

The Colorado Hosting Asylum Network

An Introduction to our Mission, Goals, Values and Organization

Introduction

Recognizing the leadership of existing community organizations, and in particular those led by immigrants themselves, we seek to find our own unique role in the system of support and advocacy for our immigrant neighbors. We look for ways to leverage our resources in coordination with the larger effort, being neither competitive nor redundant in our participation. The information and wisdom contained in this initial training module, has been created with significant input from:

The Episcopal Church of Colorado

Supporting Asylum Seekers: A Toolkit for Congregations

IRIS Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services

Community Co-Sponsorship Program Manual for Refugee Resettlement

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

*Congregational Accompaniment Project for Asylum Seekers:
Handbook for Congregations*

Foothills Unitarian Church, Colorado

Sanctuary Everywhere

A Franciscan Blessing

May God bless you with a restless discomfort
about easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships,
so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with holy anger at injustice, oppression,
and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for
justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer
from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may
reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that
you really CAN make a difference in this world, so that you are able,
with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

And the blessing of God the Supreme Majesty and our Creator,
Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word who is our brother and Savior,
and the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Guide, be with you
and remain with you, this day and forevermore.

Anonymous

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 3

Vision, Mission and Values 4

Establishing Team Identity and Capacity 5

Accompaniment as a Response to Injustice 5

Sustainability: Know and Be Clear on Your Capacity 6

Managing Your Expectations and Emotions 7

Organizing Your Team 9

Establishing Roles and Responsibilities 9

Other Ways to Get Involved 14

Frequently Asked Questions 16

Guidelines to Hosting 18

Considerations for the Host 18

Things to Consider: Household Norms 19

CHAN, Host Team and Guest Agreement 21

The Asylum Process 26

Vision

The Colorado Hosting Asylum Network (CHAN) is founded on the principle that entering into long-term, personal relationships with the oppressed and accompanying them as they seek permanent refuge in the United States is capable of positively transforming the difficult situation our guests find themselves in and opens up new pathways for them. It also deepens our own understanding of our role in society and the power systems that create the unjust conditions that our guests have survived in their home countries and often experience here.

Mission

We welcome Asylum Seekers into our own communities! It is our mission to support Asylum Seekers through both personal relationships and with material resources, looking toward a successful outcome in Immigration Court and a successful transition to an independent, meaningful life in the United States.

We create teams to accompany Asylum Seekers in hospitality and companionship as they journey through their legal process. This includes hosting our guests in private homes, financially and materially providing for their initial needs until they receive their Employment Authorization Document, connecting them with the larger community and its resources, and emotionally supporting them as they work through their past and look to their future.

Core Values

We Value People - Our guests are strong people. They have endured persecution and violence in its most cruel and dehumanizing forms, and have survived. We recognize the strength, perseverance, and courage that Asylum Seekers have demonstrated. We also respect their autonomy to make their own decisions for their own lives.

We Value Teamwork - Hosting an Asylum Seeker requires significant emotional, material and time involvement. The guest and each team member bring a wealth of knowledge, lived experience, skills, professional and social networks, and unique perspectives to this effort. Everyone has something to contribute to this effort.

We Value Relationships - Personal, long-term relationships are powerful. As we leave behind stereotypes and learn to understand each other as real people with unique stories, we may find we have much in common and explore new ways of thinking. We will experience first-hand the complexities and injustice of our immigration system as we accompany our guests. And through it all, we can learn to use our voice, our resources, and our influence to bring real change.

Establishing Team Identity and Capacity

Accompaniment as a Response to Injustice

Across history and throughout nations, people have found ways to accompany, shelter, and defend the rights of those who are at risk, providing sanctuary in a wide variety of forms. As we are once again witnessing the brutal effects of a broken and unjust immigration system, ordinary people have decided to challenge false narratives about arriving immigrants and choose a different way to respond. All over the United States, friends, neighbors, faith communities and groups of all kinds are organizing to welcome our newest neighbors into our lives and communities. They are learning to leverage their own social and professional networks to meet the immediate needs of shelter, food and clothes as well as longer-term goals of helping immigrants learn to win their legal cases, navigate our culture and put down roots in our community. We offer emotional care and comfort in times of stress and fear. We make introductions and connect them to local support systems. We advocate on their behalf. We share their journey.

In all forms, accompaniment is an invitation to witness, to listen, and to show up; it is a practice of being human together in the face of extremely dehumanizing systems and circumstances. For those of us who are not directly targeted by ICE, accompaniment brings us closer to the intentional cruelty and brokenness of our immigration system and creates opportunities to build relationships with those who are most impacted. As a result, many people who engage in accompaniment become deeply transformed, and grow more committed to disrupting these harmful systems and acting for a more sustainable future for all of us.

For Discussion

What drew you to this type of involvement with asylum seekers? What motivates you?

What things make you feel worried or hesitant?

What can you offer this endeavor – not only skills, but personal qualities, background knowledge, personal experience, social and professional relationships?

Autonomy: Who We Are and Who We Aren't

Helping people who are in need of support is a central way in which we put our values and beliefs – as well as our compassion and our commitment to justice – into action. But “helping” can also be problematic, because as with so many dimensions of our lives, there are power imbalances involved. They are dependent on us, and may feel that they must say and do things that will not jeopardize the help they are receiving, which puts them under additional stress and discomfort. Ideally, at the same time that we’re meeting an immediate need, we also need to be thinking about and working to shift those power dynamics so that **the person we’re helping can act with as much choice, agency, autonomy and dignity as possible.**

Respecting autonomy may include their rejection of things that we consider important. It may mean that they prioritize things differently than we do. It may mean making choices that we do not agree with. It may mean they have expectations of us that we don’t agree with. Being aware of our assumptions and expectations can **keep us centered in that larger goal of independence.**

In this accompaniment relationship, we must respect the humanity and independence of those we seek to walk alongside: we are not parents, social workers, or counselors. It is not our job to “fix” our guests, make decisions for them, or teach them to be “Americans”. Ultimately, we have no control over their decisions or how they view their relationship with us. Team members are companions, guides, and helpers - maybe long-term, maybe not. They may choose to leave your team support for better opportunities elsewhere. They may make choices that result in no longer being able to live in the host home.

ACCOMPANIMENT
Respects
AUTONOMY

In all situations, **the choices and the consequences are theirs alone.**

Unexpected and challenging situations are very likely to arise during your hosting period which will take creativity and effort to address. But sometimes a situation presents itself that means the guest can no longer live in the host home. The host’s personal or family situation may change. The guest may engage in behavior that is a threat to the peacefulness, stability or safety of the host home and family. The guest may have needs that are beyond the ability of the team to provide. Their need for housing may be longer than the host is willing to do. Ultimately, your guests are responsible for themselves and their own families, but it is wise to have some kind of exit strategy in place to make sure everyone involved remains safe. CHAN will work with your team to manage the exit process if necessary.

EVEN WHEN WE
DON'T AGREE

For Team Discussion

What if I don't want my guest to live in my home any more? What is the exit plan?

*What if my guest tells me that they have more family members that are also here and need help?
How will our group respond?*

Sustainability: Working Through the “Messiness”

Asylum seekers are a particularly vulnerable group. First, they have fled danger or persecution, which, depending on the situation, may threaten to follow them into the United States. Even if they are *physically* safe, they may not *feel* safe for a long time. Second, the treatment of asylum seekers in the U.S. has become unpredictable and confusing because government policy is always changing based on political dynamics, executive orders, public opinion and other issues. And third, like other vulnerable populations, asylum seekers generally lack resources, choices, and the privileges that come with citizenship. While communities and individual volunteers may not have professional training in protecting and interacting respectfully with vulnerable populations, **it is important to learn as much as possible as we help, in order to prevent further trauma for our new neighbors.**

Who we each are – that is, our core identity, which itself is multidimensional – is complicated! Our sense of self is influenced by a wide array of factors: individual characteristics, life events, personal choices, cultural recognition, social norms and so on. It is the same for our guests. They had full and productive lives before they fled. They are much more multidimensional than they may appear at this moment. As they feel safer and more comfortable in their new life, **they will probably have their own preferences, opinions, habits, values and responses.**

Our choices are also inevitably influenced by our relative positions of privilege and power, especially in relation to race, class, and citizenship. Even if we do not consider ourselves to be particularly well-off, as American citizens, we have rights that we can exercise, access to public and private resources, social/family/professional networks, a reasonable expectation of personal safety, and - most importantly, choices. Our guests either do not have access to these resources, or do not know how to use them, thus limiting their choices. We all have useful knowledge and skills to bring to the table, but we also have things we can learn about the experiences and perspectives of those we are welcoming. **We should never assume that our experience is the same as theirs’, even in the exact same situations.**

For Group Discussion

What kinds of cross-cultural experiences have you had in the past?

*How might your experience influence understanding your guest’s perspective?
How might your guest’s understanding of their experience be different from yours?*

If and when you engage in the support and welcoming of asylum seekers, it is important to be clear on what you or your group can and cannot do. You cannot provide everything your guest may want or need. You are offering housing and some basic services, and your team must decide together what you have the desire and ability to provide beyond that. The reality of their lack of access to resources, limitations of not having a work permit, and built-in risk of legal failure is brutal sometimes. We will share their frustrations and our hearts may break when we discover we cannot fix it. There have been cases where an individual wants to be a “host home” for an

asylum seeker, or a group wants to engage in hosting type ministry, but they are not prepared for the material, emotional and time commitment, and it can be hard and “messy” at times.

One of the keys to accompanying in a way that is sustainable is to **maintain healthy boundaries**, both among team members and with your guests. This includes avoiding misunderstandings by clearly articulating each person’s responsibilities, identifying whose responsibility it is to help solve a particular problem, and recognizing each person’s limits and communicating that clearly with the guests.

Trauma: Complicating Relationships and Achieving Goals

Trauma is also an important factor in how our guests respond to us and to the demands of adapting to a new environment. **People who are deeply traumatized may need to heal before they can engage with their team and with the new responsibilities and challenges they face.** Sometimes it can be frustrating to the team if the guest doesn’t seem to be taking responsibility for their own progress or seems disengaged. Your team may find it helpful to arrange for a professional trauma counselor to meet with you. If you need help with this or if you believe your team would benefit from training in responding well to trauma, contact Denise at DChang@HostingAsylum.org .

For Thoughtful Consideration

Have you ever experienced a traumatic, life-changing event? How did you respond?

How might your experience (or lack of it) influence how you interpret your guest’s feelings and responses?

Shifting expectations, complicated feelings, and uncertainty about outcomes are natural and probably unavoidable, though the specifics will vary. To stay engaged while maintaining emotional and practical boundaries is an enormous challenge that your team should anticipate.

For Thoughtful Consideration

*What kind of relationship are we expecting to have with our guest?
What if that relationship doesn’t develop?*

*What expectations do we have about how grateful our guests will be for the support our team is offering?
What if that gratitude doesn’t show up in the way we are expecting?
What if they dislike what you have to offer or the US in general?*

Organizing Your Team: Establishing Roles and Responsibilities

Before agreeing to support an asylum seeker, clearly define the work that each member of the team is able to take on, and clearly communicate this role to the person you are supporting. The contract that CHAN uses between the host and guest is included in this packet so you can see what is required and what is up to your team's discretion.

Accompanying and welcoming asylum seekers is an enormous commitment. In addition to the hard work and time required for this type of involvement, there is also the uncertainty of the outcome of the asylum seeker's case and the ambiguity that may exist in the relationships. Even in the best of circumstances, what starts as enthusiastic, wholehearted engagement of a support group may give way to doubts about the project and varying degrees of burnout among participants. **It is important that each team member stays in contact with the team coordinator and jumps in where they can help.** Don't let your host or coordinator end up shouldering the burden alone. As a rule of thumb, your team should prepare for a minimum time commitment of approximately seven months of providing support such as housing, clothing/food/material needs, and connections to whatever community services they may qualify for. This length of time is variable depending upon the needs of the asylum seeker, whether or not you are connected to another accompaniment network (that is providing more services/support), and when your guest is expected to receive their Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Guests have stayed with their hosts for as little as 3 months, and as long as more than a year.

Each team will ideally consist of a host family, a team coordinator, and 8 or more team members. If your team lacks a specific set of skills listed below, contact Tomi at TStage@HostingAsylum.org for help finding additional team members.

Coordinator:

The coordinator is the team leader. The host cannot be the coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for organizing the team into a cohesive group and acts as the point of contact for the entire team. This includes identifying areas of responsibility and disseminating information to the rest of the team. The host may find it easier to do much of the necessary work themselves, but it is the coordinator's responsibility to be in regular contact with the host to find out what is needed and distribute that load to the rest of the team. The host can "burn out" if they carry more responsibility than just hosting.

The host may encounter a difficult situation with their guest that creates tension in their household. It is very helpful for the coordinator to step in and objectively make the difficult decisions, in order to protect the relationship between the host and their guest and the peace in the home. The host will likely find it helpful to deflect responsibility to CHAN or to the coordinator should disagreement arise as they interact with their guest.

We strongly advise that the coordinator has at least 2 team meetings before beginning the process to receive the guest. This manual is designed to direct the first two trainings. After that, teams should meet regularly to maintain the relationship with your guest, socialize as a team, address problems as they arise, reflect on best practices, share knowledge, and plan ahead.

Host:

The host family is responsible for providing a furnished private room, meals, and companionship to the guest. The host is a team member, NOT the team lead. While it may seem easier for you as the host to assume much of the burden of transportation, scheduling, and shopping for the guest, it is crucial that you communicate regularly with your coordinator and allow them to distribute those jobs to other team members.

Hosting is a TEAM effort!

The host will complete the part of the Host-Guest Agreement describing their household, lifestyle, and what kind of living situation is being offered to potential guests. They may also be called on to formally petition for the release of the guest from ICE detention as their sponsor. The role of “sponsor” is not the same financial commitment required by USCIS for securing a visa. You are merely telling ICE that you will provide an initial home address and short-term support for your guest as an alternative to being detained. It is not your responsibility if the guest leaves your home.

Legal Support:

The details of your guest’s legal case are private, and you may never know why they fled their country or what their journey was like. CHAN does not ask what the basis for the guest’s asylum plea is, only that they have been referred to us by an immigration lawyer or a partner organization as a viable asylum case and, preferably, with an application already filed. We do not evaluate the merit of their case in consideration for sponsorship.

Your guest will possibly come to you with an attorney arranged by RMIAN, IRC or another organization. **If the guest does not already have an attorney, a team member needs to find an immigration attorney who can take their case, hopefully a low-cost or *pro bono*.** A good place to start is to ask for assistance within your team’s professional and social networks. In addition, a resource list is available in your Resource Manual. If your team is unable to fundraise for the attorney fees, CHAN can help, contact Denise at DChang@HostingAsylum.org.

This team member supports the asylum seeker as he/she works with an attorney and goes through the legal process. This may include accompanying the asylum seeker to court appointments, ICE check-ins, legal appointments, and assisting the asylum seeker in gathering any information and documents requested by the attorney. It may include no responsibility at all if your guest decides to take care of their case requirements themselves. Remember that attorney-client information is privileged, and your guest may or may not choose to allow you to speak with the attorney directly or to be involved in their legal case. If they want you to help them, they need to sign a Release of Information (ROI) available from their attorney. Please do not share any information learned about their case with other team members unless the guest gives permission to do so. **Their story is theirs alone to tell.**

NOTE: Providing advice about legal matters and completing forms is considered practicing law. Volunteers who are not licensed attorneys should be careful not to advise the guest in any way, including completing paperwork for their case. CHAN has an Accredited Representative on staff, trained and licensed by the Department of Justice to give legal advice or submit paperwork. Contact LHauger@HostingAsylum.org if you have questions.

Finance and Fundraising:

This member will manage the finances of the team, including setting up a bank account and bookkeeping, and reimbursing various team members for their expenses from the team’s funds. In the first several months of the asylum process, the person you are sponsoring will most likely be financially dependent on your team for all of

their needs (housing, clothing and toiletries, food, transportation, phone, medical care, legal aid, etc.). **Expect to spend \$500 - \$1,000 per month, depending on the size and particular needs of the family.**

This team member would also take on the work of **appropriately communicating to the wider community about the work of the team and their financial needs.** CHAN funding is limited, and so the team needs to participate in fundraising for the daily costs of their guest that cannot be met through community resources. Ideas might include organizing a special collection in your religious congregation, soliciting monetary and in-kind donations from individuals, hosting a fundraising event, launching an online giving campaign, or other actions to raise money to support the team's work. More ideas are described below. It usually costs around \$5,000 to support a guest for 7 months, which most sponsors have been able to raise through fundraising.

CHAN currently has funding to assist with the costs of moving into an independent living situation when they receive their EAD, including deposit, first months rent, and possibly more. We can also assist with excessive medical or legal expenses. Finally, we have contacts for many professional services offered at a free or reduced cost that can help reduce your expenses. If your guest comes to you as a referral from another agency, they may be providing some support, particularly in the areas of legal and medical services, which will most likely be your biggest expenses. In addition, you'll find that donations of clothing and necessary goods are often generously provided. If you need some training in fundraising or a specific service that you cannot source, contact Tomi at TStage@HostingAsylum.org.

CHAN asks that team members do as much fundraising as possible to pay for the guest's expenses. However, we do not expect any team member to spend more than they are willing to or to incur any long-term financial obligations. The team coordinator should be working with CHAN to manage any large expenses.

Any receipts submitted to CHAN for reimbursement must contain the name, address, phone number and email of the person to be reimbursed, and the name of the guest. Please submit all receipts to JWilliams@HostingAsylum.org.

Shopping and Life Skills:

Your guest may come with clothing and personal belongings, or they may arrive with nothing. Put together a welcome basket with basic items they will need immediately – toiletries, a jacket, or whatever you think their needs might be. Plan a shopping trip within the first few days to buy clothing, especially winter wear if you live in a cold area. Thrift stores are an excellent source of inexpensive, good quality clothing, and will continue to be a valuable resource when your guest becomes independent. Underwear, socks, and some other personal items will need to be purchased new. **Whenever you are out shopping, take the opportunity to show your guests how to choose more economical options**, such as store brands vs. name brands, clearance racks, coupons, and grocery store loyalty cards. You may also want to express costs in terms of work-hours or days, with \$15/hr as a reference point. This will help them start to think about what it will cost to live on their own.

The team will provide a smart phone and phone plan if our guests do not already have one. Your guest will probably already have one, but may only use WhatsApp when connected to wifi. In today's world, good phone service is essential for everything from making social plans to communicating with a doctor or seeking work. T-Mobile *Metro* (not T-Mobile) is widely used by our clients, and plans sometimes come with a free phone or tablet. They also offer month-to-month plans that the guest can take over when they have income.

After initial needs are met, **include your guest in your routine errands** or shopping trips for other items such as groceries, household items, the bank, auto repair, etc. This will assist your guest in adjusting to and becoming

independent in the US. The norms and processes in the US are often confusing, and being able to watch and learn before they are on their own increases their chances for success.

Sign them up for local **food banks**. This will not only help your host with their food budget, but will be a valuable resource when they are on their own.

In consideration of dignity and autonomy, your team may choose to provide your guest with a **monthly stipend**, such as a prepaid gift card, for buying what they want themselves. Some teams make the stipend large enough to also purchase their own food.

Once they have received their work permit, you will need to help them set up a **bank account, a Colorado ID, a Driver's License**, etc. Colorado is one of the few states that offers these, but policy changes, so please check the CDOT website for current information. There is a residency requirement, which can be demonstrated using school enrollment paperwork, medical bills, phone bill, and any other paperwork that shows the guests' name and address. CHAN can send a bank-generated check to them if necessary. If you need this, contact Jan at JWilliams@HostingAsylum.org

Medical and Dental:

CHAN requires that the host team will arrange for any “pressing and necessary” medical and dental care. Asylum seekers will have medical and mental health needs, just like any of us, but also may have heightened medical/mental health needs due to their long journey and past trauma. **This team member would identify local health care providers** for the needed care (including culturally competent and trauma-informed providers), arrange transportation as necessary, and assist with any follow-up or ongoing support that is needed. There should be low-cost health clinics in your area for general care, immunizations, medications, and referrals for more specialized needs. A description of medical services available in the Denver area, including low-cost lin at each stage of the immigration process is available in the Resource Manual. Because local resources may be overwhelmed by the demand, it might be helpful to ask within your church, business contacts, or social networks for donated services or references.

Emergency care is available at any hospital, and should be free. You will need to make an appointment (afterwards) with the financial office to fill out the paperwork for Emergency Medicaid *in their name*. When discussing income, include only your guest's income, not yours.

If your guest identifies as LGBTQ+, be sure the places you find are queer-friendly. If your guest is beginning or continuing hormone treatments and needs support and mentoring, the Resource Manual has a list of a variety of services and support groups that you can access.

If you need help or advice navigating the health care system in your community, you can enlist the help of someone who works in the medical profession or contact Tomi at TStage@HostingAsylum.org .

English classes

Not all asylum seekers have an interest in or are ready to begin to learn English, especially in the early months. Some guests may speak English quite well, and may only need focused, employment-related vocabulary and skills. Some of them may have had very little formal schooling in their past, which can make it challenging to read or write in their own language, much less in a foreign one. Nevertheless, having the option available, if they choose it, will be very helpful. In the early weeks and months when it will be difficult for your guest to work, having a schedule and a place to go with a purpose can be helpful. Find out what kinds of classes are available

for free, especially ones that are walking distance from your home or on an easy route for public transportation. Libraries, community centers, and churches are a good place to start. CHAN also has some funding to pay for ESL classes. Enlisting team and community members for informal conversation for practice will also go a long way in developing vocabulary and confidence, as well as a larger social network.

School and Education

If your guest is under the age of 21, he or she is eligible to enroll in public school if they wish. If they are older, programs to study for a High School Equivalency exam are available through the State of Colorado.

As your guest waits for their work permit, enrollment in a job-readiness program to know how and where to look for jobs, create a resume, practice interviews, explore career possibilities that match their skills and interests, understand work expectations, and know their rights will help them make a smoother and more successful transition into independence. A list of organizations that offer this kind of support is available in the Resource Manual.

Social, Emotional, Spiritual Needs:

Asylum seekers have gone through a harrowing journey, and are in the midst of a challenging and uncertain time as they go through this legal process. In addition, they need to learn to navigate a foreign culture. Opportunities to socialize, build relationships, and receive social and spiritual support are vital. **This team member would discuss with the asylum seeker their preferred ways to meet emotional and spiritual needs**, perhaps through connecting with community events or opportunities, regular visits from team members they trust, and/or connecting with a faith community of their own choosing.

CHAN offers **mental health care** if the guest requires it, but that can look different ways for each guest.

If possible, connect them to an appropriate cultural community, or recruit a “cultural advisor” as a resource to help you facilitate cultural understanding and expectations. Be aware that as an asylum seeker, they may have experienced their trauma at the hands of their own countrymen, and may not want to join a group from their home country. A list of ethnic community organizations is available in the Resource Manual. Don’t be afraid to join in yourself sometimes to learn about your guest and the world they left behind!

Your asylum seeker may also want to get to know the local neighborhood through **activities**. This could include visiting the local public library or swimming pool, enjoying a walk or pick-up soccer in a local park, etc. Until such time as the asylum seeker is comfortable to access and enjoy community activities and events independently, a volunteer or two may be needed for such outings. This is a great way to help casual volunteers from your community to get involved in a small way!

A particular challenge for asylum seekers is the amount of idle time they might experience once they have settled in their new home/environment. Finding meaningful outlets for asylum seekers to share their experience and skills can be helpful in overcoming a sense of helplessness, even depression, and can even help with recovery. **This often means creative approaches for them to volunteer or other ways for the asylum seekers to contribute to their own future and/or be able to give to others**. Immigrants who are more established in the US may find it helpful to mentor those who are newly arrived or who have been recently placed in a host home.

Drivers and Transportation

Transportation to and from appointments and activities is the most time-consuming job on a team. The ability to drive in the daytime and evening will be helpful in support of the whole team, especially in the early months

until the guest becomes confident in using public transportation. This person would not only drive the guest themselves, but they would be responsible for finding and scheduling others to share the driving responsibilities. Helping with driving responsibilities is a good way for those who want to be casually involved with your team to help.

One of the earliest ways to help your guest have a sense of agency is for them to get places they want to go independently, without assistance. Learning the public transportation system will be a challenge in the beginning, but it will offer a lot of freedom very quickly. **As soon as your guest is ready, introduce them to public transportation and the RTD MyRide app.** CHAN has access to discounted RTD tickets. If you need help, the Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council offers 4-hour in person workshops on how to use public transportation. Information about this program is available in the Resource Manual.

Other Ways to Get Involved

Take Advantage of Offers For Casual Help by Your Friends and Communities

Your friends, relatives and community groups will probably be interested in what you are doing, even though they may not want to join a team or make a long-term commitment. There are many ways for them to get involved on a one-time basis with their skills and knowledge. Be ready with suggestions for helping!

- Buy certain things, like a winter coat or baby stroller
- Give money or fundraise for your team
- Organize a gift card drive - grocery cards and Walmart are great choices
- Organize a diaper drive, school supplies or pantry staples
- Teach them how to use the bus to get places they want to go
- Research something, like calling around to find a lawyer or what local health clinics are available and what they offer
- Work with your guest to understand bills and use them to create a budget
- Help them fill out a job application and coach them on interviews
- Invite your guest for the day to a social event, football game, or holiday
- When it is time, help find an apartment to rent, fill out the application, and understand the lease

Shrink the language barrier

If no one in your sponsoring home speaks your guest's language, your shared lives can be challenging for all of you. If you and your guest do not have a language in common, identify people in your community who would be able to step in on occasion and help with interpretation. Many teams have found **Google Translate** and similar apps that are easy to use on a day-to-day basis. This is also a perfect opportunity for you to brush up on your language skills or enroll in a class! If your guest speaks an uncommon language, reach out to ethnic organizations for help. If you need introductions, contact Tomi at TStage@HostingAsylum.org.

Recruiting a **"cultural interpreter"** to advise your team on occasion may also be helpful in addressing misunderstandings. Consider reaching out to your local ethnic community organizations, places of worship, businesses, and restaurants for assistance. A list of Denver-area cultural organizations is available in the Resource Manual.

Develop Your Team's Knowledge Base

Your guest can come from anywhere across the globe! Background knowledge in your guest's country, its history, their customs, and culture will be invaluable in understanding. Be aware that as an asylum seeker, your guest is a unique individual whose identity, experiences, personality, interests, and beliefs may both converge and diverge from their country's "norm". In addition, your guest has experienced persecution in some form from their own countrymen, so do not assume that they want to socialize with them here. Ask questions, listen well, and never assume!

Allow your guest to invite you into sharing their identity, whether it be attending a cultural event, cooking together, visiting their place of worship, or inviting their friends to join you for an activity or meal.

Frequently Asked Questions

How are potential guests vetted?

CHAN accepts potential guests for consideration based on four requirements:

- They have filed an asylum application or similar. This process includes background checks through the FBI and several law enforcement databases.
- They have no non-political, non-immigration criminal history.
- They have no other relatives in the US who can sponsor them.
- They are committed to actively pursuing their legal case.

Sometimes CHAN may conduct a second screening to find out more about specific situations stated in the applications. Each of our applicants is different, and the situations they come from can be messy. The majority of our clients are referred to us through our partnerships with established refugee and asylum seeker serving organizations. Once a team has decided to begin the process to accept a particular asylum seeker, they will be able to speak with the referring agency about whether this will be a good match. At least one in-person meeting between the host and guest is part of the placement process, and can include team members also.

CHAN endeavors to find out as much as possible about situations that may affect the hosting relationship so that the potential team can consider them in their decision to host. However, it is very likely that you will encounter difficult situations as your guest settles in. Your guest is seeking asylum, which means that they may be experiencing a significant amount of trauma. Forming relationships, interacting with society, maintaining physical health, and managing extreme emotions may be very difficult for them. This is where the team needs to step in and help find resources and share the load.

What if my guest does something illegal?

Neither the official sponsor nor the team members are liable in any way if your guest commits a crime, unless the sponsor or members of your team have participated in or covered up the crime. If your guest is engaging in any illegal activity, please contact Denise at DChang@HostingAsylum.org.

What happens if my guest misses his or her ICE appointments, court dates, or paperwork deadlines?

Your guest is solely responsible for their appointments with ICE, for showing up for their court dates, and for following any restrictions or rules that may be imposed on them as they await an asylum decision. Your only commitment is to provide transportation as necessary. Their lawyer is responsible for keeping them informed about deadlines and paperwork, and that relationship is privileged. Your guest may choose to allow you to speak to their lawyer yourself, but that decision is theirs alone. However, you are making a moral commitment to facilitate whatever is needed for the asylum seeker to meet the requirements set forth by the government.

Actively pursuing their case and meeting their legal obligations conscientiously is a requirement to be in this sponsorship program. If your guest is not doing so, contact Denise at DChang@HostingAsylum.org to discuss further options.

If my guest wants something I don't think is necessary or I can't afford, what do I do?

As a sponsoring team, you are agreeing to provide a private room in a safe housing situation, food, a phone, legal counsel, pressing medical/dental/mental health care, and transportation to necessary appointments. Your guest

may request money, items, or other services from your host or team. However, no one in the support team is legally responsible for your guest financially, and you are free to deny the request. Your commitment is an ethical and voluntary one only. Should larger-than-expected expenses arise that your team believes are necessary and cannot pay for, CHAN may be able to provide fundraising, financial, or material assistance. Contact Denise at DChang@HostingAsylum.org .

What if we have a crisis and don't know what to do?

For immediate help, call the Colorado Crisis Services at (844) 493-8255.

CHAN has many relationships with other nonprofits, immigrant support programs, professional service providers and volunteers who can help. A list of resources is available in the Resource Manual for longer-term help. Contact Denise at TStage@HostingAsylum.org for specific help.

What if my guest wants to move out before they are ready?

While we anticipate that our guests will live in their host homes until they have secured their work permit (EAD) and a job, that is not the outcome of every hosting situation. Your guest is free to leave your home at any time and move out if they choose to, for any reason. Both temporary and long-term housing options are described in the Resource Guide.

It is CHAN's policy that when a guest chooses to move out, the services provided by CHAN will end immediately. However, some teams choose to maintain the relationship with their guests and continue to support them as they navigate independent living, offer advice, allow the guest to visit, and even return back to the host home if they are unable to self-support. Your team is free to decide what is best in your situation.

It is your guest's responsibility to inform ICE of their new address if they choose to move out. You have no legal liability for their decisions. It is helpful for sponsors to remind their guests that failure to inform ICE of a change in residency can result in an immediate deportation order; but this is ultimately the decision of the person you are hosting.

What if I no longer want to host while my guest is still here?

You have the right to end the hosting relationship for any reason at any time. Your guest will be informed of that before they decide to accept your offer. However, sudden requests to terminate can have a very damaging effect on a guest that is already traumatized. Your team should make a plan for this situation. Suggestions and resources for handling this kind of situation are included in the Resource Manual. Contact Denise at DChang@HostingAsylum.org prior to finalizing the termination to make the transition as smooth as possible.