-law or separate apartment\*
- Residential hotel

*\* If the owner of the private home or an in-law/separate apartment is not part of your group, the owner of the property must also submit to an SV background check. In either case, the property must undergo a cursory inspection by an IRIS staff member or agent.*

### Permanent Housing and The IRIS Standard

If you are able to secure an apartment before you have been offered a family for co-sponsorship, you are free to do so. *Your group will be responsible for any rent incurred before the family is settled.* First month's rent can be reimbursed only after the family has settled.

Due to the rise in rents over the last year, the IRIS (formerly New Haven) Standard maximum amounts that clients are expected to pay have been raised as indicated in the table below. Your group is expected to subsidize client rent above the appropriate amount below for the duration of the lease.

<b>1BR</b>	<b>\$1,100</b>
<b>2BR</b>	<b>\$1,400</b>
<b>3BR</b>	<b>\$1,700</b>
<b>4BR</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>

*Effective November 10, 2021*

### Family Placement



IRIS is receiving notices of assurance every day, sometimes multiple times per day. Once a family has been identified for co-sponsorship, you will receive a call from your case manager that a family is arriving. Usually the only information we are given is the number of people in the family, their genders, and their ages. Furthermore, at the time we offer your group the co-sponsorship, we may not yet have a date of arrival to provide. Nonetheless, **we ask that you confirm the offer of co-sponsorship within 24 hours, which must include a signed Co-Sponsor Agreement Form and an MoU** (i.e., those will be sent to the group lead via secure email shortly after the offer is extended by phone). The case manager will then provide you with as much information about the family that is available, along with some guidance on what to expect in terms of DSS benefits for the family.

### **Arrival**

The arrival procedure for APA families is different from what many of you have experienced with refugee families. Travel could happen within days or more than a week from the time you accept the offer. In light of these circumstances, as mentioned above, it is strongly recommended that you have temporary housing options in place. Most arrivals will take place at the IRIS office in New Haven. If time permits, arrangements can be made for a group to meet the family at JFK or LGA.

### **Social Security and Work Authorization**

APA families were able to apply on bases for both restricted Social Security cards and work authorization in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), or card. They are being processed and will be sent to the headquarters of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Washington, from where they will be distributed to families through the affiliate to which their cases were assigned. This means that IRIS will receive these documents and make arrangements to get them to you.

The Social Security card is restricted and will say “Valid with DHS Authorization Only”, which simply means that it can be presented with the EAD once it arrives to demonstrate ability to work legally in the US. Unlike with refugees, the expiration date on the EAD corresponds to the last date of the client’s humanitarian parole, which would be two (2) years from the date humanitarian parole was granted. Also, an APA client cannot work until s/he has the EAD in hand.

### ***APAs with pending SSNs can work! What to say to employers?***

The following documents can be presented to those employers who insist an SSN must be presented to confirm eligibility to work. The EAD is sufficient while the SSN is pending.

- USCIS Handbook for Employers - Section 3.0, Completing Section 1 of Form I-9  
<https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/form-i-9-resources/handbook-for-employers-m-274/30-completing-section-1-of-form-i-9>
- USDOJ Immigrant and Employee Rights Section, Civil Rights Division  
“Employee Rights and Resources for Refugees and Asylees” (also applies to Afghan parolees)  
<https://www.justice.gov/crt/case-document/file/1132566/download>



- IRS Publication 15 - Employer's Tax Guide (Circular E) for 2021 -- p. 15  
<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p15.pdf>
- Social Security Administration - Employer Responsibilities When Hiring Foreign Workers  
<https://www.ssa.gov/employer/hiring.htm>

### **Adjustment of Status**

This is an ongoing issue that must be resolved through congressional action. Until Congress acts to adjust the status of Afghan humanitarian evacuees (parolees) to that of refugees, the only option currently available is to apply for asylum. The refugee resettlement community and its advocates around the country, including in Congress, are working diligently to extend refugee status to Afghan humanitarian parolees in order to ensure a path to both permanent residency and citizenship. [See link here to advocacy efforts for the "Afghan Adjustment Act."](#) We will keep you posted on these developments.

### **DSS Benefits Onboarding**

Because DSS field offices throughout the state remain closed to all but emergency appointments due to the pandemic, applications for cash, SNAP, and medical benefits must be made online. Please refer to the [DSS Application Instructions](#) document while applying. Please note that:

- A Social Security application receipt is NOT necessary; and
- Once clients are fully enrolled, subsequent requests for documentation can be uploaded into the family's account or dropped off at a DSS Field Office.

### **Medical Exams and the Refugee Health Assessment (RHA)**

Although APA families have received comprehensive medical checks and have been administered vaccinations (including for COVID) on base, our national resettlement agency, Church World Service (CWS), requires that the family undertake an additional medical examination within 90 days of arrival in Connecticut. Some families are arriving with ample medical documentation, and others are not. In order to ensure a complete examination, particularly testing for lead among children, the Connecticut Department of Public Health has asked that all APA clients undergo a **Refugee Health Assessment (RHA)**, similar to what some of you have done for refugees. Unlike with refugees, the RHA for APA clients can be completed within 90 days of arrival in Connecticut. Nonetheless, children will need to have their RHAs done as soon as possible in order to complete school registration.

**You will not be able to bring the family to Yale due to acute capacity issues.** IRIS has formalized a relationship with Community Health Centers, Inc., which has several locations throughout Connecticut and is currently training its staff statewide to conduct RHAs with oversight from DPH. You are free to choose a CHC as a medical home for the family or any doctor who accepts HUSKY going forward.  
<https://www.chc1.com/locations/>

**Please note that unless specific medical documentation is supplied requiring the scheduling of an appointment pre-arrival, appointments cannot be scheduled through CHC until the family has arrived. If you**

**wish to schedule an appointment at a CHC facility, please contact your case manager. S/he will initiate contact with the CHC scheduler via email so that the scheduler may contact you to schedule an appointment. You will need to bring a CHC release form along with an RHA form for each client to the appointment(s). You will also need to make sure that the health team lead has access to a scanner so that medical records and documentation can be uploaded and transmitted to CHC through its secure platform called "Box" prior to the appointment(s).**

## APA Program Steps and APA Period Timeline

### ***Pre-Arrival***

- APA Co-Sponsorship Agreement (CSA) and MoU sent via secure email to group contact upon acceptance of offer of co-sponsorship.
- After receipt of CSA and MoU, pre-arrival information and the following onboarding forms and documents (or links to these documents which reside on the IRIS website) will be sent to the group leader via secure email:
  - Home Safety and Evaluation Checklist  
*To be completed and signed before family arrives*
  - Home Supply List  
*To be completed and signed before family arrives*
  - First Visit Form  
*To be completed at first visit within 48 hours of the family's arrival*
  - Authorization to Release Information (one per adult, one parent signs for children) and IRIS Co-Sponsor Photo/Interview Release Form (one per adult, one parent signs for children)  
*To be completed and signed at first visit*
  - Client Rights and Grievance Form  
*To be signed at first visit*
  - Co-Sponsor Case Management Intake  
*To be administered and signed by CS within 5 days of arrival*
  - IRIS Racial Identification Guidelines (accompanies CM Intake)
  - Earnings and Expenses Form  
*To be completed and signed in final toward/at the 90-day meeting*
  - DSS Letter for family and/or each adult in case and/or DSS Service Needs Assessment(s), primarily for both parents unless a newborn less than one year old is in the household



*For the DSS letter, your case manager will need the complete address for the family's residence, complete contact information for the landlord, the monthly amount for rent, and the utilities for which the family will be responsible.*

- Employment Assessment Form  
*Completed within first 2-3 weeks*
  
- Second Home Visit Form  
*Completed within first 2-3 weeks*

### **Post-Arrival**

- Return the following completed forms with all required signatures via secure email to your case manager within 7 days of the family's arrival:
  - Home Safety and Evaluation Checklist
  - Home Supply List
  - First Visit Form
  - Authorization to Release Information Form(s)
  - IRIS Co-Sponsor Photo/Interview Release Form(s)
  - Co-Sponsor Case Management Intake (signed by CS)
  - Client Rights and Grievance Form
  
- Case notes beginning with pre-arrival arrangements need to be compiled and emailed weekly (using client initials to protect PII) to your case manager. Using the case note template and guidelines as a reference (posted on the resource page), provide weekly case notes by detailing both required activities (as denoted in the template) and other important information. Groups who enlist their administrative contact to gather and organize weekly case notes have experienced the most efficiency in meeting this requirement.
  
- Social Security cards have been applied for on the bases. They will be delivered to IRIS through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Washington and arrangements will be made to get them to you. **There have been delays in receiving these in the vast majority of cases. Yet, they are arriving. Do not attempt to apply for cards at a Social Security Administration (SSA) office.**
  
- As soon as possible, apply for TFA/RCA, SNAP, and HUSKY through DSS online by following the instructions linked above.
  
- Within two weeks of arrival, the co-sponsor needs to submit a reimbursement request for allowable expenses following the directions on the reimbursement request cover sheet and the reimbursement guidelines in the "What Does APA?R&P Cover?" document. Until such time that these updated documents are uploaded to the resource page, your case manager will send you these documents via secure email.
  
- Schedule RHAs for children in order to facilitate school registration. You may visit a family doctor/pediatrician of your choice who takes HUSKY and is willing to wait for coverage to be



activated before billing. Alternatively, you may contact CHC as directed above. Adults must have their RHAs within 90 days of arrival in Connecticut and theirs can be done at a practice of your choice or through CHC as directed above.

- Roughly 2-3 weeks after arrival, the “second home visit form” is to be completed with the family in their home and an employment assessment conducted for all adults in the household. With interpretation, the second visit and the employment assessment will take between 2 and 3 hours. If the adult clients do not require interpretation, the time needed for the visit and employment assessments may only take 2 hours. Your case manager can provide you with guidance on completing these assessments if needed.
- Cultural Orientation and Resettlement Education (CORE), which is required for all clients 18 or older, is not currently being held in person due to pandemic restrictions. Your case manager will administer a compressed version of CORE with adult family members in their home, or by arranging for adult family members from cases in a geographic area to meet at a nearby venue (e.g., at a church/temple/community center), or via Zoom. An interpreter must be sourced by the co-sponsor if the adult clients are not proficient in English. This must be done within 90 days of arrival.
- By the 75th day, your group should have submitted or plan to submit all reimbursement requests in order to ensure that the grant is spent by the 90th day. If the family’s grant is not expended by the 75th day, please consult your case manager as soon as possible to discuss how to meet this requirement.
- Around the date on which the 90th day falls, your case manager will either meet with the group leader about the Earnings and Expenses form or come to the family home to review the grant expense report and the Earnings and Expenses form. The adult clients will sign both the report and the form at this meeting. In addition to reviewing 90-day financials, your case manager will discuss any outstanding and/or pressing issues that remain prevalent at this juncture. An interpreter must be sourced by the co-sponsor if a meeting is needed and the adult clients are not proficient in English.