

Tips for Home Hosting

- **Screen and prepare as Hosts:** Guests need assurance that they are moving into a safe place. Hosts should obtain a police clearance for all adults over 18 living in the home and provide personal references. Guests should take time to see the space being offered (or at least photos/video) to ensure it offers privacy and meets basic standards of safety.
- **Talk about expectations:** This is crucial. Write down and share basic house rules (including things like quiet times, smoking and alcohol consumption, having visitors in the home etc) Establish an end date for the hosting relationship. You can adjust later if necessary but it is helpful to have a shared understanding of a time frame at the outset.
- **Think about long-term housing from the beginning:** Finding long-term housing is a huge challenge and it can take a lot of time and effort. Exploring options and thinking about possibilities early is helpful.
- **Be mindful of cultural differences:** Guests may not share the same culture or religion as you. Approach this with curiosity and respect. Keep an eye out for what you can learn from your Guest. What good things do you observe in their culture? What can you learn from them? Do you know someone from their culture who can be an advisor for you? Is there any good literature you can read about their culture or home country? On a practical level finding someone to help interpret or using translation apps on your phone can be extremely helpful.
- **Pay attention to power dynamics:** The Host-Guest relationship can lend itself to unequal and unhealthy power dynamics where the Host can have all the power and control. The more you are aware of this and try to mitigate it the better. Always look for ways to increase the

mutuality. In your relationships learn to receive from Guests as well as to give.

- **Respect the Guest's choices:** Hosts can offer resources and ideas, but the Guest needs to make their own choices and decisions. Recognize both their vulnerability AND their ability to contribute- refugees arrive with skills, education, faith, and other gifts to share with us.
- **Build connections:** Don't be a lone ranger. Invite others from your circle of friends to join you in supporting the Guest staying in your home. Introduce your Guests to others in your network so they can begin to establish their own circle of relationships. Utilize the resources in your community that a newly arrived refugee might benefit from. Language classes, settlement organizations, libraries, job searching agencies, religious and cultural groups, food and furniture banks are all helpful resources to connect with.
- **Money matters:** Think through and talk about money issues. Will Guests be expected to pay anything to stay in your home? How will you manage food? Transportation? Or other material needs they might have?
- **Be trauma informed:** You can expect that your Guests have experienced some degree of trauma on their journey. They will also be worried about family/friends back home, as well as their own future. Don't directly ask people to share details about what they have experienced. If at some point they choose to share more of their story with you, be ready to listen. Learn about some of the common responses to stress and/or trauma as well as some helpful coping strategies.
- **Insurance:** Let your insurance company know that you have additional people staying in your home. Make sure you have adequate car insurance if you are driving Guests in your car. Always use proper car seats for children.



- **There are limits to the support you can provide:** Offering a safe place to stay and friendship is a critical part of a refugee's recovery journey. However, it is important to remember that you cannot "fix" everything for your new friends, and their immediate needs may be more than you can meet. Find a trusted friend with whom you can process your own feelings if you feel overwhelmed. Be realistic about what you can, and can't do.

For further resources about home hosting for refugees contact info@iafr.ca.