



**State of Florida
Department of Children and Families**

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 20, 2020
TO: Members of the Broward Refugee Task Force
FROM: Miriam Rosario (RS)
SUBJECT: July 16, 2020 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: September 17, 2020
Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Location: TBA
Contact: Miriam Rosario
Office: (561) 227-6722
Cell: (561) 459-6098
E-Mail: Miriam.rosario@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Broward area in the past few years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and volunteer groups. An average of about twenty to twenty-five attend these meetings on a regular basis. The purpose of these meetings is to increase awareness of the refugee populations, share best practices, build collaborations between agencies, spot trends in refugee populations, characteristics or movements, help create good communication among service providers; get informed about upcoming community events, request for proposals, training, workshops, conferences, etc., at the local, state and national level; discuss refugee program service needs and possible solutions to meeting those needs. Meeting participants also receive updates, information and clarification on new federal and state regulations and policy changes pertaining to refugees.

If there are any issues that you would like to include in the agenda, please contact me at the above address.

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting!

Southeast Region - Circuit 15
111 South Sapodilla Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

BROWARD COUNTY REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING**INTRODUCTION**

The meeting was held via a telephone conference call and Miriam Rosario, Southeast Region (SER) Community Liaison (CL), Refugee Services (RS) Program, Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) facilitated the Refugee Task Force (RTF) meeting. Miriam thanked and welcomed all participants for joining the meeting. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves and the agencies they represented. Approximately 27 people joined the call.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

A brief overview of the Department of Health Translation project was presented by Sasha Verbillis-Kolp, LCSW, MSW. Members of the task force and others members worked on this special translation project. The purpose of the project was to translate certain behavioral health screening tools (the RHS-15) into Haitian Creole. The RHS-15 is a mental health screening tool used in health settings to screen people for mind and body symptoms that may be bothering them. The tool is also available in many other languages. Every culture and language has specific terms/phrases to relate emotions and emotional distress. The purpose of this project was to explore emotions and expressions most appropriate and common in the Haitian Creole language. The tool will be used nationally and globally. The assessment tool is available for SER community partners and can be obtained by contacting **Sasha Verbillis Kolp at: sverbilliskolp@gmail.com**.

NEW ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN

Each agency discussed how services and resources are currently being provided during the pandemic. Offices closures and reopening were discussed, as well as timelines. Broward County remains under a continued State of Emergency.

Carlos Naranjo, Resettlement Program Coordinator, Church World Service (CWS)/South Florida Offices, provided information on the Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS). Carlos indicated that due to the Covid19 pandemic situation and Social Security Administration (SSA) office closures, initial SSN card processing has been suspended due the unavailability of the face-to-face interviews. Many clients have been unable to apply for a social security card.

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

USCIS, Roketa Mansfield and Berta Cassidy, Community Relations Officer (CRO), Miami and Caribbean District U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, stated that USCIS is now open to the public and has resumed non-emergency services as of June 4. Please contact Berta M Cassidy at, Berta.M.Cassidy@uscis.dhs.gov for additional information.

Coast to Coast Legal Aid of South Florida Inc. (CCLASF)- Victoria Sexton, Attorney at Law, Coast to Coast Legal Aid of South Florida Inc., stated that courts are currently closed. However, if someone needs an injunction for protection or a restraining order, they should contact CCLASF immediately (www.coasttocoastlegalaid.org/family or 754-312-3349).

American Red Cross (ARC), Jaime Cruz, stated all local ARC office remained closed. Because of the pandemic, fewer volunteers are working with the ARC. RAC continues to try and educate families on hurricane preparedness and fire safety. Questions can be directed to 786-714-6796.

FL Highway Safety Motor Vehicle (FLHSMV) - Ulises Pacheco, Program Consultant, stated that offices are open as of June 3. Offices are open via appointment only. Ulises encouraged individuals to utilize online services whenever possible. For more information, contact 1-850-617-2000 or 1-850-617-3000 (automated 24 hours). For information on online services visit FLHSMV.GOV.

Florida Agency for Health Care Administration. (AHCA) - BUREAU OF MEDICAID, Jerome Hill, Program Operations Administrator – SES, stated that all offices are currently closed. They stated that hospital ICUs are currently being impacted by the pandemic.

Family Success Administration Division/Community Action Agency, Broward County stated (FSAD/CAA) Audrey Ljung, Outreach Coordinator/Public Communications, stated that Broward Children's Services Council's Back to School Extravaganza will supply over 10,000 Broward students with backpacks and other resources for the family. This year the event will be a drive-thru distribution. FSAD/CAA provides emergency assistance and case management services through 4 programs to prevent the families of Broward County from experiencing homelessness, evictions, foreclosures, loss of electric and water services and assist with tuition, financial management, employment, transportation, nutrition, and childcare. Contact the Call Center at 954-357-5025 for more information.

ESS/DCF- Wilber Roney, Economic Self-Sufficiency Program (ESS/DCF) announced that ACCESS storefronts remain closed (clients can use drop boxes to drop off documents or documents may be scanned or faxed). Clients are again required to complete an interview to receive benefits. Clients may call 1-866-762-2237 or 850-300-4323 (TTY 1-800-955-8771) to complete an interview telephonically. In July ESS/DCF staff started calling clients for interviews. Additional information can be located at DCF website: <https://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>.

RS/DCF – David Draper, CL Manager, stated that important operational updates can be found on the DCF Covid-19 webpage (www.myflfamilies.com/COVID19). The governor's eviction moratorium has been extended until 8/1/2020. He encouraged the task force to research additional community housing resources and solutions to prevent housing issues for refugee families.

RS Contracted providers: Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS);

Carlos Naranjo, Resettlement Program Coordinator, Church World Service (CWS)/South Florida Offices, provided information on the **Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS)**. All CRS services and Matching Grant (MG) services are operating virtually. CRS services are all operational and clients can be seen face-to-face via appointments. The program has been seeing an increasing number of arrivals (parolees). The CRS employment is working hard to place refugees in employment (many recent job placements). Job developers are helping clients with interview skills and job searches. The CRS program continues to provide Tier Case Management, Employment, Career Laddering, Legal Services, Adult Education, Child Care (vouchers) and Mentoring services. Christine Reis, Attorney Director, STHRI, indicated legal services are being offered in Broward County. Most services are conducted virtually or by phone. Christine mentioned challenged with the DMV and SSA offices (some offices closed, delays in applications).

Project RENEW (PR/BC); Jocelyne Martinez, Project RENEW Director/BC indicated that Adult Education classes are being offered online. Broward College campuses are currently closed. Students are also learning computer skills with the help of their teachers. 146 students are currently registered. PR/BC has not determined if they will open for fall. Jocelyn indicated a reduction in summer registrations. For more information, contact Vonda Ward Bryant, Learning Services Coordinator, Broward County Library at phone 954-357-6230 fax 954-357-6257 or VBRYANT@broward.org.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Meeting: **Thursday, September 17, 2020**

Time: 10:00 AM to 12PM

Location: TBA

Contact: Miriam.Rosario@myflfamilies.com Cell: (561) 459-6098
David.Draper@myflfamilies.com Phone: (407) 317-7335, Cell: 407-222-5270