



Pictou County Safe Harbour

Refugee Settlement + Support

Volunteer Orientation Manual

Community. Dignity. Empowerment.

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Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a volunteer with Pictou County Safe Harbour (PCSH). The work of Safe Harbour would be impossible without the help of our dedicated volunteers.

Volunteers are invaluable to this organization. They provide us with new ideas, energy, enthusiasm, skills and talents. Our volunteer program is made up of community members who represent a variety of ages and backgrounds, all of whom are interested in welcoming newcomers to our community and ensuring they get the settlement support needed to ensure their success. We are an apolitical, non-religious organization, but we work closely with the team at Trinity United Church in New Glasgow to submit sponsorship applications for refugee families and they provide us with administrative support. We appreciate and welcome the different experiences, perspectives and knowledge our volunteers bring to Pictou County Safe Harbour.

This Volunteer Orientation Package was designed to assist you in your orientation to the work of Pictou County Safe Harbour. Enclosed you will find information about our history, mission, volunteer requirements, policies and procedures.

On behalf of Pictou County Safe Harbour, I thank you for your interest in our work and wish you all the best in your volunteer endeavours. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kailee Brennan

Volunteer Coordinator
Pictou County Safe Harbour

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I. Introduction

Mission Statement

Pictou County Safe Harbour is a volunteer-driven, non-profit refugee sponsorship society that supports newcomers by providing them with a warm welcome and connecting them to the resources they need to achieve social and economic empowerment.

Vision

Pictou County Safe Harbour envisions a community in which newcomers have connection with the people and services they need to reach their inherent potential.

Values

Pictou County Safe Harbour is committed to the following values:

Dignity

We respect the diverse experiences, cultures and perspectives of the newcomers we serve, the volunteers we ask to participate, our board colleagues and our community partners. We demonstrate this by recognizing and honouring cultural sensitivities, religious observances, differing opinions, and the uniqueness of individuals and their abilities.

Teamwork and Partnerships

We value our community, especially the volunteers who give their time to assist newcomers with the minute details of resettlement. We value community partners who step forward to help our organization and newcomers. We appreciate how the addition of newcomers from other countries enhances our community and how newcomers can help each other. We depend on the good opinion of the broader community of Pictou County. The success of Pictou County Safe Harbour relies on having positive and productive relationships with the families we support, our tireless volunteers, community partners and potential partners. We are mindful to nurture our connections.

Empowerment

We believe the end goal of all successful settlement is for newcomers to be confident, independent and self-sufficient in Canada and this underpins our approach to our relationships with newcomers we serve. Our goal is to assist these newcomers to make their own decisions to be successful.

Welcome

We believe that everyone should feel welcome and have a sense of belonging in our community regardless of where they come from or the experiences they are bringing with them. It is important to us that newcomers to our area feel this sense of welcome through connection to local community members, services and other resources.

Advocacy

Many newcomers experience barriers to their successful settlement and integration because of a lack of services or opportunities that meet their unique needs. This can be particularly acute in a smaller community. It is important to us that we use our position and privilege to advocate for those that we serve when they experience barriers.

History

Pictou County Safe Harbour (PCSH) was founded in 2015 in response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis that was widely publicized in the fall of 2015 after the death of Alan Kurdi. PCSH was established as a community-based sponsorship group, joining Canada's long tradition of private refugee sponsorship by local citizens, beginning with the Vietnamese Boat People in the late 1970s. Canada's refugee sponsorship program relies on community groups and volunteers to welcome newcomers to their community, providing one year of financial and emotional supports for the family as they settle into their new lives. While non-religious as a separate entity, Safe Harbour established a close working partnership with Trinity United Church to submit a sponsorship application for one Syrian family. This family arrived in the winter of 2016.

Shortly thereafter, Safe Harbour assisted with the relocation of a Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) family from Hamilton to our community. This family was close relatives to the family sponsored by Safe Harbour and the two wished to live nearby one another.

In the fall of 2018, close to two years after the initial settlement of the two families, Safe Harbour was presented with the opportunity to sponsor an additional five families from Syria. The University of Ottawa had made special funding available to sponsorship groups across the country interested in continuing their work, and with this added financial incentive, Safe Harbour was able to welcome the five families to Pictou County.

It was at this time that Safe Harbour recognized their need for additional support and central coordination of the volunteer community should their work continue. With privately secured funds, Safe Harbour was able to hire a Newcomer Services Coordinator in December 2018 for one year to support the new families, the volunteers, and community partners in an effort to facilitate the settlement of newcomers and develop better infrastructure and partnerships for resettlement in rural communities.

In the summer of 2019, with funding made available again from the University of Ottawa, Safe Harbour was able to sponsor two additional families – this time from the Democratic Republic of the Congo – with another Congolese family expected to arrive in 2020 and a privately sponsored family-linked Syrian case expected shortly thereafter.

Safe Harbour currently works with 47 newcomer individuals in our community and a wide volunteer network. While sponsorship is a year-long commitment, Safe Harbour acknowledges a moral obligation to continue to provide limited assistance afterwards, while fostering independence and self-sufficiency. Most of Safe Harbour's success is due to the efforts and goodwill of dozens of dedicated volunteers and community members.

Refugees 101

No one is a refugee by choice and anyone could become a refugee. At the end of 2019, there were 70 million forcibly displaced persons, including 25 million refugees. In 2019, this means that 37,000 people were forced to leave their homes daily. *Forcibly displaced persons* can be those who have been displaced internally within their own country or those awaiting an asylum hearing to determine their status. *Refugees* are those who have crossed an international border into another country and have been recognized legally as having lost the protection of their state.

A refugee is legally defined as someone who has a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, membership to a particular social group or political opinion, is outside their country of origin and unable or unwilling to return due to that fear. Nearly 80% of refugees are hosted in neighbouring countries that are already economically burdened providing for their own citizens. Refugees come from countries all over the world, but 57% of refugees currently come from 3 countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan.

The international community helps refugees to find lasting, or durable, solutions to their plight. The historical 3 durable solutions are:

1. **Voluntary repatriation** (this means going back to their country once it is safe)
2. **Local integration in the asylum country** (ie: Syrians staying in Lebanon or Jordan)
3. **Resettlement in a third country** (like Canada)

In recent years, many western, wealthy countries have closed their doors to refugees. Resettlement numbers have been at an all-time low. In 2019, 1.4 million refugees were identified as needing immediate resettlement to a third country, but only 58,000 refugees were accepted by resettlement countries worldwide. This means only 4% of those designated as vulnerable were able to move, and if you consider the broader number of all refugees (25 million), only 0.3% received a resettlement opportunity to a safe country.

Canada accepts more refugees than any other country at present. They resettle refugees through the following three programs or streams:

1. **Government-Assisted Refugees** (GARs) are selected by the UNHCR for their vulnerability and resettled to Canadian cities across Canada through a settlement agency. In 2019, the target was set at 8,500 individuals.
2. **Privately Sponsored Refugees** (PSRs) are selected by private citizens, churches, or groups, and resettled to various communities across Canada, where their sponsorship group provides + pays for all first year settlement supports. In 2019, the target was set at 19,000 individuals.
3. **Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugees** (BVORs) are selected by the UNHCR for their vulnerability and matched to a Canadian sponsorship group who will provide their first year settlement supports in a 50/50 cost-sharing agreement with the government. In 2019, the target was set at 1650 individuals.

Groups like Pictou County Safe Harbour, made up of private citizens engaged in refugee sponsorship through the PSR and BVOR program, make a valuable difference in the lives of those displaced and resettled to Canada.

II. Volunteer Information and Process

Our Commitment to You

We have a commitment to our volunteers. We will provide training necessary for the role, support and opportunities for self-development and leadership. Every effort is made to match an individual's interests and skills with a suitable role to ensure that the work is interesting, rewarding and challenging. We have a commitment to inform you of any information, changes and policies that affect you or your work as a volunteer.

Volunteer opportunities with Pictou County Safe Harbour are always changing, depending upon the needs of the program and the families involved. We try to keep an updated list of services, committees and projects that require volunteers. Please note that due to limited capacity, individuals are not guaranteed volunteer positions.

Volunteer Opportunities Overview:

Drivers/Accompanier

As many of you know, Pictou County does not currently have a public transit system. While many locations in New Glasgow are quite walkable, occasionally newcomer families need a ride to an appointment or event. In addition, sometimes newcomers need a support person to accompany them to important appointments, such as medicals or job interviews for the first time. Volunteer drivers make themselves available to PCSH to provide rides + accompaniment as needed. Specific duties include:

- Willingness to work with the Coordinator on planning or be approached directly by families with transit needs.
- Arriving/departing on time.
- Providing advocacy on behalf of the client (only when it is apparent that the client cannot self-advocate) if needed.
- Explaining any follow up instructions to the client and liaising with the Coordinator to ensure continuity of follow up appointments and transit.

NOTE: All volunteers taking clients in their cars must be insured with \$1 million dollars liability. Some volunteers may choose to increase their liability to \$2 million dollars, but \$1 million dollars is considered adequate. Insurance payment is the responsibility of the volunteer and not a cost absorbed by PCSH. See volunteer waiver below.

Shopping Support

Many of the newcomer families in New Glasgow live within walking distance to a grocery store and can often get themselves to and from the grocery store. However, occasionally they might like to take a larger trip, visit a more affordable grocery store, or even shop for groceries out town. In this role, duties include:

- Arranging for transportation. This can be arranged on a predetermined scheduled directed by you and families will be asked to accommodate.
- Providing advice about sales, lower priced product and healthy options, while recognizing the family's right to autonomy and freedom of choice (even if you don't agree!).
- Keeping the trip within the time frame that you've set. Shopping can take ages, but doesn't need to! Remind families before entering how long you've set aside for this trip and remind them throughout to keep on schedule.

Moving Volunteers + Support

Moving volunteers + support are responsible for working with newcomers in New Glasgow to find affordable and appropriate housing our community, and coordinate logistics of moving. Specific duties include:

- Understanding newcomer needs and available resources.
- Conducting Kijiji searches with the newcomers (either together or beforehand on your own).
- Explaining pros and cons of certain units or neighbourhood (ie: accessibility, utilities, etc.).
- Making appointments with the newcomer to view the housing; explain Safe Harbour's role in supporting their transition; answer any questions the landlord might have; follow up after the appointment.
- Walk newcomers through lease agreements or any necessary paperwork.
- Encourage newcomers to connect with their Community Services caseworker after appropriate housing has been chosen if beyond their 1 year of sponsorship.
- Inform the Coordinator of the new address at earliest convenience. Coordinator will fax Change of Address forms (COAs) to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.
- Helping coordinate the physical move by liaising with the Newcomer Services Coordinator or other volunteers with access to transportation.
- Helping the newcomers apply for the Social Housing through the Housing Authority if needed.

Special Events Planner

Special Events Coordinators are responsible for planning one newcomer-friendly event each month for the families sponsored by Safe Harbour. The event is meant to be a fun, community building experience and can involve local cultural activities or events.

Specific duties include:

- Researching local activities and events that are free or cost minimally.
- Planning for one event each month. Safe Harbour has a small budget that may be able to be used for events. For example, the purchase of pumpkins for a pumpkin carving event. Please ask the Coordinator ahead of time if you anticipate expenses.
- Creating an invitation (pdf) that can be sent digitally to the newcomers or sharing the information with the Coordinator to send out.
- Liaising with local groups such as Active Pictou County or the Recreation Directors to learn about opportunities for partnership.
- Communicating consistently with the Coordinator about anticipated plans, needed funds, and rides for residents.
- Event ideas include: beach days, pumpkin carving, sleigh ride, skating, movie night, picnics, etc.

Direct Support

Direct Support or “regular support” volunteers are those who support the operations of Safe Harbour through regular services and anticipate being in direct contact with clients as a part of their volunteer activities, including within the newcomer’s home. Specific duties include:

- Consistent communication with the Newcomer Services Coordinator regarding interactions with clients and needs/concerns that may arise.
- Mentoring or guiding new volunteers, reporting on progress or issues.
- Supporting clients with tasks such as finding appointment locations, planning for transportation, registering for online programming such as LINC Online or ISANS employment services, checking emails and navigating other community services.
- Developing appropriate boundaries with clients that encourage independence and self-reliance where appropriate.
- Identifying when additional support is needed from the Newcomer Services Coordinator.

All Direct Support Volunteers must have a valid police records check which includes the vulnerable sector. The Coordinator can provide a volunteering letter for the police department as required.

Ad Hoc Volunteers

Ad Hoc volunteers can be called upon for a variety of tasks to ensure the work of Safe Harbour runs smoothly. They participate in tasks that do not necessarily involve direct contact with clients. This is a role for new volunteers or those with limited availability. It is a role that requires a significant degree of independence. Specific duties may include:

- Deep cleaning new houses before family's arrival (vacuuming, sweeping, mopping, etc.).
- Helping with any renovations, handiwork or repairs needed around homes.
- Office support for the Coordinator (scanning, emailing, filing forms, etc.).
- Sorting/organizing donations that arrive at Trinity United Church.
- Support with fundraising events.

Tutors + Conversation Buddies

Many of the newcomer families arriving wish for additional English Language support outside of the classroom. They wish to have a 'buddy' to practice their language with in an informal setting, often over coffee in their homes or in a public place. Specific duties include:

- Being 'matched' to a newcomer individual or family for the purposes of practicing language
- Working with the newcomer to identify areas of weakness or need for improvement.
- Planning sessions together with the client according to their needs; creating a regular meeting schedule.
- Seeking out support resources, such as YouTube videos, workbooks, or lesson plans, as needed or identifying the desired resources to the Newcomer Services Coordinator and wider volunteer network.
- Reporting on progress to the Newcomer Services Coordinator.

Translators

From time to time, Safe Harbour needs to call upon translators and interpreters to support the newcomers. Translators do not have to be regular Safe Harbour volunteers, but communicate a willingness to be called upon as needed to translate certain documents or accompany newcomers to appointments.

How to Become a Volunteer with PCSH:

We ask that everyone interested in becoming a volunteer go through the same process. This includes

:

- Filling out a Volunteer Application online at **WEBSITE LINK NEEDED**
- Attending a Meet + Greet with the Volunteer Coordinator to discuss matching you with a suitable volunteer role
- Completing a Vulnerable Sector Police Record Check
- Attending a meeting with the Coordinator to fill out the required paperwork:
 - Confidentiality Statement
 - Volunteer Waiver and Release form
 - Volunteer Agreement form
 - Abuse Prevention Policy acknowledgement
 - Media Release

If we are unable to find a suitable position for you we will keep your application on file for three months in the event of a suitable position becoming available.

We match you with a volunteer job according to: The availability of the position; times that you are available; requirements of the role; your interests and goals; your experience and skills; and the results of your police reference check (if applicable).

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities:

Volunteer Responsibilities

- To attend relevant and ongoing training as available (twice per year offered by PCSH)
- To have good communication with the Volunteer Coordinator. It is essential that the Coordinator is aware of the work being done by PCSH volunteers. If you are spending time with the newcomer families, regular updates by email are a good way of keeping the Coordinator aware of family situations, needs, or concerns
- To be committed to the time + efforts required by the volunteer role
- To attend volunteer meetings when available
- To maintain confidentiality of the people you are working with
- To advocate for oneself when additional support is needed or the workload/expectations feel burdensome or unmanageable
- To know PCSH policies and procedures. Please feel free to ask the Newcomer Services Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns

Volunteer Rights

- To receive relevant training and to be informed of additional professional development or networking opportunities related to the field
- To be given specified lines of support, adequate guidance, supervision and direction
- To be given a variety of experiences, to be heard, to be recognized and to be appreciated
- To be free of harassment and discrimination, and to have safe working conditions
- To know as much about the organization as possible, and to know what is expected

Benefits of Being a PCSH Volunteer:

At Pictou County Safe Harbour, we understand that volunteers will undoubtedly have different motivations for spending time with our organization serving Pictou County's newcomer population. Nonetheless, there are several benefits to volunteering with PCSH:

- Meeting new people, including fellow volunteers and clients from diverse ranging backgrounds
- Utilizing your talents and skills in a meaningful way
- Serving your community
- Gaining social capital, better understanding the world and its diverse people
- Raising your profile with potential employers
- Self-enhancement, self-confidence and self-awareness
- Cultivating new skills, and discovering new abilities and talents that can be linked to the Canadian job market
- Receiving valuable work experience in client services

Volunteer Recognition

Volunteers have a right to expect some type of recognition for the work they perform. Recognition can take the form of a simple verbal thank you from the Volunteer Coordinator, a written thank you from the Board of Directors or staff, or a volunteer recognition event.

Reference Letter

Many individuals are required to volunteer in the community. **Please note that due to limited capacity, individuals who attend a Meet + Greet with the Coordinator and/or are interviewed according to particular volunteer positions cannot be guaranteed a position and will not be eligible for a reference letter.** New volunteers will be accepted if they possess specific skills that are needed by Pictou County Safe Harbour.

Individuals can request a formal letter from the Newcomer Services Coordinator to acknowledge their volunteer role once a placement has been established. The Coordinator can provide one volunteer confirmation letter for any volunteer.

III. Working with Refugees: Best Practices

Managing Expectations

In refugee sponsorship, everyone has expectations of how things will go – both the sponsors/volunteer and the refugees. Expectations aren't a bad thing, but they can be unmanageable when left unchecked. Ask yourself:

- *Why did I get involved in supporting refugees?*
- *What do I hope to take away from this experience?*
- *What do I enjoy about this work? What is challenging?*
- *What does 'success' look like for me? What does it look like for the newcomer? Is there a disconnect here?*
- *If things don't go the way I expect, how will I feel?*

It can be very discouraging for volunteers if they feel as if the newcomers aren't meeting their definition of success or progress. However, it is important to remember that the newcomers themselves have their own idea about what they would like to accomplish and how they might go about it. These ideas may or may not be the same as the volunteer, but is the newcomer's right to make choices about their life and family. It is your job to manage your expectations in a fair, objective way, keeping in mind their experience and autonomy, as you build your relationship with the family.

At the same time, the newcomers can sometimes have unrealistic expectations about their life in Canada that can result in confusion and misunderstanding. For example, they may expect the sponsor can and will do everything for them. Or, they may think they will easily be able to find a job, but then can't find employment for many months. These experiences may result in frustration that can occasionally be expressed towards volunteers in an unfair manner.

Some common examples are below.

Common expectations of refugees, held by sponsors:

- Refugees will be extremely happy to be here
- Refugees and sponsors will become great friends
- Refugees will stay in your city forever
- Refugees will/won't be comfortable with saying "no"
- Refugees should be thankful for anything they get
- Refugees will be soft spoken
- Refugees will look a certain way
- Refugees will be poor
- Refugees will be uneducated
- Refugees will express themselves the way you do in Canada

Common expectations held by refugees include:

- All Canadians are happy, friendly & rich
- Employability and earning potential
- Weather (extremely cold vs. extremely warm)
- Immediate, improved standard of living (i.e., car, big house, disposable income)

| Expectation | Reality |
|--|---|
| All Canadians are happy, friendly & rich | Many Canadians do not have large disposable incomes; some Canadians hold racist or ignorant views about newcomers. |
| Employability and earning potential | It can take a long to find a job, especially language is an issue. Many first jobs for newcomers are not well paid. |
| Immediate, improved standard of living (i.e., car, big house, disposable income) | Life in Canada can be very difficult in the first months and years. It can be a very challenging time for individuals and families. |
| Healthcare is free and readily available | Nova Scotia has a major doctor shortage and has limited physicians, including female physicians. |

It is crucial that volunteers recognize the expectations that exist for all parties in a volunteer-newcomer relationship. Additionally, while PCSH aims to meet the settlement needs of newcomers, it is important that both the volunteers and newcomers recognize the limitations of all individuals. Volunteers need to be able to distinguish between what is *important* and what is *urgent*. Many times, while newcomers are working through their needs and expectations, communications can have an urgency that cause stress for all involved. Many things that the newcomers might desire are *important*, but not everything can be *urgent*. There is a danger in falling into a culture of urgency as it can lead to volunteer resentment, burnout, compassion fatigue and lack of boundaries. Volunteers are responsible for discerning what items they can help with, which items are not urgent for the time being, or which items can be taken back to the Volunteer Coordinator for further discussion. Remember: it is always okay to say no. The Volunteer Coordinator is always available to help you navigate these issues.

Expectations are normal, but need to be managed when they become problematic or unrealistic. Communication and compassion are key.

Power + Privilege

Many volunteers involved in refugee sponsorship or support have some level of social privilege. Talking about privilege can make people feel uncomfortable, but understanding privilege, and the power that accompanies it, is important when engaging in this type of work. Consider how many of the following statements are true for you:

- I was born in Canada
- I am white
- My first language is English
- I came from a two-parent home
- I finished high school
- I finished post-secondary education
- I own property
- I can afford to take a vacation
- I can afford healthy food

Privilege can be defined as a set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group.

Society grants privilege to people because of certain aspects of their identity. Aspects of a person's identity can include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, geographical location, ability, and religion. Privilege can often feel invisible to those who have it, so sometimes it can be easier to think of it terms of oppression. Privilege is the opposite of oppression.¹

Consider the ways in which you are oppressed: How are you disadvantaged because of the way society treats aspects of your identity? Are you a woman? Do you have a disability? Does your sexuality fall under the LGBTQ umbrella? Do you experience poverty? Do you have a mental health issue? Are you a person of color? Are you gender non-conforming?

All of these things could make life difficult because society disenfranchises people who fit into those social groups. Society is affected by a number of different power systems: patriarchy, white supremacy, heterosexism, cissexism, and classism, etc.

Privileged groups have power over oppressed groups.

Privileged people are more likely to be in positions of power – for example, they're more likely to dominate politics, be economically well-off, have influence over the media, and hold executive positions in companies.

Privileged people can use their positions to benefit people like themselves – in other words, other privileged people. Or, in the case of refugee sponsorship, they can use it to benefit others and the wider community. While this in itself is positive, it must be approached thoughtfully as refugees are often coming from a place of oppression due to their circumstances. This can create a real power imbalance that is felt by the newcomers. Volunteers who engage in this work, without a clear understanding of their power and privilege, can often end up in a 'savior' type of role to the refugee, doing many things for them, which reinforces the refugee's disempowerment and perpetuates a privilege/oppression dynamic. Volunteers should be vigilant about this power imbalance and actively find ways to give refugees back their power.

¹ Source: <https://everydayfeminism.com/2014/09/what-is-privilege/>

Respecting Autonomy + Promoting Self Sufficiency

Related to the above, refugees are simply people, with the right to make choices about their lives and destiny. It is the volunteer's role to support and empower the newcomers to make informed decisions, but they do not necessarily have to be the same decisions the volunteers themselves might make. The goal of refugee sponsorship is self-sufficiency, even when this looks different than what you might anticipate.

Many volunteers engage in this work with an expectation that the newcomers will become their close friends. Many times this happens, but it is okay if it doesn't. The newcomers should be viewed as peers rather than as automatic friends. In addition, viewing the newcomers as peers or fellow community members is a helpful perspective shift from thinking of them as victims or needing to be 'helped.' Certainly, the volunteers offer a great deal of help and support, but a useful phrase to remember: *'Do things with them, not for them.'* This is an important approach to this type of work. If the newcomer is asking you to do something for them, look for ways to meaningfully include them. This results in them learning more skills and taking back some of their power. For example, they may ask you to mail a letter for them. It is a simple enough request, but why not go together and teach them how the post office works? This way, the letter gets mailed, but they also learn how to do it for next time.

Refugees are resilient people. Many have survived a great deal of hardship before arriving in Canada. It may be the volunteer's role to open metaphorical doors for them, but it is their job to walk through them (or not!). They are free to make choices that you disagree with and it should not feel like a poor reflection on the volunteer or the wider community. Sometimes, people learn by making mistakes. Refugees are people and are free to make what you might consider to be 'mistakes.'

Navigating Conflict

Sometimes, as a result of the stress of migration, families and communities can experience a significant amount of conflict with one another upon arrival. There can be tension over cultural norms, familial roles, or mismanaged expectations.

Families may need additional counselling or support as they navigate the transition. Many males originating from more traditional societies have difficulty losing their position as the main breadwinner or head of the family. Many children feel the pressure of becoming the sole translator for mom and dad. This is an understandably stressful experience. Volunteers can help them walk through some of these evolving roles, lending a supportive ear and compassion.

In addition, many refugees are already well-connected to other refugees that have been resettled to Canada. They may discuss and compare their experiences of resettlement, adding to unrealistic expectations or creating competition with one another. Many refugees have been in a position of scarcity for months or years before arrival, and many want to make sure they now receive everything they believe they are entitled to, especially if they

know someone else has received it. This is also an understandable response, but can create feelings of resentment between the volunteer and newcomer.

Volunteers need to first approach all conflict with an awareness of the cross-cultural differences that may exist or contribute to miscommunication. Also, the majority of the time, it is not the role of the volunteer to intervene unless there is a very clear value-add to being a part of the conversation. Volunteers should be careful not to feed into disagreements, take a neutral stance and discourage competitiveness between newcomers as each situation is unique. Volunteers should seek to create personal boundaries with families so as not to be pulled into conflict. Finally, volunteers should always inform the Coordinator of any potential conflicts and it is the role of the Coordinator to actively support both the volunteer and the newcomers through these types of issues.

Mental Health

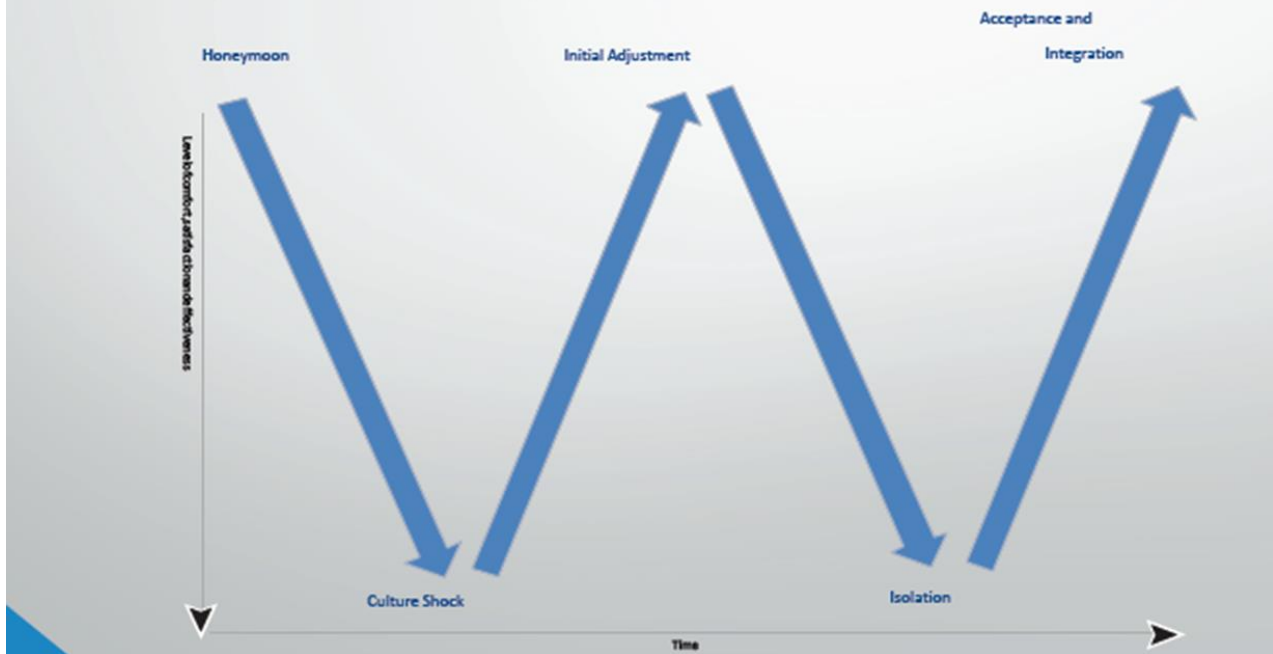
As noted above, the stress of migration on families and individuals is immense. Many assume that once refugees arrive in Canada, they will instantly feel happy, settle in and adjust to their new life. However, many refugees have experienced trauma and loss related to their displacement that accompany them throughout the first weeks, months and sometimes years of resettlement journey. This trauma does not end upon arrival. The chart below considers factors that may affect pre-migration, in-flight, and post-migration mental health.

| <u>Pre-Migration</u> | <u>In-Flight</u> | <u>Post Migration</u> |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Violence (as witnesses, victims, and/or perpetrators)• War• Lack of food, water, and shelter• Physical injuries, infections, and diseases• Torture• Forced labor• Sexual assault• Lack of medical care• Loss of loved ones• Disruption in or lack of access to schooling | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Living in refugee camps• Separation from family• Loss of community• Uncertainty about the future• Harassment by local authorities• Traveling long distances by foot• Detention• Torture | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community violence• Acculturation Stress (e.g., new school, expectations)• Resettlement Stress (e.g., financial hardship)• Isolation• Discrimination• PTSD in parent |

In addition, some research has described the first year of resettlement as a W-curve, with a honeymoon phase in which the newcomers might be content with their new home, followed by culture shock, isolation and adjustment. This can look different for each person, but generally speaking, the first year of resettlement can have many high and lows for newcomers which can significantly impact their mental health.

Resettlement and Integration

The W curve Model



Many refugees experiencing mental health challenges often do not articulate their feelings in ways that might be expected. Many newcomers are coming from cultures and places in which mental health is not discussed or there is a negative stigma attached to mental health. It can be even more difficult for them to disclose their emotions and experiences because of the power imbalance that can exist between themselves and the volunteer and the desire to please their sponsor community.

Therefore, many newcomers will explain emotional distress in the form of psychosomatic symptoms. For example, while experiencing stress, they may complain of:

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Heaviness of the heart
- Stomach pains
- Tightness in the chest

While these types of complaints should be taken seriously, and appropriate medical attention sought, it is not uncommon for many of these symptoms to be related to a newcomer's emotional health, rather than physical. If volunteers have concerns about a newcomer's mental health, they should seek the support and guidance of the Coordinator.

IV. PCSH: Policies and Procedures

- A. Confidentiality
- B. Anti-Discrimination Statement of Principles
- C. Harassment
- D. Police Record Check
- E. Social Media policy
- F. Interactive Guidelines for Time Spent with Residents

A. Confidentiality Agreement

This policy applies to employees, volunteers and placement students with regards to highly personal and/or sensitive information. Confidentiality extends not only for the duration of an individual's relationship with PCSH, it continues indefinitely. Legislative requirements to report illegal or medically urgent circumstances supersede this policy. In these circumstances, only those persons who need to know the circumstances will be consulted.

i. Definition

Any information acquired in circumstances where there was confidence and trust that the information would remain private is considered confidential. It is important to recognize that confidential information can be acquired through a variety of means including in writing, electronically, or verbally.

Any information acquired through an involvement with Pictou County Safe Harbour which identifies an individual by, for example, health status, sexual orientation, race, religion, mailing or email address, name, or telephone, fax, MSI or Social Insurance Number is considered confidential.

Information related to the business of PCSH, which is not intended for public consumption, for example, financial records or personnel records shall also be considered confidential. Confidentiality extends to health and personal information received by an employee from outside sources in the course of their official duties.

ii. Breach by a Volunteer or Intern/Student

A first violation of this policy shall result in a warning and notation on her/his file. The employee responsible for supervising the volunteer or student shall meet with the person in question to discuss the violation of the policy. The employee shall ensure that the volunteer or student fully understands the policy and the nature of the violation. A detailed record of the meeting shall be made and kept in the volunteer or student's file. A second violation may result in the termination of the volunteer/student placement indefinitely.

iii. Confidentiality Agreement

Volunteers and students shall sign the annexed Confidentiality Agreement once their orientation to this policy has been completed.

B. Anti-Discrimination Statement of Principles

The aim of this statement is to guide the development of program, activities, policies and procedures to deal with inequities at PCSH. We at PCSH believe that the racial and ethno-cultural diversity of our program participants, staff and community are sources of enrichment and strength. PCSH will not tolerate racism, prejudice, discrimination or harassment of any kind.

C. Harassment Policy

PCSH adheres to the provisions of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Code which states that everyone has the right to be free from discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, place of origin, citizenship, religion, age, record of offenses, marital status, family status or disability.

Who can make a complaint?

A person or group who feels they have been harassed by anyone at PCSH or a person who sees another person or group being harassed.

Complaint Procedure:

1. Submit a written, signed complaint to the Volunteer Coordinator that alleges dates, times, places and circumstances.
2. The Coordinator and/or a member from the Board of Directors will investigate the complaint and notify the alleged harasser that a complaint has been received and will arrange to meet with him/her.
3. An attempt to resolve the complaint during this meeting will be made. A record will be kept of the meeting. If the complaint is not resolved at this time, the matter will be referred to a Board delegate.
4. If necessary, a volunteer may be dismissed from PCSH as a result of an investigated and submitted complaint.

D. Police Record Check

Police Record Checks (Vulnerable Sector) are required by all volunteers working with families of PCSH in a Direct Support capacity as this is a role that works closely with vulnerable individuals. The Coordinator will keep a digital copy of all Police Record Checks submitted.

E. Social Media Policy

Pictou County Safe Harbour recognizes that many of its volunteers use social media including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube. However, volunteers' use of social media could become a problem if it:

- Is used to harass or discriminate against employees, volunteers or residents
- Divulges confidential information about PCSH families, included their name or photo if permission has not been granted.
- Harms the goodwill or reputation of Pictou County Safe Harbour

As a result we encourage volunteers to use social media within the following guidelines. If you are uncertain about the appropriateness of a social media posting, volunteers should check with the Coordinator.

Social Media Guidelines:

- Do not post any comment or picture involving an employee, volunteer, newcomer without their explicit verbal or written consent
- If you post any comment about PCSH, you must clearly and conspicuously state that you are posting in your individual capacity and that the views posted are yours alone and do not represent the views of PCSH
- Do not post any comment which can be construed as harassment of the public, volunteers or staff
- Do not post any falsification or misrepresentation of PCSH policies and procedures or by-laws
- Unless given written consent, you may not use PCSH logo or any organizational material in your posts other than approved event flyers
- Violation of this policy may lead to termination of volunteer placement

Procedural Information

Location

Pictou County Safe Harbour operates out of two main spaces. The Volunteer Coordinator holds an office on the second floor of the **New Glasgow Library Headquarters** located at **182 Dalhousie St**, New Glasgow, NS B2H 5E3. Both newcomers and volunteers are welcome to visit this space. **Trinity United Church**, as the co-sponsor and administrative arm of PCSH, is also a key operational space located at **151 Temperance Street**, New Glasgow, NS, B2H 3A9. All mail should be directed to this address. In addition, should any volunteer need to submit an out of pocket expense, it must first be approved by the Volunteer Coordinator and then submitted to the church office with the proper expense claim form.

Hours of Operation

The Volunteer Coordinator is available Monday-Friday, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, but manages this role in addition to being the **Director of Rural Settlement with the Pictou County Regional Enterprise Network** so may not always be readily available. While the nature of this work can be unpredictable, volunteers are asked to keep communications between these hours as much as possible, or expect a reply when the Coordinator is back in office.

Key Contacts

Kailee Brennan, Volunteer Coordinator:
902-331-0451; kailee.brennan@pcsafeharbour.ca



PICTOU COUNTY SAFE HARBOUR CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

All information regarding clients and PCSH staff must be kept in strictest confidence.

1. Any information provided by a client to a staff member or volunteer, either face to face, by phone, or via email must be kept confidential.
2. Staff or volunteers must ask for the written permission of the client if identifying information needs to be revealed in the event that further clarification or information is required from another source, or if the staff/volunteer will be acting on the client's behalf. This client must be informed as to why more information or clarification is required.
3. When examples of a client's situation are used for publicity, teaching, or social reporting purposes, the details must be changed so that the client cannot be identified or recognize them as his/her own unless consent has been expressly given in writing.
4. Information regarding clients extends to the staff's/volunteer's personal life, and so information must not be shared with family members or friends.
5. Release of identifying information about a client without his/her permission may occur when the physical or mental safety of the client or another person is at stake. Another exception would be if a legal obligation exists, as in the case of the obligation to report child abuse to the Children's Aid Society.
6. Unless a situation is life threatening or involves suspected child abuse, breaking client confidentiality must first be discussed with the Newcomer Services Coordinator.
7. Staff and/or volunteers will sign the Confidentiality Agreement, one copy of which will remain on file in the office.
8. A breach in confidentiality shall result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

As a staff member or volunteer of Pictou County Safe Harbour, I have read and understood the above Confidentiality Agreement.

I understand that my obligation to maintain the confidentiality of client information shall survive the termination of my involvement with PCSH.

Name of Participant _____

Signature _____

Date _____

PICTOU COUNTY SAFE HARBOUR VOLUNTEER WAIVER AND RELEASE

This form must be signed by/on behalf of each volunteer who will participate in or be involved with any volunteer activity/project with Pictou County Safe Harbour.

1. I understand that I will be spending my time as a volunteer with PCSH and will be participating at my own risk. I acknowledge that my participation is voluntary and does not constitute a condition or requirement of employment. I further acknowledge that the project/activity may involve an amount of risk and may be potentially dangerous. I attest that I am physically fit and prepared for this event.

2. I will not create an unsafe situation for other individuals or myself nor will I use any tool or engage in any task with which I am not completely comfortable. I will abide by all applicable federal, provincial and municipal laws, as well as the rules and directions of the sponsors and coordinators. If I see any situation that I feel is unsafe, I will immediately call it to the attention of my supervisor(s) or safety representative. I understand that a volunteer may be at the facility in the event of an injury and that I may need to assist in arranging transportation to nearby medical facilities if necessary.

3. I understand that is my choice as to whether or not I will take clients places in my vehicle. I recognize that there is no obligation from Pictou County Safe Harbour to transport clients in my personal vehicle should I not feel comfortable. If I choose to take clients in my car, I acknowledge that I am appropriately insured with \$1 million liability insurance (or \$2 million if I desire), and this is a cost not covered by PCSH.

4. On behalf of myself, as well as my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, I hereby forever release, discharge, waive and agree to indemnify and hold harmless Pictou County Safe Harbour and any additional sponsors of these Agencies along with their respective officers, directors, agents, employees, contractors, successors and assigns, and any volunteers to whom I give my consent to provide medical treatment to me, from and against any and all claims, demands, actions, causes of action, obligations, liabilities, suits, losses, damages, costs, expenses, and fees, of any and every nature of character, including, without limitation, for death, personal injury and/or loss of property, whether anticipated or unanticipated, directly or indirectly arising out of or connected in any way with my participation with Pictou County Safe Harbour. Finally, I hereby grant harmless, Pictou County Safe Harbour and complete permission to use in legitimate promotions of the volunteer project/activity photographs of me and quotations from me.

Name of Participant _____ (please print)

Signature _____

Date _____

Emergency Contact Details (please print)

Name + Telephone of Contact _____ (please print)

PICTOU COUNTY SAFE HARBOUR VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

Pictou County Safe Harbour (PCSH) values your willingness to contribute to its work. Be assured that we are committed to doing our best to make your experience with PCSH a productive and rewarding one. This agreement articulates some of the expectations we have of ourselves in honoring you as a volunteer and some of the expectations we have for you throughout your work with us.

PCSH:

We, PCSH, agree to accept the services of the named volunteer as a partner in serving those accessing our services as of the date indicated above. We commit to the following:

- a) To provide adequate information, training and assistance to the volunteer in order to successfully meet the responsibilities of his/her position
- b) To take every reasonable precaution to prevent workplace hazards and to educate volunteers concerning potential health and safety risks
- c) To ensure the volunteer receives support and supervision where required as well as feedback on performance when appropriate
- d) To respect the skills, dignity and individual needs of the volunteer, and to do our best to adjust to these individual requirements
- e) To be open to any comments from the volunteer regarding ways in which we, together, might better accomplish our respective tasks

THE VOLUNTEER:

I, the volunteer named, agree to serve as a volunteer and commit to the following:

- a) To perform my volunteer duties as outlined and described to me to the best of my ability
- b) To adhere to PCSH policies and procedures pertaining to volunteers
- c) To meet my time and duty commitments. If I cannot do so, I accept that it is up to me, the volunteer, to give adequate notice to the Newcomer Services Coordinator so alternative arrangements can be made.
- d) I agree to maintain confidentiality concerning the personal, financial, or other affairs of the people that are served by PCSH or of the persons/corporations which I come into contact with by virtue of my association with PCSH. I agree to do so both during and after my involvement with PCSH.
- e) At any time either PCSH or I may terminate my volunteer position.
- f) At all times while representing PCSH I will respect and uphold the values of this organization, and will conduct myself in a manner consistent with the values statement with persons internal and external to the organization.
- g) I am aware that occasionally health and safety hazards may arise and that there is no compensation in place for accidents or injuries incurred while representing PCSH. If I become aware of any health and safety risk present in the course of my duties, I commit to ceasing the activity and notifying a supervisor immediately.

Name of Participant _____ (please print)

Signature _____

Date _____

**PICTOU COUNTY SAFE HARBOUR
MEDIA RELEASE**

I give permission to Pictou County Safe Harbour to use media in which I may appear in the following manner (please check all that apply):

- ☐ PCSH website
- ☐ PCSH social media including but not limited to Facebook and Twitter
- ☐ In PCSH newsletters
- ☐ PCSH public presentations
- ☐ PCSH promotional material

I understand that Pictou County Safe Harbour will never distribute my contact information, nor publicly identify me by name, without my consent.

I understand it is my responsibility to inform PCSH if I have not signed this consent when photographs/videos etc are being taken.

Name of Participant _____ (please print)

Signature _____

Date _____