

Housing FAQ: A Sponsor's Guide

How far in advance should I start looking for housing for the newcomer?

It's best to begin the housing search a few weeks or months before the newcomer's arrival to allow time for exploring both temporary and long-term options that fit family size, composition, and other needs. Early preparation also gives sponsors a chance to connect with landlords, gather the paperwork needed to rent an apartment or house, and anticipate challenges like affordability or availability. However, in some cities, due to high competition in the housing market, rental apartments may only become available a few weeks before move-in. In these cases, it's still good to establish relationships with housing providers early on and familiarize yourself with affordable, accessible neighborhoods. If needed, consider securing temporary housing, such as an Airbnb or hotel, in advance. NOTE: Sponsors should be prepared to act quickly when housing opportunities arise and be flexible in terms of location and housing options.

What type of temporary housing should I consider if long-term housing isn't immediately available?

Securing long-term housing before a newcomer's arrival can be challenging as many landlords require tenants to be present with all necessary paperwork in hand to sign a lease. In these cases, temporary housing may be the best solution for the first few weeks of a newcomer's stay. Temporary housing options can include short-term rentals like Airbnb, extended-stay hotels, or host family homes. These solutions provide immediate accommodation until a more permanent housing arrangement is secured. Sponsors should prioritize temporary housing that is safe, comfortable, and equipped with basic necessities, such as working appliances and access to essential services, especially transportation, grocery stores, and pharmacies.

Depending on the newcomer's needs and budget, temporary housing can work while the search for long-term housing continues. If the housing search takes longer than anticipated, sponsors should have a contingency plan. This includes arranging extended temporary housing if needed and regularly updating newcomers on the progress of their housing search. [This resource](#) includes best practices for finding and using temporary housing.

Is it possible to temporarily host a newcomer in my home?

It depends. Sponsors can accommodate refugees in their home if at least one adult refugee is a family member of the sponsor, such as a parent, spouse, sibling, or in-law, and the housing is provided free of charge. If the newcomer family is not related to the sponsor, they cannot stay in the sponsor's home. But, they may be housed in a separate unit on the sponsor's property, such as a guest house or accessory dwelling unit (ADU) as long as it is also provided at no cost and includes necessary furnishings and utilities. All living arrangements must be free of charge and meet basic housing requirements. To learn more about hosting in your home, visit the [Welcome Corps website](#).

What documents or information will I need to secure a rental property on behalf of the newcomer?

To secure rental housing, landlords typically ask for valid (current) identification, proof of income, and rental references. For newcomers without rental or U.S. credit histories, sponsors may need to provide additional documentation, such as proof of sponsorship or resettlement assistance, financial support details, or even offer to co-sign the lease. It is helpful to have a letter of introduction explaining the newcomer's situation, outlining the support they will receive, and demonstrating their ability to meet rent obligations. [This resource](#) outlines the documents newcomers may have that can fulfill or serve as alternatives to the documentation typically required by housing providers.

How can I find landlords who are willing to rent to someone without a rental history or credit score in the U.S.?

Finding landlords willing to rent to newcomers can be easier if you work through local resettlement agencies, housing authorities, or nonprofit organizations that have experience with refugee housing. These groups often maintain relationships with landlords who are open to renting to newcomers who lack typical U.S. rental documentation. Sponsors can also contact landlords directly, explaining the newcomer's situation and offering alternative support, such as a higher security deposit or co-signing, for added reassurance. Smaller rental property owners or real estate agents may be more flexible, as larger rental corporations often cannot adjust their policies to accommodate alternative documentation. Engaging with landlords early on can help, as securing housing can be a challenging process. [This resource](#) provides helpful conversation topics to simplify this task. [This resource](#), created by the U.S. federal government, answers questions that landlords may have as they consider renting to newcomers. [This resource](#) provides guidance on vetting housing providers and rental properties.

Are there financial assistance programs available to help cover rent or other housing costs?

There are several programs that can assist newcomers with rent and other housing costs. Government initiatives like Housing Choice Vouchers (formerly Section 8) and Emergency Rental Assistance, as well as nonprofit organizations, offer financial aid to low-income individuals and families, including some newcomers. However, it's important to note that federal housing programs in many areas only accept applications during specific periods, often once a year, and waitlists can be long. You can find local housing authorities and federal programs [here](#), and you can search for available affordable housing opportunities [here](#). Depending on a newcomer's status, resettlement agencies may also provide financial assistance for initial housing costs, such as security deposits or the first month's rent. Sponsors should explore these options early on to ensure the newcomer receives the financial support that is available to secure housing. [This resource](#) details which newcomer groups are eligible for federal housing assistance programs. [This resource](#) outlines the criteria that public housing authorities use to determine eligibility for public housing and the housing choice voucher program.



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