



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 21, 2020
TO: Members of the Broward Refugee Task Force
FROM: Miriam Rosario (RS)
SUBJECT: September 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: November 19, 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 conference call and was facilitated by Miriam Rosario, Southeast Region (SER) Community Liaison (CL), Refugee Services (RS) Program, Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). Miriam thanked and welcome all participants for calling in. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves and the agencies they represented. Approximately 40 people joined the call.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

David Claros, Supervising Attorney, Church World Service, provided an overview presentation on changes to immigration policy and their impact on clients served through the comprehensive refugee services program. He mentioned the pandemic creating issues in scheduling immigration hearings. He stated that USCIS fees will also soon be increasing. Other topics discussed included the public charge rule, difficulties in applying for asylum, and USCIS delays in processing work permits.

NEW ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN

In response to the pandemic, beginning on Monday, September 14, Palm Beach and Broward are moving into phase two of the Safe, Smart, Step-by-Step Plan for Florida's Recovery. The task force had an open conversation about how services are being provided during the pandemic and timelines for reopening offices. Palm Beach School District will reopen classroom learning on September 21 and Broward County School District will be reviewing their plan on September 22 and most likely reopening in October. Families still have the option for E-Learning instruction in-home if they are unable or unwilling to be physically present in school. Refugee Services (RS) has created tools to help parents and provider staff navigate the school system. This tool includes links, phone numbers, and information.

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

USCIS, Roketa Mansfield and Berta Cassidy, Community Relations Officer (CRO), Miami and Caribbean District U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, gave guidelines on those presenting themselves at USCIS offices (ensuring that all are following proper guidelines). They also mentioned USCIS issuing new policy guidance related to the final fee rule.

American Red Cross (ARC), Jaime Cruz, Service to the Armed Forces and International Services Specialist stated that all local physical offices are closed to the public. Due to pandemic, hurricane season, and fires on the west coast, ARC is working to collect blood plasma as a preventative measure. ARC has also developed an COVID FAQ (in English and Spanish) for immigrants. ARC continues to provide fire safety services and family connection services.

Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCHA) Jerome Hill – Program Operations Administrator, - Bureau of Medicaid, informed the task force that offices are closed and AHCA continues to work virtually.

Broward County Library (BCL) - Mary Cassel Librarian Senior, West Regional Library offered reported on all the resources available through the Broward County Library. She mentioned various workshops available during the next month. She confirmed that while library buildings are still closed to the public, individuals can check out materials through a walk-up or drive up service.

Department of Health (DOH) – Migdalia Dias stated that those in need of referrals or registration should contact them: Medical Health Assessment Office - (954) 412-7166, or Migdalia.Diaz-Nieves@flhealth.gov

KidCare, DOH- Marcelle Datus Louis, from Florida Department of Health, KidCare Broward provided updates. She confirmed that offices are currently closed but staff are teleworking remotely. They are working to get children enrolled quickly and safely. Currently, they are working to provide SIDS awareness and safe-sleep guidelines.

Broward County Family Success Center/ Community Action Agency (FSC/CAA)- Audrey Ljung, Community Coordinator, reported on Broward County Housing assistance and resources. The CARES Act has enabled local governments to allocate emergency funding to residents who face pressing financial needs due to the pandemic. Broward's Family Success Division is reviewing and assessing claims received and amounts requested to determine next steps to further assist the public. The initial application period of August 31 through September 6, 2020 is now closed. Details can be found at Broward.org/CARES. Contact your city for Rent and Housing assistance. Questions call 954-831-2380. For loss of income not related to COVID-19, please visit FSC/CAA website for what other resources are available. <https://www.broward.org/FamilySuccess>

Children Services Council of Broward (CSCB)- Danielle Bachelder informed the task force that CSCB is now providing virtual trainings to service organizations. CSC has also launched online resources on professional, social, and emotional development. These resources can be found on the CSCB Training website. She also mentioned that Grab-and-Go meals are available at all Elementary, Middle, and High Schools. The new "Family Resource Guide" is now available in various languages.

Step Up for Students- Melissa Jaramillo, Manager, Community Outreach, Step Up For Students, spoke about income-based scholarships – the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship and the Family Empowerment Scholarship. Step Up is now accepting applications for the 2020-21 school year. There are also scholarships for bullied children in public schools. Please contact Melissa at mjaramillo@stepupforstudents.org. For more information: www.StepUpForStudents.org .

United Nations Association, UNA Broward County Chapter, Eileen Davis-Jerome, Ed.D., S.E. Regional Representative, National Council, United Nations Association-USA, UNA Broward County Chapter stated that they continue to work to educate others on building global partnerships and working toward a sustainable future.

ESS/DCF- Wilber Roney stated that store fronts continue to offer drop boxes for leaving documents. Documents can also be scanned and faxed to DCF. He also mentioned that DCF's Statewide Customer Call Center is available for customer questions and application assistance at 850-300-4323 or 1-866-762-2237 (TTY 1-800-955-8771). Representatives are available for extended hours, Monday through Friday, 7a.m. to 6p.m. Please visit www.myflfamilies.com/covid19/access.shtml for more information.

RS/DCF – David Draper, CL Manager, reminded task force members to check the DCF Covid-19 webpage for important updates on benefits and service delivery. He mentioned that DCF Refugee Services currently has two active procurements, one in Southwest Florida and another in Miami. He mentioned the state's eviction moratorium being extended through October 1. He also shared that the next refugee task force will be through a virtual call (Microsoft Teams).

RS Contracted providers: Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS);

Jocelyne Martinez, Director, **Project RENEW /Broward College (PR/BC)** indicated that Adult Education class sessions are online services as Broward College is closed. PR/BC has open for fall full term on-line on 8/24/20. The students are also learning computer skills with the help of the teacher and are very excited in learning new computer skills. PR/BC is assessing the options of On-line learning and classroom learning, offering a mix of options even after BC reopen campus.

Carlos I. Naranjo, Resettlement Program Coordinator, and Francisco Figueroa, Program Administrator, **Church World Service (CWS)**, provided information on the CRS and Matching Grant (MG) programs in Broward. Both programs are fully operational, and clients are being seen by appointment only. Virtual appointments are also available. CRS services include Tiered Case Management, Employment, Career Laddering, Legal, Adult Education, Child Care, and Mentoring services. Adult Education is being offered thru Project RENEW/Broward. Cuban and Haitian arrivals have increased. The Mentoring Services program is functioning and both mentors and mentees are being recruited and matched. Cristine Reis, Director Attorney, **St. Thomas Human Right Institute (STHRI)**, stated that offices are open and clients are being seen by appointment only.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Meeting: **Thursday, November 19, 2020**

Time: 10:00 AM to 12PM

Location: TBA

Contact: Miriam.Rosario@myflfamilies.com Phone: (561) 227-6722

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