

Accompanying vs Non-Accompanying Family Members

Which family members can be sponsored on the same application as the Principal Applicant (PA)?

When applying to sponsor refugees under the PSR program, one person must be designated as the Principal Applicant (PA) on the application.

When you are applying to sponsor one refugee, that person is the PA by default (note: the age to qualify as a PA is 18 and over). When you are sponsoring a family, one family member must be designated as the PA. This is often the head of the family unit, but should ideally be the person with the strongest refugee story.

The PA can only list family members that meet the definition of a “family” used by the Canadian immigration system on their application.

In the Canadian immigration system, a “family” is defined as: the PA; the PA’s spouse or common-law partner; any of the PA’s dependent children or any of the PA’s spouse’s or common-law partner’s dependent children; a dependent child of the PA’s dependent child; and, a dependent child of the PA’s spouse’s or common-law partner’s dependent child.

In the Canadian immigration system, a “dependent child” is defined as any children under the age of 22. A child under the age of 22 is not considered to be a dependent child if they are married. A child 22 or older is also not considered to be a dependent child.



Anyone that meets the definition of a “family” used by the Canadian immigration system can be sponsored on the same application as the PA. Anyone that does not meet this definition (i.e. children that are 22 or older; children under 22 that are married; uncles/aunts; siblings; grandparents; cousins; nephews/nieces etc.) cannot be sponsored on the same application as the PA and require a completely separate application package.

Sponsoring groups must sponsor the PA and any of the PA’s family members that meet the definition of a “family” used by the Canadian immigration system, even if those family members are missing, presumed dead or in detention. If sponsors do not list, and do not sponsor, all eligible family members of the PA, the PA will most likely not be able to bring them to Canada at a later date to reunite with them under any immigration stream¹ and there may be [consequences for the sponsoring group](#).

On the application forms, namely on the [Sponsorship Undertaking](#) and the [Generic Application Form for Canada](#), the sponsoring group and the PA must indicate whether the PA’s family members are accompanying or non-accompanying.

¹ See [Section 117\(9\)\(d\) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations](#), although there is a [two-year pilot program](#) that currently allows undeclared family members to be sponsored to Canada (this pilot is in effect from September 9, 2019, to September 9, 2021).

When a sponsoring group submits a sponsorship application under the PSR program, they are responsible for providing financial and settlement support to the PA and all of the PA's accompanying and non-accompanying family members, including biological children born after the application is submitted, and must satisfy IRCC that they have the financial and settlement capacity to support the PA and all of the PA's accompanying and non-accompanying family members at the time they submit the application. Sponsors must take into account the settlement needs of the PA and all of the PA's accompanying and non-accompanying family members and provide details of their plan to address their needs on the [Settlement Plan](#).

When should family members of the Principal Applicant (PA) be listed as [accompanying](#) or [non-accompanying](#) on the Sponsorship Undertaking form and the Generic Application Form for Canada?

If one or more of the PA's family members would like to travel with the PA to Canada, regardless of where they are located, the sponsoring group and the PA must indicate on the [Sponsorship Undertaking](#) and the [Generic Application Form for Canada](#) that these family members will be accompanying the PA to Canada. If the PA and their family members are listed as accompanying and they are located in different countries, the respective Visa Offices will make reasonable efforts to coordinate processing so the PA and all of their accompanying family members arrive in Canada together. Sponsors have the option to provide separate contact information on the [Sponsorship Undertaking](#) for any of the PA's family members that are not residing with the PA or are in a different country to coordinate this processing.

If one or more of the PA's family members do not, or are unable to, travel with the PA to Canada (e.g. they are missing, presumed dead or in detention), regardless of where they are located, the sponsoring group and the PA must indicate on the [Sponsorship Undertaking](#) and the [Generic Application Form for Canada](#) that these family members will be non-accompanying.

What forms and supporting documents do [accompanying](#) family members need to include with the application package?

If the PA's family members are listed as accompanying on the [Sponsorship Undertaking](#) and the [Generic Application Form for Canada](#), they must submit the following with the application package for the PA: a completed and signed [Schedule A](#) and [Schedule 2](#) (if they are 18 years of age or older); and, one photo that meets the relevant [specifications](#).

What forms and supporting documents do [non-accompanying](#) family members need to include with the application package?

If the PA's family members are listed as non-accompanying and are missing, presumed dead or in detention, there is no need to submit a photo or a completed and signed Schedule A and Schedule 2 for them. Sponsors must include a cover letter with the application package explaining the reasons why the non-accompanying dependents were unable to provide a photo or complete and sign these forms.

If the non-accompanying dependents are not missing, presumed dead or in detention, they must submit the following with the application package for the PA: a completed and signed [Schedule A](#) and [Schedule 2](#) (if they are 18 years of age or older); and, one photo that meets the relevant [specifications](#).

[If the Principal Applicant \(PA\)'s relationship with their spouse has broken down, but there has not been a divorce or a legal separation, does the spouse need to be listed as an accompanying or non-accompanying family member on the application forms?](#)

Yes, the spouse must still be listed as an accompanying/non-accompanying family member on the [Sponsorship Undertaking](#) and the [Generic Application Form for Canada](#) when it is submitted to ROC-O. If the application is being submitted by a SAH, a cap space will be required for the spouse.

The PA should explain the nature of the relationship with their spouse in a cover letter that is included with the application package. It is left to the Visa Office to assess the bona fides of the relationship between the PA and their spouse, and the Visa Office will decide whether the spouse should be removed from the file.

The only scenario in which the PA does not need to list their spouse as an accompanying/non-accompanying family member on the application forms is when there has been a legal separation or a divorce. If the PA is married but no longer living with their spouse and the relationship has broken down, the PA should list their marital status as “legally separated” on the [Sponsorship Undertaking](#) and the [Generic Application Form for Canada](#). When a PA declares themselves as being divorced or legally separated, the ex-spouse is not considered a family member; is not eligible for family reunification via the One-Year Window of Opportunity Provision (OYW) or the family class; and, will not be permitted to join the PA in Canada.

If the Principal Applicant (PA) is divorced or legally separate from their spouse, and the PA’s spouse has legal custody of their children, should the children be listed as accompanying/non-accompanying family members on the application forms even though the PA does not have legal custody and the former spouse will not consent to the children travelling to Canada with the PA?

Yes, the children must still be listed as accompanying/non-accompanying family members on the [Sponsorship Undertaking](#) and the [Generic Application Form for Canada](#) as it will allow sponsorship under the family class in the future if circumstances change. If the application is being submitted by a SAH, cap spaces will be required for the children.

How will non-accompanying family members come to Canada to be reunited with the Principal Applicant (PA)?

Family members of the PA that are listed as non-accompanying family members on the forms will be processed under the One-Year Window of Opportunity Provision (OYW). The PA has one year after their date of arrival in Canada to initiate the OYW process. For further information about the OYW and to get the required application forms, please [click here](#).



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Last updated: October 2019