



Settlement Guidebook

for
Community Supporter Groups
in the
Community Refugee Integration & Settlement Pilot
(CRISP)



Community Refugee
Sponsorship Australia

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Part One: Introduction to CRSA and the CRISP

1. About CRSA

Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia (CRSA) is an independent Australian charity leading civil society efforts to establish community sponsorship of refugees as a common practice throughout Australia, to benefit refugees and Australian communities alike.

Established in 2020, CRSA builds on the work of its predecessor, the Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, which was an unincorporated project of a number of Australian charities and NGOs launched in 2018.

Our vision is to lead in encouraging, developing and supporting programs that expand and improve refugee settlement in Australia by harnessing the generosity, goodwill and social capital of groups of everyday Australians and community groups.

2. About the CRISP

In late 2021, the Australian government appointed CRSA to co-design and administer a new Australian community sponsorship program for refugees, known as the 'CRISP' (Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot).

The CRISP program enables groups of everyday Australians (including those in regional communities) to welcome refugees into their local area from 'day one' of their Australian journey and provide them with practical resettlement and integration support, in line with other community sponsorship programs operating successfully around the world.

The vision for the CRISP is inspired by the successful community refugee sponsorship program operating in Canada since the 1970s, which has enabled more than 325,000 refugees to build a new life in Canada, in addition to those resettled under the government-funded resettlement program. Similar schemes are now being implemented around the world, including in the UK, Ireland & New Zealand. The CRISP will support 1500 refugees over 4 years, between 2022 - 2025.

3. About this Guidebook

This Settlement Guidebook has three parts:

- Part One: Introduction provides the broad policy guidelines for the CRISP;
- Part Two: Settlement Planning is designed to assist Community Supporter Groups (CSGs) to develop a Settlement Plan for the refugee household they welcome;
- Part Three: What if something goes wrong? outlines the support CRSA provides to CSGs, and what CSGs should do in the case of something going wrong.

At the core of community sponsorship models around the world is an understanding of CSGs as independent, self-directed, self-governed and trusted knowledge holders in their own regions. Thus this Guidebook is not intended to be prescriptive, but to support CSGs to take a holistic approach to settlement planning for their matched refugee household.

4. Summary of CSG Commitments

Part Two of this Guidebook contains a range of information that may assist you in providing settlement support to your matched refugee household. However, the list below constitutes the minimum requirements of CSGs within the CRISP.

1. Meet the Refugee Household at the airport upon their arrival in Australia and transport to on-arrival accommodation, including (if required) transit support from an international airport to a domestic/regional airport and transit accommodation.
2. Provide safe and suitable temporary accommodation to the Refugee Household, from their date of arrival, until they secure appropriate long-term housing.
3. Provide the Refugee Household with essential items upon arrival in Australia, including at least one week's worth of food and groceries, seasonal clothing and at least one smartphone with a sim card and adequate data.
4. Provide the Refugee Household with weekly income support payments on a par with Commonwealth income support entitlements to enable the family to sustain themselves until they begin receiving income support via Services Australia.
5. Assist with registration for Services Australia income support and Medicare.
6. Assist the Refugee Household to open an Australian bank account.
7. Assist the Refugee Household to secure appropriate long-term housing.
8. Provide the Refugee Household with suitable and good quality furniture, appliances and other basic household goods for their long-term residence.
9. Connect the Refugee Household with a local GP and any other healthcare provider required to meet their physical and mental health needs.
10. Assist the Refugee Household to enrol children in school and adults in English classes including the Adult Migrant English Program.
11. Provide settlement and integration support on an as-needs basis (including English language and employment support), to help the household achieve their goals and attain financial and general self-sufficiency for a period of 12 months from the household's arrival in Australia.

5. Insurance

This document about [risk and insurance](#) is not legal advice but rather a tool to help CSGs form a general understanding of how CRSA's programs approach the question of 'risk' and the existence of certain umbrella insurance policies arranged by CRSA.

For more detail, read our [policy schedules and policy wording](#). We encourage groups to familiarise themselves with these policies, noting that like all insurance policies they contain conditions and exclusions and do not cover all potential risks. Insurance coverage for CSGs will commence on the date of arrival in Australia of the refugee household they will support.

6. Fundraising

Undertaking fundraising activities in your local area is a great way to engage your local community into your refugee sponsorship endeavour.

If you wish to be able to issue tax deductible gift receipts as part of your fundraising, we encourage you to explore the option of fundraising through a local charity known to your group (eg. a local church or non profit organisation).

Failing that, CRSA is trialling allowing groups to fundraise in the name of CRSA through the 'Shout for Good' platform. All donations above \$2 made through this platform are tax deductible. CSGs who are interested in fundraising through this platform are invited to contact our Operations Manager, Sophie Bosch at info@refugeesponsorship.org.au for assistance to set up and use this tool.

It is anticipated that CSGs' financial responsibilities will be confined to the first few months post-arrival. There is no expectation under the CRISP for CSGs to provide ongoing financial support to the refugee household throughout the 12 month period.

7. Media and Promotion

We ask that CSGs notify us as early as possible of any marketing or media activities relating to the CRISP, or of any media interest in the CRISP or CRISP refugee participants, particularly where it involves a national media outlet, as CRSA is obliged to notify the Department of Home Affairs in such instances.

To protect the privacy and safety of refugee participants of the program, CSGs must not provide personal information about refugee participants to the media without the informed and express consent of the participant. CSGs should encourage refugee participants to consider the implications of sharing their personal information and images publicly, including possible impacts on the safety of relatives overseas.

This [Promotions Toolkit](#) has been developed to support CSGs to promote their activities in their local areas. It includes draft wording, photos and tips that CSGs may like to draw on.

Part Two: Settlement Planning

The Settlement Checklist, at the end of Part Two of this Guidebook, sets out the suggested time frames for each settlement task, and allows Community Supporter Groups (CSGs) to identify which member of the group will take a lead on each area of responsibility. Please see below for an outline of each settlement area.

1. 'Welcome to Australia'

Community Supporter Groups are responsible for:

- Meeting the newcomers at the airport at their point of arrival to Australia;
- Accompanying the newcomers between domestic airports, and providing accommodation in transit, if required;
- Providing transportation to the newcomers' on-arrival accommodation;
- Having a 'welcome pack' of essential items ready before the newcomers' arrival;
- Providing income support until government income commences (2 weeks).

1.1 *Airport Reception*

Only one member of the Community Supporter Group (CSG) is required to be at the airport. Given flight itineraries can change with little notice, in planning which group member/s will meet the newcomers at the airport, CSGs are encouraged to consider who can make themselves available at little notice. To ensure the refugee household's reception at the airport is not compromised by any unforeseen issues, such as a car breaking down on the way to the airport, CSGs are encouraged to develop a 'Plan B' for the airport arrival ie. a second vehicle and group member on call to assist if needed.

1.2 *Transit Support*

Though the newcomers' flights will be paid for to the final destination, in the event that they need to transit between their point of international arrival to a local airport, they will need to be met by at least one CSG member at their point of international arrival, and accompanied to their final destination. Only one CSG member is required to provide transit support, at the cost of the CSG. If overnight accommodation is required, the cost will be incurred by the CSG.

1.3 *Transportation to Accommodation*

CSGs should consider how many vehicles might be required to fit all household members and their luggage, and whether any children's car seats or other mobility aids might be required.

1.4 *Initial Income Support*

CSGs should plan and budget for the provision of two weeks of income support, on a par with Commonwealth income support entitlements. See 'Essential Registrations', below.

1.5 *'Welcome Pack'*

CSGs should ensure the household has essential supplies at their accommodation on arrival. See list below of prescribed (essential) and suggested items.

Welcome Pack Checklist
Prescribed
<input type="checkbox"/> At least one week's worth of culturally appropriate food
<input type="checkbox"/> At least one week's worth of groceries including toiletries
<input type="checkbox"/> A smartphone with a charger, sim card and adequate data
<input type="checkbox"/> Initial income support payment (to last 1 - 2 weeks)
<input type="checkbox"/> Nappies for infants; baby formula if needed
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency contact details - 000, Nurse On Call, group members' contact details
Non-Prescribed Suggestions
<input type="checkbox"/> A photo and short biography of each member of the group
<input type="checkbox"/> English dictionary or phrase book
<input type="checkbox"/> Local map and pre-paid public transport ticket; a local newspaper
<input type="checkbox"/> Toys, colouring books, etc, for children
<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural or faith-related items (eg. bible, Qur'an, prayer mat, etc).
<input type="checkbox"/> Chess, playing cards, backgammon, etc
<input type="checkbox"/> Backpack, document holder, water bottle, keyring, sunscreen, insect repellent

1.7 *Engaging Your Local Community Pre-Arrival*

It can be helpful to engage with key community contacts before the newcomers arrive, to inform them of the imminent arrival of a refugee family into the community and to bring them into the shared endeavour. This may involve establishing contact with:

- A local GP - ideally one who will bulk-bill the refugee household and use an interpreter if needed. CSGs might consider sharing the Refugee Health Guide for GPs and details of the free GP interpreting service with the GP; see 'Health', below.
- A local real estate agency - who may be open to advising landlords of the endeavour and exploring their interest to support a newly arrived refugee family.
- The local school, relevant place of worship, and any other people or organisations who may become meaningfully involved with the refugee household.

2. Housing

Community Supporter Groups (CSGs) are responsible for:

- Providing accommodation from date of arrival until long-term housing secured;
- Supporting refugee participants to secure long-term housing; and
- Furnishing the long-term residence.

2.1 *On-Arrival Accommodation*

On-arrival accommodation must be available and ready for the refugee participants to reside in from their date of arrival in Australia. CSGs should ensure it has adequate sleeping arrangements for all family members and access to essentials such as cooking and laundry facilities.

While the process of securing long-term housing will differ depending on settlement location, the size of the family household and other factors, we recommend planning and budgeting for up to 6 weeks of short-term accommodation, and thinking about whether it can be extended, or alternative arrangements made, in the event that long-term housing is not secured within 6 weeks.

When CRSA speaks with refugee participants within the CRISP one week after their arrival to Australia, we advise that newcomers are usually expected to start paying rent, or contributing to rent payments, when they move into long-term housing or four weeks post-arrival - whichever comes first. CSGs are encouraged to set clear expectations with the refugee household they support within the first few weeks post-arrival about when they might commence paying, or contributing to, rent.

CSGs are encouraged to research and understand the likely cost of a serviced apartment, or similar, in their region, early on in their planning, as this is usually the most significant cost of the sponsorship period. Where this short-term housing can be provided in-kind, the overall cost of the sponsorship is significantly reduced.

2.2 *Long-Term Accommodation*

Long-term housing should be of a quality and size that would likely be acceptable to an average Australian family, taking into account the size and composition of the family.

Housing affordability and availability are challenges faced by many across Australia, and are likely to be among the most significant challenges of the community refugee sponsorship endeavour. [These housing strategies may be of interest to CSGs](#). In particular, some groups find it helpful to develop a housing application pack, including letters of support from each group member explaining the group members' professional backgrounds and duration of residence in the region.

We recommend waiting for refugee participants to arrive before committing to long-term housing, for two key reasons:

- It allows them to have a say in where they will settle, which is likely to increase their chance of remaining in the property for the period of the lease; and
- There can be unforeseen delays in refugees' arrival to Australia, even after a travel itinerary has been issued. Where CSGs have committed to a lease before the newcomers arrive, they can find themselves paying rent on a vacant property.

In looking for long-term housing with the refugee participants, CSGs should consider proximity to public transport, the supermarket, schools and other essential services, as well as affordability for the refugee participants, who will rely on government income support through Services Australia until they secure employment.

In planning how they will support the newcomers to secure housing, CSGs should consider:

- Who will assist the refugee household to complete relevant paperwork;
- Who will act as a personal reference if required;
- How refugee participants will get to and from housing inspections;
- What documents may be needed to evidence the newcomers' government income;
- Connection of utilities - electricity, gas, water, internet, etc.

In community refugee sponsorship models around the world, community supporter groups have reported positive housing outcomes as a result of having establishing relationships with local landlords and/or real estate agents before the refugees arrive, and potentially even before a match with a specific refugee household has occurred, to encourage their engagement in the shared community endeavour of refugee sponsorship.

2.3 *Furniture and Basic Household Goods*

CSGs are encouraged to develop a full list of items that are likely to be required in the refugee family's long-term residence, to ensure smaller items (pots and pans, linen, etc) are not forgotten. Many household goods can probably be donated, but CSGs should ensure they are clean and in good repair with no tears, stains or obvious damage.

Apart from basic whitegoods such as a fridge and washing machine, CSGs are encouraged to wait for refugee participants to arrive in Australia before purchasing furniture, so individual and cultural preferences can be accommodated.

Examples of cultural preferences may include preferring a rug and cushions to a dining table, or a large family bed to individual beds. These should not be assumed but discussed with the matched refugee household once they're in Australia.

[This list of Basic Household Goods](#) is provided by the government to its funded settlement service providers, and outlines the items that constitute a full household package for newly arrived refugee households. This is provided here as a guide only - CSGs are encouraged to speak with their matched refugee household to ensure the items provided meet their preferences and needs.

3. Language and Communication

Community Supporter Groups (CSGs) should consider any language barriers that may exist between them and their matched refugee household and how they will address them, both before and after the newcomers' arrival to Australia.

3.1 *Interpreting & Translation*

Interpreting refers to verbal language support, and translation to written language support. Both CSGs and refugee participants have access to free interpreting support under the CRISP, through the government's Free Interpreting Service (FIS).

The Free Interpreting Service provides telephone interpreting which can be accessed on-the-spot, or booked in advance. CSGs will be provided with instructions for how to set up their FIS account after they have been matched with a refugee household.

CSGs should not assume that the newcomers will want to use an interpreter, but to ask on each occasion, so the newcomers have every opportunity to practice English if they wish.

However, where the newcomers have only a beginners level of English, it is generally recommended for a qualified interpreter (through the CSG's FIS account, or through a GP or school or other service provider's account), as opposed to a family or community member, to be used for medical and legal matters, including signing a lease agreement.

CSGs may need to educate key contacts within their communities (eg. GP, real estate agent, school staff) about how to access free language support through the free interpreting service that is available to all GPs and schools or, failing that, through the CSG's FIS account.

CSGs should be mindful that it is common for migrants and refugees to rely on their children to interpret for them, as they may have higher English proficiency. This can put pressure on children and CSGs are encouraged to direct newcomers to language support where needed.

In the event that refugee participants require documents to be translated, they should note that only documentation translated by an accredited translator will be accepted as a verified translation. Refugee participants of the CRISP are eligible for free translation of up to 10 documents into English within their first two years of getting their visa. Applications for free translation can be lodged online, [here](#).

Types of documents that can be submitted for free translation include those relating to:

- **Identity** eg. identity, birth, marriage, divorce, custody, death certificates.
- **Facilitation** eg. drivers' licence, police certificates, medical reports.
- **Education** eg. school certificates, academic transcripts, etc.
- **Employment** eg. trade certificates, employment contracts, etc

More information can be found [here](#).

3.2 *Pre-Arrival Communication*

In joining the CRISP, CSGs agree to establish contact with their matched refugee household while they are still offshore, to:

- Introduce the group and its members
- Get to know the refugee household
- Explain the CRISP and the role of the CSG
- Provide initial information about Australia and about their region
- Set clear expectations about how they will work together going forward
- Plan together for the refugee participants' arrival.

CSGs should think about the best way to establish and maintain contact pre-arrival eg. telephone, email, WhatsApp, FaceTime, etc.

Google Translate is a helpful tool for overcoming language barriers, and WhatsApp messages have proven to be a useful tool for prompt and efficient pre-arrival contact for the first cohort of matches within the CRISP.

Many of the first groups within the CRISP commenced the pre-arrival contact with a WhatsApp message, using Google Translate, and progressed to a video call. However, each group is encouraged to do what works for them.

3.3 *Post-Arrival Communication*

CSGs should consider how they will maintain contact with their matched refugee household post-arrival in Australia. Groups often find it helpful to establish a WhatsApp group with all CSG members, so the refugee household can direct questions to the entire group as needed.

CSGs are directed to the CRISP [Code of Conduct](#) about the use of social media and other communications platforms, with particular reference to the sharing of the participants' information or images, and with regards to children.

3.4 *Informal English Language Support*

While refugee participants should be encouraged to engage with formal English language classes, confidence and competence in English is often attained through more informal, incidental opportunities to practice conversational English.

The relationship between the CSG members and the refugee participants is likely to provide significant opportunities for the newcomers to practice their conversational English. Some groups may wish to set aside time each week specifically for a casual, conversational English session.

4. Essential Registrations

Community Supporter Groups (CSGs) are responsible for supporting their matched refugee household to:

- Open an Australian bank account
- Register for income support and Medicare through Services Australia
- Obtain a tax file number

4.1 Bank Account

Refugee participants will not be able to register for Medicare or income support through Services Australia until they can provide details of an Australian bank account. CSGs are therefore encouraged to support newcomers to open a bank account as soon as possible - ideally within 48 hours of arrival, so applications for Medicare and income support can occur within one week of arrival.

The relevant forms will need to be signed by the refugee participants, but CSGs are encouraged to have the forms ready before they arrive, and to pre-fill any sections that might expedite the process.

Refugee participants may require assistance to activate their bank cards, navigate online banking, use an ATM machine and use 'pay pass'.

ANZ Bank has been supportive of CRISA's work, and is keen to support refugees with their financial needs. CSGs and refugee participants are of course welcome to choose any bank they wish. If you choose to use ANZ, you may find [this step-by-step guide](#) helpful.

Given it will take a few weeks for the bank card to be received, CSGs should request a letter from the bank with the refugee participants' names and the bank account details. This will assist with the Services Australia registration process, and will serve as an additional identity document.

4.2 Services Australia

Services Australia (formerly known as Centrelink) will assist the newcomers to register for:

- Government income support
- Medicare
- Tax file number

More details on each of these is provided below, and in [these slides provided by Services Australia](#).

4.3 Income Support

Information about Services Australia supports for refugees can be found [here](#).

Information about payments which refugee participants may be eligible for is [here](#).

To estimate what payments a newcomer/family will receive, see the Services Australia [Guide to Australian Government Payments](#).

The primary payment that newly arrived adult refugees receive will likely be either:

- **JobSeeker Payment** (for people seeking employment) or
- **Parenting Payment** (for primary carers of children under 8 years for a single parent, or under 6 years for partnered parents).

Pay rates are updated on 20 March and 20 September each year.

From 20 September 2022, estimates for adult payments are as follows:

Your circumstance	Maximum Fortnightly JobSeeker Payment ¹	Maximum Fortnightly Parenting Payment ²
Single, no children	\$668.40	N/A
Single with a dependent child/children	\$718.60	\$915.40
Partnered	\$608.70	\$608.70

There are two additional payments available for families with children:

- **Family Tax Benefit A** (paid per child, to assist with the costs of raising each child) and
- **Family Tax Benefit B** (paid once per family, to reflect the impact of the child/ren on the parent's ability to join the workforce).

Though both Family Tax Benefit payments are income/means tested, most (if not all) refugee participants of the CRISP should receive the maximum amounts on arrival.

As at January 2023, estimates for child payments are as follows:

Your circumstance	Maximum Family Tax Benefit A Payment	Maximum Family Tax Benefit B Payment
Each child aged 0 - 12 years	\$197.96 per fortnight per child	
Each child aged 13 - 18 years	\$257.46 per fortnight per child	
Where the youngest child is under 5 years of age	-	\$168.28 per fortnight per family
Where the youngest child is between 5 and 18 years of age	-	\$117.46 per fortnight per family

¹ [How much JobSeeker Payment you can get - JobSeeker Payment - Services Australia](#)

² [How much Parenting Payment you can get - Parenting Payment - Services Australia](#)

There are 3 Services Australia forms that CSGs should assist their refugee household to complete, to apply for income support:

1. [Notification of refugee arrival form \(SS459\) - Services Australia](#)

CSGs will need to notify Services Australia of their matched refugee household's date of arrival by completing a *Notification of Refugee Arrival Form* and submitting it to arrivals.national@servicesaustralia.gov.au.

This form does not require the refugee participants' signature. It cannot be lodged before the date of arrival, but should be lodged as soon as possible post-arrival (including on the date of arrival if possible), as income support can be backdated to the lodgement date, provided the full claim and relevant documents are lodged within 14 days.

Some tips for completing this form are below:

- [Question 2: Full name and details of HSP Case Manager](#)

Provide the Group Coordinator's name and contact details in the 'HSP Case Manager' section. In the accompanying email when you submit the form, note that these details relate to a CRISP Community Supporter Group and not an HSP Case Manager.

- [Question 7: Are they entering Australia under the Community Support Program?](#)

Select NO, and skip to Question 10.

- [Question 10: Visa subclass](#)

The visa subclass will be either 200 or 204. This information will be in the Refugee Household Profile provided to you in the 'CRISP - Getting Started' email which you'll receive after signing the Settlement Deed.

- [Question 11: Visa grant date](#)

The refugee participants may have this information on a visa grant letter. If not, leave it blank - it will not affect the application.

- [Question 22: Does the applicant have a proposer?](#)

Select NO, and skip to the next question.

Once the *Notification of Refugee Arrival Form* is lodged, Services Australia will contact the refugee participants, on the contact details provided on that form, to arrange an interview.

2. [Claim for persons granted a Refugee, Humanitarian or Protection visa form \(SS415\) - Services Australia](#)

Notwithstanding the individual interview that Services Australia provides for newly arrived refugees, to claim a payment, the *Claims for Persons Granted a Refugee, Humanitarian or Protection Visa Form* will need to be completed and lodged at arrivals.national@servicesaustralia.gov.au, ideally before the interview.

CSGs are encouraged to pre-fill as much of this form as they can before the refugee participants arrive, to expedite the registration process on arrival, noting that the

forms will need to be signed by the refugee participants post-arrival, and that refugee participants will require details of an Australian bank account before the forms can be lodged.

Copies of identity documents will need to be lodged with the claim form, including the travel document the refugee family used to travel to Australia (which will be either a valid overseas passport or an Australian government-issued ImmiCard), the Australian visa grant letter, and a letter from the bank where an account was opened for the newcomers.

CSGs are responsible for providing income support to their matched household until their government income support commences. To avoid a delayed commencement of payments, CSGs are encouraged to lodge all relevant documentation with Services Australia within one week of arrival.

Some tips for completing this form are below:

- Question 13: Date citizenship granted
Leave this blank
- Question 15: Method of travel to Australia
Air
- Question 16: What document did you arrive to Australia on?
This will either be a valid overseas passport or an Australian-government-issued ImmiCard. Check with the refugee participants.
- Question 17: Are you an entrant under the Community Support Program?
No. Go to question 22.
- Question 41: Date of application for permanent residency
Leave this blank

3. [Authorising a person or organisation to act on your behalf form \(AUS313\) - Services Australia](#)

CSGs will not be able to liaise with Services Australia on behalf of the refugee participants, unless the refugee participants nominate the CSG member/s to do so by completing the *Authorising a Person or Organisation to Enquire or Act on Your Behalf Form*. This form can be lodged with the claim form, above.

The arrivals.national@servicesaustralia.gov.au email address is only provided to government-funded settlement case workers and CSGs within the CRISP, who are asked not to share it with the newcomers themselves. This address allows refugees' applications to be fast-tracked within Services Australia and is only relevant for the first 3 months post-arrival.

For correspondence with Services Australia beyond the initial registration process, or where refugee participants want to establish contact with Services Australia directly, they can speak

to skilled bilingual Services Australia service officers, from Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm on the Services Australia Multilingual Phone Line (131 202).

4.4 Medicare

CSGs should note the importance of registering the refugee participants for Medicare as soon as possible (within one week of arrival). Medical issues can arise without notice and even if a GP can be found who is willing to waive their fee, pathology and other diagnostic services will incur a cost if Medicare has not been established.

Urgent medical costs that arise before the newcomers receive their/number will need to be borne by the CSG, and can be reimbursed once the Medicare number has been provided.

CSGs are not required to complete a separate form to enrol the refugee participants for Medicare. The [Claim for persons granted a Refugee, Humanitarian or Protection Visa Form \(SS415\)](#) constitutes an application for Medicare as well as for income support.

As above, this form should be completed within a week of arrival (noting it requires the newcomers' signatures and details of an Australian bank account), and emailed with supporting identity documents to arrivals.national@servicesaustralia.gov.au.

Given it will take a few weeks for the Medicare card to be received, CSGs should request a letter from Services Australia at the initial appointment, containing the newcomers' names and Medicare number. This will allow the newcomers to access bulk-billed medical care while they await receipt of the Medicare card, and will serve as an additional identity document.

4.5 Tax File Number

Services Australia will assist the newcomers to apply for a tax file number at the initial interview where they will also be registered for income support and Medicare.

5. Physical and Mental Health

Community Supporter Groups (CSGs) are responsible for ensuring refugee participants are connected with local healthcare that meets their physical and mental health needs.

5.1 Physical Health

People with refugee backgrounds will experience similar health concerns to their Australian-born counterparts, but may also have health issues specific to their country of origin and their migration and settlement experience. Refugees tend to have higher rates of long-term physical and psychological issues than other migrants, due to a range of factors relating to the experience of forced migration, including deprivation, persecution and human rights violations as well as post-migration stressors³.

³ www.refugeehealthguide.org.au

Some people arriving in Australia may have had limited or interrupted access to health care and may require urgent access to medication, contraception, diagnostics and other health services. Many will require assistance to access a range of immunisations, most notably children, who will not be able to enrol in school, kindergarten or childcare until they have 'caught up' with the Australian vaccination schedule.

It is therefore recommended that all newly arrived refugees be connected with a GP within their first month in Australia.

CSG are encouraged to:

- Research GPs in their area before the refugee household arrives, including whether they will bulk-bill and use an interpreter if required;
- Support the newcomers to make an initial appointment, and provide education about how to make appointments independently in the future;
- Explain the importance of scheduling appointments before attending GPs and other health services, and avoiding hospital emergency departments for all non-urgent matters;
- Explain how and when to contact an ambulance;
- Explain the difference between 'over the counter' and prescription and medication, and the requirement to consult a GP before being able to access the latter; and
- Encourage refugee participants to request an interpreter in health appointments if needed.

Some GPs may be unaware that free interpreters are available for all GPs via the Telephone and Interpreting Service (TIS) National Doctors Priority Line: phone 1300 131 450. CSGs and refugee participants may find it useful to provide this information to the relevant GP.

Refugee participants of the CRISP, or the CSG supporting them, are encouraged to request a full [Refugee Health Assessment](#) from their GP. This includes undertaking a full medical history and mental health assessment and will pick up any vaccination, medication or other requirements that may be missed in a standard 'check up'.

In the event that a local GP lacks experience in refugee healthcare and in conducting Refugee Health Assessments, CSGs may like to direct them to the Refugee Health Guide (www.refugeehealthguide.org.au), which can be used by doctors, nurses and other primary care providers to inform on-arrival and ongoing health care for people with refugee backgrounds.

While the GP will likely be best placed to act as the primary local healthcare provider for the newcomers, CSGs and refugee participants can also consult the [Australian Refugee Health Network](#) or their state's specialist [Refugee Health Nurse Service](#) with any questions or concerns they might have about their health needs. These services are available to provide secondary consultation to refugees, and people supporting them, including remotely for those in regional areas.

Contact details of the Australian Refugee Health Network in each state are [here](#).

Contact details of the Refugee Health Nurse service in each state are [here](#).

5.2 *Mental Health*

CSGs are encouraged to research the mental health services available in their region before their matched refugee household arrives, so they can provide information to the newcomers about how to access the service in the future if they feel they need to. This will allow the refugee participants to access the service independently as needed, and not have to rely on the CSG.

Settling in Australia can be stressful and is not a linear process. CSGs are encouraged to check in regularly with the refugee household they're supporting about how they're coping, and encourage them to access support as required.

Perceptions about mental health differ across cultures, with mental illness and associated support still carrying stigma in many parts of the world. It can be helpful to explain that in Australia, 'mental health' is widely understood as going beyond diagnosed disorders and including a sense of general wellbeing, and that seeking mental health support is accepted and encouraged.

Though mental health services will differ across regions, the two main pathways for CSGs to be aware of are:

- Access to free or subsidised support with a psychologist, which is accessed by requesting a mental health support plan from the local GP. This is the appropriate pathway for the same general mental health issues that any person can face.
- Access to specialist support, targeted to survivors of torture or trauma. See 'Torture and Trauma', below.

CSGs are encouraged to also provide refugee participants with details of free, 24/7 support services such as Lifeline (free telephone support, 24/7 - phone 13 11 14), and to remind them of the importance of requesting an interpreter if needed.

If CSGs have urgent concerns about a refugee participant's mental health (such as risk of harm to themselves or someone else), they should contact emergency services (000) immediately, or go with them to an emergency department.

Another option in a crisis is to contact the local crisis assessment and treatment team (CATT) - known in some parts of Australia as psychiatric emergency teams (PET) - for immediate help, 24 hours per day.

To find a local CATT or PET team, CSGs can ring their closest major public hospital, or contact their state's mental health crisis line for immediate support, as below:

- Australian Capital Territory
Mental Health Triage Service: 1800 629 354
- New South Wales
Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511
- Northern Territory
Northern Territory Mental Health Line: 1800 682 288
- Queensland
24 Hour Specialist Mental Healthcare: 1300 642 255

- [South Australia](#)
Mental Health Triage Service: 13 14 65
- [Tasmania](#)
Mental Health Service Helpline: 1800 332 388
- [Victoria](#)
[Check here](#) for services in your area, or contact Nurse On Call: 1300 606 024
- [Western Australia](#)
Mental Health Emergency Response Line: 1800 676 822

5.3 *Torture and Trauma*

People with refugee experiences can have specific mental health presentations that relate to traumatic experiences associated with the refugee experience.

Refugee participants of the CRISP are eligible for government-funded mental health support from providers that specialise in addressing the torture and trauma faced by people with refugee experiences.

The [Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma \(FASSTT\)](#) is a network of Australia's eight specialist agencies that work with survivors of torture and trauma who have come to Australia from overseas, usually as refugees, humanitarian entrants or people seeking asylum. There is one FASSTT member agency in each state and territory of Australia, as below:

- Australian Capital Territory: [Companion House](#)
- New South Wales: [STARTTS](#)
- Northern Territory: [Melaleuca Australia](#)
- Queensland: [QPASTT](#)
- South Australia: [STTARS](#)
- Tasmania: [Phoenix Centre, Migrant Resource Centre](#)
- Victoria: [Foundation House](#)
- Western Australia: [ASETTS](#)

6. Education

CSGs are responsible for enrolling children in school, assessing the education needs of preschool aged children, and connecting adult refugee participants with English classes and other educational pathways that may be of interest to them.

6.1 *School Aged Children*

The age range in which children are legally required to attend school varies from state to state, but children are usually required to attend school or be otherwise engaged in education between the ages of six and seventeen years. CSGs are encouraged to consult

their state government website to understand the education requirements for children in their area.

The long-term address of the refugee household is likely to impact which school their children can enrol in. CSGs are therefore encouraged to prioritise supporting their matched refugee household to secure long-term housing in the immediate post-arrival period, so children can be enrolled in school without a protracted delay. CSGs should also note that children may not be able to enrol in school until they have caught up with the Australian vaccination schedule. The local GP will be able to assist the newcomers with vaccinations.

CSGs are encouraged to consult their state government education website to understand what support is available for children requiring English language support. Depending on the region, and on the child's English proficiency, this may involve receiving English language support from within a mainstream school, or spending 6-12 months at an English Language School before enrolling in a mainstream school. The links below may serve as a useful starting point.

- [Australian Capital Territory](#)
- [New South Wales](#)
- [Northern Territory #1](#) and [Northern Territory #2](#)
- [Queensland](#)
- [South Australia #1](#) and [South Australia #2](#)
- [Tasmania #1](#) and [Tasmania #2](#)
- [Victoria #1](#) and [Victoria #2](#)
- [Western Australia](#)

6.2 *Preschool Aged Children*

CSGs are encouraged to connect preschool aged children with kindergarten at the appropriate age, and should consult their local council to understand what is available in their region.

Children from non-English speaking backgrounds can be at a disadvantage in school if they have lacked exposure to the English language before commencing their formal schooling. Thus CSGs are encouraged to support families with children below kindergarten age to engage with other educational opportunities, such as playgroups facilitated by local councils and activities delivered at local libraries.

6.3 *Adults*

Refugee participants of the CRISP are eligible for free English language classes through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

The AMEP is delivered across Australia. [Find your nearest AMEP provider here.](#)

In some areas, AMEP can be accessed remotely, through distance learning.

In areas with no local AMEP provider, CSGs are encouraged to contact their nearest TAFE.

Refugee parents who engage with English classes through the AMEP are eligible for free childcare for the duration of their engagement. Childcare is usually provided at a nearby childcare centre, though in some regions, it is provided onsite at the AMEP provider.

Those engaging with the AMEP can also request additional support through the national AMEP Volunteer Tutor Scheme, which matches refugee participants with a trained volunteer tutor who can virtually meet with them, one-on-one, each week.

CSGs are encouraged to discuss and support any other educational aspirations the refugee participants might have, apart from English classes.

7. Employment

CSGs are encouraged to support their matched refugee household towards full economic participation in the Australian community, including through employment. In doing so, they should ensure the newcomers' own career aspirations are at the fore.

7.1 *Understanding Refugee Participants' Career Aspirations*

Refugees arrive in Australia with a range of different skills and levels of education. Finding employment in Australia that is commensurate with their skills and experience is important for successful integration.

Entering the job market early may help refugee entrants retain a sense of control and belonging, improve their English and become financially self-sufficient sooner. However, entering the job market too soon may mean that some refugees will obtain low-skilled jobs that do not harness their existing experience and expertise. Early entry may also delay opportunities for formal English language training, skills upgrading and recognition of overseas qualifications. The first few months post-arrival may be the only opportunity the newcomers have to focus on English language study full-time.

CSGs should ensure the refugee participants' own career aspirations are at the forefront in the provision of employment support or direction.

7.2 *Pre-Arrival Skills, Qualifications and Expertise*

The process for having overseas qualifications assessed against Australian standards varies from state to state, but is generally free for Australian residents.

The process of having overseas skills recognised in Australia varies from industry to industry. In some cases it can be a lengthy and expensive process, particularly if the refugee participants' English language proficiency is not yet adequate for them to pass an examination. In such cases, to avoid paying fees with each attempt, refugees are usually encouraged to wait until they have attained adequate English proficiency before undertaking any examinations that incur a cost.

CSGs are encouraged to refrain from giving advice in this area, and instead to direct refugee participants to the relevant industry peak body.

7.3 *Employment Readiness*

Regardless of their level of skill, qualification and expertise, refugee participants are likely to benefit from assistance to develop a CV/resume that meets Australian expectations, to learn how to search for jobs online, and to prepare for a job interview.

Coaching and support in this area can provide newcomers to Australia with increased confidence to navigate the job search process.

7.4 *Business Ownership*

Refugees and humanitarian entrants have higher rates of business ownership than any other migrants in Australia, and are almost twice as likely to be entrepreneurs as the wider Australian population⁴. Government data shows that almost 30% of all refugees will start a small business within 10 years of arriving in Australia⁵.

Thrive Refugee Enterprises is a national not-for-profit organisation that provides business loans and mentorship to refugees in Australia: www.thriverefugeeenterprise.org.au

8. Transport

CSGs are encouraged to educate and support refugee participants with both their short-term and long-term transport needs.

8.1 *Setting Expectations*

CSGs are encouraged to set clear expectations with refugee participants about the accessibility and cost of the transport options in their region, and of their ability as a group to provide transportation, particularly in the immediate post-arrival period.

Refugee participants are likely to have a range of important tasks to complete in their first few weeks in Australia, including registering for essential services and attending appointments and house inspections. CSGs are encouraged to consider, pre-arrival, how they can support the newcomers during this busy period, and be clear with the newcomers on their arrival to promote a shared understanding.

Some groups choose to transport the newcomers to their early appointments by car as a matter of efficiency in the immediate post-arrival period. Others prefer to use the initial appointments as an opportunity for the newcomers to be oriented to local public transportation, and instead accompany the newcomers to their initial appointments at the bank and Services Australia on public accommodation. There is no right or wrong; groups should do what works for them.

⁴ www.refugeecouncil.org.au/refugees-are-entrepreneurial

⁵ www.thriverefugeeenterprise.org.au/about-us

8.2 *Public Transport*

Where refugee participants are settling in an area with ready access to public transport, CSGs are encouraged to support them to access public transport as soon as possible post-arrival. Independent access to transportation is a key settlement milestone and early, independent mobility can be an important element in refugee participants building confidence in Australia.

CSGs may like to use early appointments at the bank or GP as opportunities to accompany the refugee participants on public transport. This orientation to local public transport should include education about how to top up a travel card, and the importance of proactively paying for fares to avoid receiving a fine.

8.3 *Driving*

CSGs are encouraged to direct refugee participants to consult their state transport authority to understand the licencing requirements in their area. In some states, newly arrived refugees can drive on an international licence for a specified period of time, before requiring a local licence, though this may depend on the country of issue of their overseas licence.

CSGs are also encouraged to explain the legalities and costs of maintaining a vehicle in Australia, to enable refugee participants to make an informed decision before purchasing a vehicle. Information about registration and insurance, and about laws relating to speeding, seatbelts, child car seats, etc. is likely to be new to many.

9. Community Connectedness

Community Supporter Groups (CSGs) are encouraged to prioritise the connection of refugee participants to the broader local community, to avoid them becoming dependent on the CSG and to encourage self-agency, self-sufficiency and independence. In exploring local connections for their matched refugee household, CSGs are encouraged to consider the cultural and religious background of the family, and the specific needs of children, youth and families and of elderly people.

9.1 *Religion and Faith*

Refugees are as diverse as any other section of the population, so their connection to religion and faith should not be assumed. However, for some, an early connection with a local place of worship can be among the most meaningful milestones in their settlement to their new community.

CSGs are encouraged to think about local faith-based organisations in developing their Settlement Plans. This may involve establishing contact with local religious leaders before the refugees arrive, to engage them in the shared endeavour of community sponsorship, and to seek advice.

9.2 *Diaspora Communities*

Similarly, while many people arriving as refugees choose to live in close proximity to others with the same cultural background, this should not be assumed. Others may prefer to embed themselves within the broader Australian community.

Still, CSGs are encouraged to research whether there is an established community in their region with the same cultural background as their matched refugee household. For some refugee participants, this connection to their cultural community can be very meaningful. Local community leaders may also be able to support CSGs, pre-arrival, to understand the cultural practices, norms and needs of the refugee household they plan to welcome and support.

9.3 *Local Communities*

The CRISP aims to integrate refugee participants into their new local communities so they can participate fully in all aspects of Australian community life.

In addition to considering refugee participants' cultural and faith backgrounds, CSGs are encouraged to consider how they can support the participants to engage with the broader Australian community, beyond connecting them with services such as a school and a GP.

Local sports clubs and social groups, for example, can provide enormous benefits to people who are new to Australia, in providing opportunities to practice conversational English and in rebuilding a sense of community and purpose. Some recreational clubs may be willing to waive their fees for a newly arrived refugee household. There are also a range of free activities in many communities. Local libraries, neighbourhood houses and community centres are a good place to start.

9.4 *Local Services*

In addition to the informal community networks outlined above, CSGs should consider the local service sector in their Settlement Planning, by asking which are the key services that relate to each settlement outcome listed in this Guide ie: health, education, employment, transport, community connectedness.

Including a brief description of each of these as part of the refugee household's initial orientation can build their self-sufficiency in allowing them to access services independently in the future as needed, without relying on the CSG.

9.5 *Settlement Engagement and Transition Support*

Refugee participants of the CRISP are eligible for the government-funded Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program, which provides newly arrived refugees with settlement-related information, advice, advocacy and assistance. Refugees are eligible for support under the SETS program for their first five years in Australia. There are 78 funded SETS providers around Australia. [Find your local SETS provider here.](#)

9.6 *Children and Youth*

Refugee youth (generally defined as those aged 12 - 24 years) have enormous potential to be active participants in Australian society, but often face challenges in accessing the support and opportunities they are entitled to. Their particular experiences and needs are distinct from those of adult refugees, and from many of their Australian-born counterparts, and often go unrecognised within the broader youth and settlement sectors.⁶

It is common among newly arrived migrants and refugees for adolescent children to take a lead in their families' settlement journeys, including becoming an interpreter for their parents. This can put a lot of pressure on the children and adolescents, who are undertaking their own settlement journeys while also experiencing the universal developmental challenges of adolescence.

CSG members are encouraged to ensure the refugee participants and local service providers (such as GPs, school staff and real estate agents) know how to access free language support, so any children in the family do not need to take on this role.

Further, CSG members are encouraged to explore any youth-specific services or social activities in their areas that may be of interest to the children or teenagers within their matched refugee household. Connecting children and youth with their counterparts from the local community, outside of the school setting, can be an important way for them to build their self-esteem and social networks in their new communities.

9.7 *Children and Families*

The refugee experience of forced migration, coupled with the stressors of settling in a new country, can significantly affect family wellbeing and parenting practices. Further, for many, parenting practices that were normative in their countries of origin are not endorsed in Australia⁷.

If CSG members have significant concerns about any parenting practices within the refugee households they're supporting, and suspect child abuse or neglect, they should advise CRSA and the relevant authority in their state (see more in Part Three of this Guidebook). Where CSG members have no concerns for the children's wellbeing, but think the parent/s might benefit from additional support, they should explore what family support services might be available in their area.

⁶ <https://myan.org.au/about-us/>

⁷ Australian Centre for Child Protection, *The Working with Refugee Families Project*, <https://earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au>

10. Orientation

Community Supporter Groups (CSGs) are encouraged to be intentional in the provision of education and orientation support about:

- The Australian health system
- The Australian education system
- Employment and money
- The local community
- Local transport options
- Australian laws including those relating to family violence and child protection
- Australian culture, values and attitudes including relating to multiculturalism, gender equality and acceptance of difference (LGBTIQ+, disability, etc)

10.1 CSGs might like to consult the content from the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program that is offered to refugees in the two weeks before they depart for Australia. The program is delivered by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) on behalf of the Australian government. It is a five-day program and is not mandatory. More information on the program can be found [here](#). The course content is available [here](#). Videos in community language are available [here](#).

10.1 Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Program

10.2 Australian Health System

The Australian health system is complex and can be difficult to navigate for people who are new to Australia. In many countries, people attend the hospital for all their healthcare needs, without an appointment, and wait to be seen.

CSGs are encouraged to provide education to their matched refugee household about:

- How and when to contact emergency services (000) and the importance of only using this service in an emergency
- The role of the GP as the primary contact point and healthcare provider
- The importance of making appointments to see a GP as opposed to dropping in
- The importance of checking whether a GP bulk bills before booking an appointment
- The importance of requesting an interpreter if needed
- The difference between prescription and 'over the counter' medication
- The need to see a GP and obtain a referral in order to see a specialist
- Anything else that the CSG considers to be relevant in their local region

10.3 Australian Education System

In some countries, parents show respect to their children's education by deferring to the teacher on everything related to education. This often involves not stepping within the school gates, asking questions about what the child is learning, engaging with children's homework or communicating directly with the teacher.

CSGs are encouraged to educate refugee participants that in Australia, parental engagement in their child's learning is encouraged and considered a strong contributor to children's educational success.

CSGs may find it useful to establish contact with the local school welfare coordinator or similar before the refugee participants' arrival, or to encourage the newcomers to do so on their enrolment in school.

Orientating refugee participants to the Australian education system may involve:

- Explaining the state-based legal requirements for children to be engaged in education between a certain age range
- The importance of punctuality at school drop off and pick up
- The importance of notifying the school of a child's non-attendance
- Information about what to pack in a lunch box
- Permission slips for excursions, and the importance of requesting a translation from the school if needed
- Information about kindergarten or preschool
- Information about adult education, including English classes

10.4 *Employment and Money*

The following items may be new concepts for people who are new to Australia:

- Taxation
- Superannuation
- Minimum wage, employment Awards, payslips, etc
- Leave entitlements
- Occupational health and safety

10.5 *Local Community*

Orientation to the local community might involve walking or using public transport to point out key essential services, such as the police station, train station, bus stop, supermarket, place of worship (if relevant), etc.

10.6 *Transport*

There is no expectation that CSGs teach refugee participants about Australian road rules, or teach them to drive, but a basic transport orientation might include:

- Information about whether they require a local licence
- Taking an initial bus or train ride with the participants

10.7 *Australian Laws*

There is no expectation that CSGs provide a full orientation of Australian law! However it is recommended that areas of the law that are likely to differ from refugee participants'

countries of origin be explained, particularly where doing so proactively could reduce their engagement with tertiary services or authorities. This may include laws relating to:

- The trusted role of police
- Bribery
- Child protection
- Family violence
- Driving - seatbelts, parking, licencing, speed limits, child seats, etc.
- Workplace rights - workplace health and safety, protection from discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment, etc.

10.8 *Australian Culture, Values and Attitudes*

Understanding and being able to demonstrate certain Australian values and attitudes can assist newly arrived refugees in their settlement journey, including improving their access to employment opportunities. Some topics that may be worth discussing include:

- Gender equality
- Acceptance of diversity - multiculturalism, LGBTIQ+, disability, etc.
- Acknowledgement of First Nations people and colonial history

CSGs may find it helpful to consult:

- Content from the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program which is offered to refugees before arrival in Australia. See [here](#).
- The MYAUS App developed by Migration Council of Australia
- The SBS Settlement Guide, available on the SBS Australia website
- The government's statement on [what it means to be an Australian citizen](#)
- The government's citizenship test booklet, '[Our Common Bond](#)', containing information required for the citizenship test

11. Family Separation & Reunification

11.1 *Family Separation*

Unfortunately, family separation in situations of displacement is common, and CSGs should be prepared for the refugee household they welcome to arrive in Australia with mixed emotions - joy for their future in Australia, and grief about those they've left behind.

Family separation is among the greatest emotional challenges of the refugee experience, and can undermine the settlement journey. A common sentiment expressed by people interviewed by the Refugee Council of Australia for a 2016 research paper into refugees and family separation, was that the physical safety offered by Australia was often offset by the ongoing mental anguish of family separation, especially when the family members overseas remained in unsafe conditions.⁸

That paper, titled '[Addressing the Pain of Separation for Refugee Families](#)' listed a number of ways in which family separation can undermine successful settlement:

⁸ [Addressing the pain of separation for refugee families \(refugeecouncil.org.au\)](#)

- Psychological Impacts - the impact of family separation on refugees' mental health can be significant, leading in some acute cases to self harm and suicidal ideation. It is common for people to experience a sense of 'survivor guilt'.
- Social Impacts - family separation can deprive refugees of the social and emotional support that is critical to personal wellbeing and positive settlement outcomes. Recovery from past trauma, and the challenges of settling in a new country are already difficult, and made all the more so for newcomers who don't have their support networks around them.
- Financial Cost - refugees resettled in countries like Australia often face enormous pressure to support relatives in refugee situations overseas. This can both compound the stress of family separation and impose a significant financial burden on people attempting to settle in Australia.

Some CSGs may find it difficult to support the refugee household they're working with through these experiences and emotions. They are encouraged to refer members of the refugee household for mental health support as needed, which can assist them to develop positive coping strategies.

11.2 Family Reunification

It is common for newly arrived refugees to seek advice about how they can sponsor their loved ones to join them in Australia. Notwithstanding some concerns CSGs may have about embarking on this process (including financial cost, prolonged delays in processing and the limited availability of affordable migration advice), feeling they have taken some action to reunite with their loved ones can be an important part of feeling able to settle in Australia.

CSGs should refrain from providing any legal or migration advice unless they are a registered migration agent. Doing so can incur significant fines and, given immigration policies are subject to change, could inadvertently involve giving the wrong advice.

CRSA recommends that refugee participants consult a registered migration agent before lodging any visa applications or paying any costs to anyone offering to assist them. Unfortunately it is common to hear of unregistered people (here and abroad) claiming to be migration agents and taking large sums of money from refugees seeking family reunification. The [Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority \(OMARA\) website](#) has a register of all registered migration agents. It can be used to find a migration agent in your local area, or to check agents' registration status.

There are some specialist services that provide migration advice to refugees at no cost. While they tend to have long waiting lists, some may be able to provide migration advice (which visa to apply for, etc) more immediately than full migration assistance (full preparation and lodgement of the visa application). The services below may provide a useful starting point:

- New South Wales - [Refugee Advice and Casework Service \(RACS\)](#)
- Northern Territory - [Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory](#)
- Queensland - [Refugee and Immigration Legal Service \(RAILS\)](#)
- South Australia - [Legal Services Commission South Australia](#)
- Tasmania - [Tasmanian Refugee Legal Service](#)
- Victoria - [Refugee Legal](#)
- Western Australia - [Circle Green](#)

Settlement Checklist

Settlement Need	Lead CSG member
Pre-Arrival	
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange short-term accommodation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange a welcome pack with food, toiletries, clothes, phone, etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange income support for first 2 weeks	
<input type="checkbox"/> Register for free interpreting service	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify & engage key community contacts (GP, real estate agent, etc)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare <i>Notification of Refugee Arrival</i> form, for lodgement post-arrival	
<input type="checkbox"/> Have bank and other Services Australia forms ready	
Within One Week of Arrival	
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet newcomers at airport and transport to accommodation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assist refugee participants to open a bank account (within 48 hours)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assist with registration for income and Medicare through Services Australia	
<input type="checkbox"/> Orientate to neighbourhood: public transport, shops, parks, police station	
Within One Month of Arrival	
<input type="checkbox"/> Connect refugee participants with a local GP	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assist refugee participants to secure long-term housing	
Once Long-Term Housing is Secured	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assist refugee participants with connection of utilities	
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide furniture for long-term housing	
<input type="checkbox"/> Enrol children in school (and/or preschool if desired)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assist adults to enrol in English classes and/or other relevant education	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assist adults to develop a resume; show how to search for jobs online	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assist refugee participants to access suitable employment	
<input type="checkbox"/> Connect with local community, services, social, cultural/faith groups, etc	



Part Three: What if something goes wrong?

1. Support for Community Supporter Groups

1.1 CRSA Telephone and Email Hotline

Community supporter groups can contact CRSA's telephone or email hotline during business hours (Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm, AEST) for:

- Settlement coaching and support
- Troubleshooting
- Feedback and complaints
- Critical incident reporting (see below)

CRSA's hotline details are:

- Telephone: 1300 317 411
- Email: crisp@refugeesponsorship.org.au

1.2 CRSA Peer Network

We encourage CSGs to engage with our Peer Network: a bi-monthly online forum where CSGs around Australia come together to share questions and learnings. You will receive an email with the online meeting link before each forum.

1.3 CRSA Community of Practice

CRSA maintains a Facebook group where CSGs can seek support, ask questions and share learnings with their counterparts around Australia. [Find our Community of Practice here.](#)

1.4 Online Community Hub

CRSA maintains an online resource hub of relevant information sheets and FAQs. [Find our Online Community Hub here.](#)

2. Reporting Critical Incidents to CRSA

2.1 Reporting Critical Incidents to CRSA

It is important that CSGs let CRSA know about any significant incidents that occur that relate to the wellbeing of a refugee participant, as soon as possible - ie. within 24 hours of becoming aware of a 'critical incident' which involves a refugee participant in the CRISP.

Incidents should be reported by contacting the CRSA Telephone Hotline (1300 317 411) or via email to crisp@refugeesponsorship.org.au.

This information will be used by CRSA to:

- Help your group respond to a critical incident, by providing you with advice and support and reminding you of legislative reporting requirements related to certain incidents (eg. instances of child abuse);
- Enable CRSA to inform the Department of Home Affairs about the nature and prevalence of critical incidents within the program; and
- Enable CRSA to identify systemic issues or emerging trends so we can improve our systems and tools to help future CSGs better anticipate and respond to critical incidents.

2.2 What is a 'Critical Incident'?

CRSA and the Department of Home Affairs have developed the following list of incidents that we consider to be 'critical' and therefore important to report.

As it is not possible to anticipate all scenarios, CSGs should exercise their judgement when determining whether an incident meets the criteria for a critical incident report. If there is any doubt, CSGs should contact CRSA - over reporting is preferred to under reporting.

Type	Description
Death	The death of a CRISP Household Member.
Child Abuse or Neglect	Involves an allegation or reasonable suspicion of the abuse of a CRISP Household Member who is a child (ie. a person under the age of 18), including neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse and emotional abuse.
Modern Slavery	Involves a known occurrence, allegation, reasonable belief or suspicion of modern slavery of a CRISP Household Member. Involves situations where coercion, threats or deception are used to exploit victims and undermine or deprive them of their freedom. The <i>Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth)</i> defines 'modern slavery' as including eight types of serious exploitation: trafficking in persons; slavery; servitude; forced marriage; forced labour; debt bondage; deceptive recruiting for labour or services; and the worst forms of child labour. The worst forms of child labour means situations where children are subjected to slavery or similar practices, or engaged in hazardous work.
Domestic and Family Violence	Involves an allegation, threat or reasonable suspicion of domestic/family violence against or by a CRISP Household Member. For example, physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, verbal abuse, psychological abuse, harrasment or stalking.
Assault	Involves an allegation or reasonable suspicion of an assault of or by a CRISP Household Member that results in serious physical injury requiring treatment by a medical practitioner or presentation at a

Type	Description
	hospital emergency department.
Sexual Assault	Involves an allegation or reasonable suspicion of a sexual assault of or by a CRISP Household Member.
Serious Accident or Physical Injury	Involves serious physical injury of a CRISP Household Member resulting in severe trauma (eg. serious head or spinal injuries, severe burns or lacerations, or loss of bodily function) requiring immediate treatment and being admitted to hospital.
Mental Health	Involves a CRISP Household Member threatening or attempting suicide or other forms of self-harm, suicidal ideation, and acute mental health episodes requiring hospitalisation and/or assessment.
Public Health Risk	Involves a CRISP Household Member being medically diagnosed with a condition that is identified as a serious risk to public health. For example, a CRISP Household Member is diagnosed with a serious highly contagious illness (such as tuberculosis, typhoid, Japanese encephalitis, meningitis, etc). The diagnosis or treatment of a serious health condition that is not a public health risk (eg. cancer, heart disease, etc) is NOT regarded as a Critical Incident.
Criminal Activity	Involves allegations or reasonable suspicion of serious criminal activity (eg. terrorism, drug-related crime, aggravated burglary or any crime punishable by a maximum penalty of 5 or more years imprisonment) involving a CRISP Household Member as the alleged offender or victim. Minor offences (eg. traffic infringements) are NOT regarded as a Critical Incident.
Homelessness	Involves a CRISP Household Member experiencing homelessness (ie. without conventional accommodation and sleeping rough).
Inappropriate Behaviour by a Refugee Participant	Involves violent, threatening or dangerous behaviour by a CRISP Household Member that is, or has the potential to be, a threat to the health, safety and wellbeing of others (eg. threatening behaviour of a CRISP Household Member towards a member of the CSG).
Inappropriate Behaviour by a CSG Member	Involves violent, threatening or dangerous behaviour by a member of the Community Supporter Group that is, or has the potential to be, a threat to the health, safety and wellbeing of others (eg. threatening behaviour of a member of the Community Supporter Group towards a CRISP Household Member).
Inappropriate Behaviour by CRSA Staff	Involves allegations of inappropriate behaviour by CRSA personnel towards a CRISP Household Member or member of a Community Supporter Group.

3. Concerns about a Child's Safety or Wellbeing

3.1 *The Best Interests of the Child*

The best interests of the child must be considered in all decisions that affect refugee households with children. This includes a requirement for members of Community Supporter Groups to report any concerns they have for a child's safety, particularly relating to potential child abuse or neglect, to the relevant government authority.

3.2 *Behaviours That May Constitute Child Abuse*

In considering whether a behaviour constitutes child abuse or neglect, CSGs may find it helpful to reference the list of behaviours below, which was developed by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian.⁹ Please note that these are behaviours that may, but do not always, constitute child abuse - factors such as severity, frequency and context will be relevant in assessing some behaviours (eg. yelling at a child) whereas other behaviours clearly constitute child abuse regardless of the circumstances (eg. sexual contact involving a child).

CSGs should note that parenting differs across cultures, and while some parenting behaviours that may be accepted overseas are clearly against Australian law, others - while different from common Australian practices - may not be against the law.

If in doubt (ie. where there is no threat of immediate harm), CSGs may prefer to consult their group members or CRSA before making a report of suspected abuse to the relevant authority.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse refers to the intentional or reckless use of physical force that results in, or has the likelihood of resulting in, harm to the child's health, survival, development and/or dignity. It may also include the threat of abuse where the child reasonably fears it may occur. Unacceptable behaviours include:

- Hitting, punching, kicking or slapping a child
- Choking or suffocating a child
- Throwing items or using items to hurt a child
- Dragging or pushing a child
- Threatening to hurt a child through words or gestures
- Restraining or locking a child up
- Using hostile force towards a child
- Engaging in rough physical games

Sexual Abuse

⁹ NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, *Guide to Developing Child Safe Codes of Conduct (Appendix A)*.
https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/ChildSafeCodeofConduct_1_3.pdf

Sexual abuse refers to any act that exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes that the child does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to and/or is not developmentally prepared for. It also includes acts that are contrary to acceptable community standards. Unacceptable behaviours include:

- Sexual touching of a child
- Sexual contact with a child
- Possessing or creating child abuse material
- Sharing explicit photos of a child
- Exposing a child to pornography or other indecent material
- Using a camera to record a child while they are dressing or bathing
- Using sexual language or gestures in the presence of children
- Sexual comments, conversations or communications with a child
- Comments that express a desire to act in a sexual manner with a child

Child Grooming

Child grooming is a form of sexual abuse. It refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing a personal connection with a child, in order to prepare the child for sexual abuse. Unacceptable behaviours include:

- Using a computer, mobile phone, camera or other device or exploit or harass a child
- Personal communication exploring sexual feelings or intimate feelings with a child
- Sharing details with a child of personal sexual experiences
- Inappropriately extending a relationship with a child outside of the CSG role
- Giving a child special attention or isolating them from peers with the intention of making it easier to access the child for sexual activity
- Offering a child gifts, money, attention or affection with the intention of making it easier to access the child for sexual activity
- Making close physical contact, like inappropriate tickling and 'play' wrestling

Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Emotional or Psychological Abuse refers to inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child. It can also refer to a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. It is behaviour towards a child that is likely to damage their self-esteem or social competence. Unacceptable behaviours include:

- Teasing or bullying a child
- Yelling at a child
- Persistent criticism of a child
- Refusing to acknowledge a child's worth and the legitimacy of their needs
- Persistent rejection of or hostility towards a child
- Deliberately preventing a child from forming friendships
- Encouraging a child to engage in destructive antisocial behaviour
- Making a child feel worthless, unloved, alone or frightened
- Exposing a child to family violence

Neglect

Neglect refers to when a person responsible for the care of a child, fails to provide a child with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their growth, development, and wellbeing. Neglectful behaviours can be an act of omission or undertaken by wilful choice. Unacceptable behaviours include:

- Depriving a child of necessities such as food, drink, clothing, medical care/treatment or shelter
- Failing to protect a child from abuse such as failure to report abuse when a child makes a disclosure
- Exposing a child to a harmful environment
- Failing to adequately supervise a child, resulting in injury or harm

3.3 *Child Protection Reporting Details*

Please see below for contact details and additional information of the child protection reporting authorities in each state.

- [Australian Capital Territory](#)
Child and Youth Protection Services, 1300 556 729
[Keeping Children and Young People Safe - Community Services](#)
- [New South Wales](#)
Department of Communities and Justice, 13 21 11
[Reporting a child at risk | Family & Community Services](#)
- [Northern Territory](#)
Territory Families, Housing and Communities, 1800 700 250
[Reporting a child at risk | Family & Community Services](#)
- [Queensland](#)
Department of Children, Youth Justice & Multicultural Affairs, 1800 811 810
[Protecting children - Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs](#)
- [South Australia](#)
Department for Child Protection, 13 14 78
[SA.GOV.AU - Report child abuse](#)
- [Tasmania](#)
Department of Communities Tasmania, 1800 000 123
[Child Safety Service](#)
- [Victoria](#)
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
[Child protection - DFFH Services](#)
Contact Details¹⁰:
North Division - 1300 664 977
South Division - 1300 655 795
East Division - 1300 360 391
West Division (metro) - 1300 664 977

¹⁰ Check which division you are in here: <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts>

West Division (rural and regional) - 1800 075 599

- Western Australia
Dept of Communities, Child Protection & Family Support, 1800 273 889
[Child protection](#)

4. Sponsorship Breakdown

CRSA will make every effort to support the relationship between CSGs and the refugee household they're supporting, with a view to avoiding relationships breaking down. Please contact our CRSA Telephone Hotline with any concerns as they arise.

In the unavoidable situation of a sponsorship breakdown (such as the refugee participants moving to a different region from the CSG, or the CSG becoming unable to fulfil its responsibilities), CRSA will work with the Department of Home Affairs to connect the refugee participants with another CSG or with support through the government-funded Humanitarian Settlement Program.

Concluding Comments

Around the world, community refugee sponsorship programs are most successful when Community Supporter Groups are trusted to provide holistic support to their matched refugee households, with their own local knowledge, and the refugee participants' own priorities, aspirations and values, at the fore.

We encourage CSGs to use this document as a guide rather than a prescriptive set of rules.

We hope you will find the experience of community refugee sponsorship to be rewarding and meaningful, like so many of your counterparts throughout Australia and the world, and we thank you for being a part of the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP).