



Matthew House Community Host Program

I have a spare bedroom! How do I get started?

Thank you for your open and welcoming heart! Social bonds are, alongside affordable housing, one of the most significant predictors of successful refugee resettlement. It is our hope that through our Community Host Program, refugees will meet caring neighbours and build new bonds.

If you decide to house a refugee for 3-6 months, you'll go through these steps:

- 1) Fill out an application and provide us with 2 references, including name, relationship, phone number, and email address.,
- 2) Training series with Matthew House,
- 3) Vulnerable Sector Screening check,
- 4) Home visit,
- 5) Meet & Greet with potential residents, and
- 6) Guest Host Agreement

What is my role as a host?

Your role is to provide safe, temporary housing and friendship for a Refugee Guest. As their host, you will also be expected to provide basic orientation, which includes showing your guest around the neighbourhood, teaching them how to use public services like grocery stores, public transport, etc. We hope you will include them in some communal meals, activities, holidays or outings and opportunities to grow their social network.

Your role is NOT to assist in the refugee claim case for a Refugee Guest. Representatives from Matthew House will be assisting refugee claimants regarding the claim process, social assistance application, work permits, refugee hearing preparation, permanent housing search, and any other settlement needs.

Can I choose who I host?

Matthew House collects information regarding living circumstances and preferences not only from host families but also from Refugee Guests. Therefore, we do our best to find the right match for you and your Refugee Guest as we pair you.

How do you make this all work?

Respect. Matthew House welcomes people from all religious and ethnic backgrounds. While we believe that sharing cultural and/or religious information is important for friendship building, we encourage participants to honour cultural/religious differences.

Confidentiality. Your relationship with a guest may make you privy to sensitive information regarding their personal history or their refugee claim. Therefore, we expect you to commit to absolute confidentiality regarding such information.

Communication. In order for the placement to work, communication is key. This is why we put both you and the guest through a training program that sets you up with all the tools necessary for building a healthy communication system with your guest. Our staff will make regular appointments to assist with housing search, legal aid, or other practical support.

House Rules. You will have a chance to discuss your preferences regarding such things as smoking, alcohol, quiet hours, COVID-19 regulations, and phone usage when your guest arrives at your home. We encourage you to have open conversations with your guest regarding these rules, and get their confirmation on the rules you would like to establish.

Support. We understand that hosting can be energetically demanding, which is why we provide you with support from Matthew House. Our staff will also assist in finding your Refugee Guest's next accommodation.

What if something happens - what about insurance?

You can let your insurance provider know that you have a guest staying a few months. We will ask you to confirm your home is insured and to sign a release. As a non-profit charity Matthew House facilitates community connections, but we are not liable for damages inside a private home. We can - and will - assist refugees in obtaining tenants' insurance, where required. We also provide you with a safety toolkit to ensure your home is a safe environment for all parties.

Can I collect rent from a Refugee Guest?

We require guests who are receiving social assistance or working to make a financial contribution to the cost of their host stay, based on provincial housing subsidy rates. For guests not on social assistance, we can talk about other contributions that can be made to the house. However, Matthew House does NOT condone the exchange of service for housing. Any chores should be discussed ahead of move-in and distributed in the same way other members of the household help with day-to-day cleanliness.

What makes a great host and home?

A great host is flexible and willing to live with a certain amount of disruption to schedules and daily routines. They are interested in learning about other cultures and languages. A good host is a good listener and they are not judgemental. Most importantly, hosts should be open to recognizing and receiving the gifts of others.

A great host home is accessible through public transportation and has a separate bedroom or private living space for the refugee guests.

What is required to become a host?

To be a host, you need to have up-to-date homeowner's insurance, a clean criminal record for all household members 18+, and an up-to-standard home according to the bylaws of rental units in Ontario.