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# Sponsorship: Best Practices

**Whose goal is it?**

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Is community-based sponsorship new?

US Sponsorship Growth  
Crisis in Afghanistan

Whose goal is it?  
Strategic withdrawal



# USRAP History

## US Refugee Admissions Program

### Before 1980

- Refugee resettlement occurred through “church sponsorship”

### Refugee Act of 1980

- “Standardized” resettlement services for all refugees admitted to U.S.
- Aligned the U.S. definition of “refugee” with international definition
- Establishment of annual refugee admissions ceiling
- Required annual consultations between Congress & the administration.
- Established budget for resettlement national agencies

Canadian Program Model .... 2016 ... IRIS rapid scaling



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# US Sponsorship Growth 2016 - now

## Canadian Program + IRIS Model + others

- Training Program for sponsors
- Structure for sponsor groups
- Oversight that is managerial, not solely case managers
- Agencies learning to provide guidance
- Planning for thoughtful resettlement



# 2021 Afghan Evacuee “Resettlement”

*It was ...*

- emergent,
- directly from a conflict zone,
- chaotic,
- outside legally defined pathways while being inside the US,
- “plugging chaos into middle class America,”
- the right thing to save lives fast,

*... what else?*

# 2021 Afghan Evacuee “Resettlement”

*It was not ...*

- conducive to normal planning,
- ideal communications,
- deep learning for those new to resettlement,
- reflective,
- how these Afghans thought an American welcome would be,
- enough for those left behind,

*... what else?*



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# Strategic Withdrawal

- **Time for a reset**
- Defining Self-Sufficiency
- Initial: lots of support
- Next: Strategic withdrawal
- Concepts to consider and reconsider, repeatedly



# Self-Sufficiency

- For immigrant newcomers, self-sufficiency is defined as knowing **how to independently manage** (not mastered):
  - their lives,
  - their government assistance (if still needed),
  - community resources,
  - and **who they can ask** for help as they move forward.
- Self-sufficiency is not defined as living without:
  - government benefits
  - or
  - **requested guidance** from community member

# How to achieve it?

## Keeping Sponsorship in Perspective

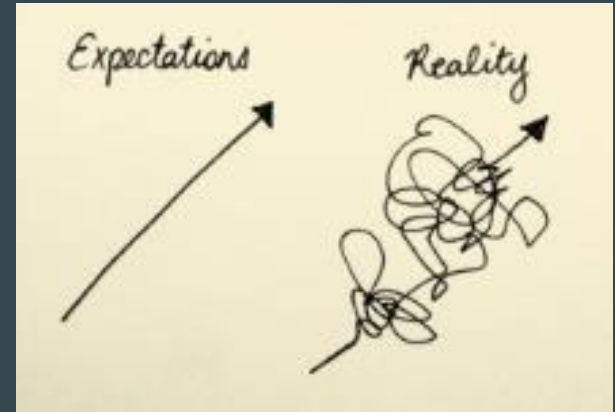
- Partnering *with* the Refugee Family
- Two Wisdoms
- Managing Privilege
- Tolerating Messiness
- How could I be wrong?
- Supporting Toward Resilience



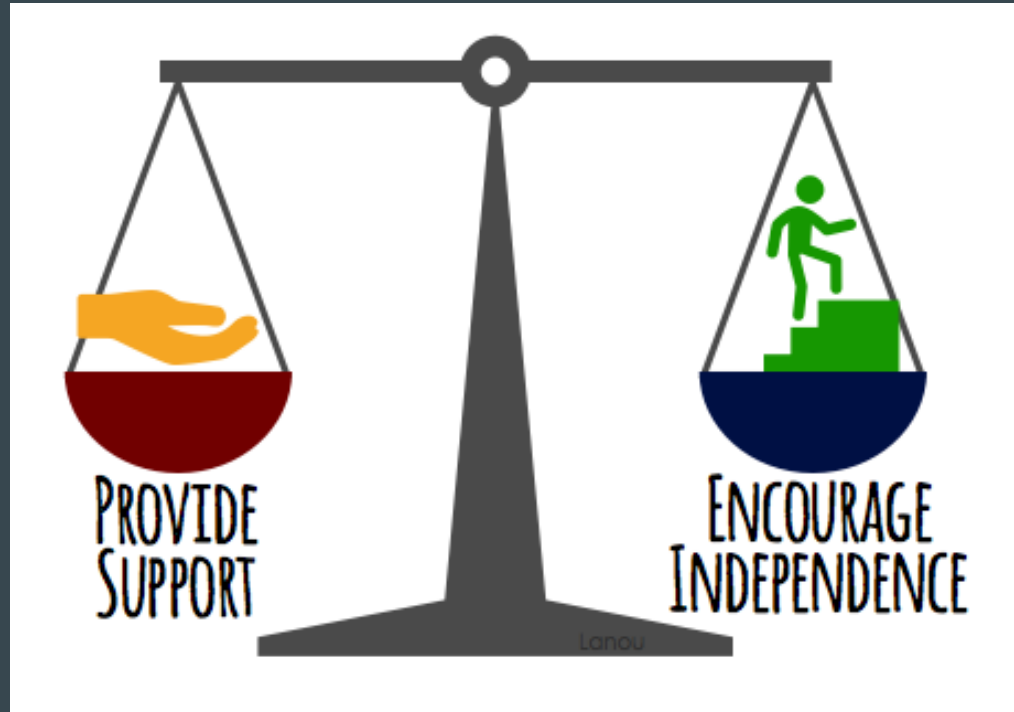
# Ask Yourself: Whose goal is it?

(Thoughtful Decision Making. **Slow down.**)

- What is the resettlement goal?
- Is it for the fundamental well-being of the family?
- Does this support independence?



# Encouraging Independence through Practice (aka **Strategic Withdrawal**)



# Scenario 1: Month 10 & I can't.

## Background

Family of four from Guatemala, mother and father in mid 30's, two children, 7 and 9. Tenth month after arrival. The father has good intermediate English, mother has basic English. Father has been employed full-time for 6 months, the mother part-time for two months. Both have discussed openly with the group about their prior trauma, at the hands of a cartell. They report they are doing well, however when they get overwhelmed they become rigid and tell the sponsor group that they cannot do certain tasks. Children are doing well in school and are very happy. The family lives on a public transportation line and in a Spanish speaking friendly community. They live within walking distance of local schools and services.

## Challenge

The co-sponsor reached out for guidance because the mother was refusing to meet with the Jobs First Counselor, saying that she felt "persecuted" by the outreaches via email, from the Jobs First Counselor. The leader reviewed the emails by the Jobs First Counselor and did not perceive the language to be aggressive or inappropriate. The leader was asking if it would be acceptable, given the family's trauma, for the group to meet with the Jobs First Counselor rather than the family. Continued benefits for the family are contingent upon the adults meeting with the Jobs First Counselor.



## Scenario 2: Month 4 + Carpool?

Sam is a volunteer driver with a co-sponsor group who has been regularly scheduled to drive Adib, a Syrian dad, to work one day a week. He also gives him a ride home.

The family has been in the U.S. for four months and both the group and the family were delighted Adib got a good job so quickly, but have been frustrated with no public transportation.

Volunteers drive Adib for every work shift. Before leaving to give Adib a ride home, Sam received a text saying Adib had a ride home from a co-worker. Sam later found out this co-worker would drive Adib regularly for a fee. Adib was pleased by this arrangement.

Sam contacted the committee chair for transportation who called an emergency meeting. It was decided that since this co-worker had not been vetted as a group volunteer and was charging a fee, it was not appropriate for this arrangement to remain in place. They made plans to meet with Adib to tell him they believed their group should continue the transportation support instead to save him money and make sure those assisting the family are vetted.

# Scenario 3: They're moving?!

## Background

Afghan family of 7 @ month 10. Tight nit, happy family. Father has memory challenges, neurologist confirmed, likely due to proximity of bombing. Yet, he obtains work easily, very affable, then loses positions, even though employers like him a great deal. Mother has stronger English, group is working on income options from home.

Children: 12, 10, 5, 3, and 1 yo. All happy doing well.

## Challenge

Family wants to move to the South, near friends. Group is very concerned they cannot handle a move on their own and has asked their agency Community Sponsor Coach to intervene, to speak to the family about staying. The group has a great deal of experience, having resettled 4 families, and ample funds.

# Common Resettlement Challenges

Challenge	Strategies
Communication breakdown with family members and/or among volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Utilize interpreters for complex conversations</li> <li>● Establish regular communication expectations with group</li> </ul>
Inconsistent messaging/info to family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consult with the group before relaying information</li> <li>● It is OK to say “I do not know”</li> </ul>
Undermining family self-sufficiency	Emphasize specific steps toward self-sufficiency consistently throughout resettlement
Over-doing	Gather team + review accomplishments of the family. Encourage independence based on strengths
Volunteers stepping out of lane	Communicate with team leader
Dismissing client autonomy	Maintain collaborative mindset
Failing to orient toward community	Encourage community connections <b>Follow the family's lead</b>

# Struggling Well. Mistakes are ok.



# TAKEAWAYS

DO	DON'T
Develop a well-organized team, with a clear leadership structure, roles, & responsibilities	Put too much responsibility on a few people
Stay in your lane & consult appropriate committee leads when you perceive a need in that area	Jump to do things outside of your role
Continually teach clients how to do tasks; Practice with them.	Do tasks for clients that they're capable of doing
Use interpreters for every complex conversation	Forego interpreters with clients who seem to comprehend English well
Assist clients in accessing and learning to navigate community resources.	Arrange for the group to provide for all of the family's needs
Designate one of your group leaders as a single point of contact with the agency.	Have multiple group members contacting multiple agency staff members
Honor client autonomy. <b>Plan for the end of sponsorship.</b>	Urge clients to do what YOU think is best for them. <b>Miss the opportunity to draw a close to organizing activities.</b>

# The End

Is there ever an end?  
Yes, there must be, because  
another family needs help.

