

Participant consent and privacy

As you welcome the refugee household you've been matched with to Australia and support them throughout their first year here, there may be media interest as well as great enthusiasm to take photos and videos with the refugee participants within your group.

CRSA may refer interested journalists to you to discuss coverage (if you've indicated that you're open to this) or local media may contact you directly. Members of your group may wish to share information and photos via their own social media, or you may share information as a group to gain community support.

Images, social sharing and media coverage can be a wonderful record of your work, and can be very helpful to CRSA in promoting refugee sponsorship to other members of the Australian community.

However, sharing and media coverage can have negative as well as positive consequences. It is important to respect the privacy and confidentiality of all concerned, including group members and refugee participants. Please keep in mind that while a refugee household may generally trust their group and reveal personal details of their lives, it is for them to decide how much of their lives to share, and with whom. You should inform refugee participants of their right to privacy and confidentiality, even when they give informed consent to waive it.

- **Media:** Your group is responsible for ensuring that the refugee participants provide meaningful consent to any interviews, photography, recordings for coverage, and sharing of information. CRSA has not produced a form to be signed as each individual circumstance will be different, and meaningful consent is our focus, rather than paperwork. For consent to be meaningful, the participant should understand:
 - Who the journalist is and which organisation they represent.
 - The expected topic(s) of coverage.
 - The expected means of publication.
 - That they can decline at any stage, terminate an interview if they're not comfortable with its direction, and decline to answer specific questions.
 - That the media is hard to control; questions may go beyond the anticipated topics; and once out in the public, stories may take on a life of their own.
- **Children:** Please ensure that both parents and - in the case of older children - the children themselves have given informed consent. The safety of children is always paramount - if in doubt, don't use photos.
- **Using photos:** Your group should only use materials in ways the refugee participants have consented to (for example, consent to use an image for a social post does not give consent to use the same image for fundraising). But they should also understand that once information and images are out in the public sphere or even shared in a private group, it's possible that they could be reproduced and used in other ways that aren't anticipated.
- **Please check whether shared information could pose any safety risk to family or contacts overseas.** A small, innocent sharing of private or sensitive information via the media could potentially put the refugee household's family or other contacts at risk. Ask the household to consider the risks of sharing their story.
- **If in any doubt,** please assume that it's not okay to share or publish photos, videos or names in any public or semi-public forum. Also consider the context – in small towns, concealing someone's name may not be sufficient to preserve a person's privacy. And remember: on social media, once shared, information cannot be unshared.
- Please **avoid using 'deficit' narratives.** As an organisation, CRSA is committed to focussing on participants' strengths rather than contributing to a deficit narrative around refugees, who may have faced difficult situations but bring a wealth of skills and positive attributes. Whilst groups may feel that a focus on the challenges of the new arrivals' past could assist with fundraising, this approach lacks respect and should be avoided.

A reminder - please email media@refugeesponsorship.org.au about any upcoming media and send us links or recordings afterwards as we have an obligation to report this to the department. Thank you!