



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 9, 2020
TO: Members of the Miami-Dade Refugee Task Force
FROM: David Draper, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: October 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: December 11, 2020
Time: 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon
Location: Via teleconferencing
888-585-9008 Access code 951-031-034 #
Contact: Lourdes Leconte
Office: (786) 257-5173
Cell: (305) 401-3374
E-Mail: Lourdes.Leconte@myflfamilies.com

This taskforce has been active in the Miami area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. Approximately 30 individuals 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!

401 NW 2nd Avenue, Suite N-812 Miami, Florida 33128

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

**MIAMI-DADE REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 14, 2020**

ATTENDEES:

Sabine Balmir; Dannielle Befeler, Janet Blair, Heidi Blanco, Ineida Canate, Berta Cassidy, Diego Castro, Rosa Chaves, Eduardo Chavez, Maria Dominquez, David Draper, Martha Ferrer, Jacqueline Gabriel, Miriam Garcia, David Gilbert, Dianelys Gomez, Andrea Gordon, Marie Jean, Gretta Jimenez, Theresa Leslie, Silvia Lopez, Roketa Mansfield, Elaine McArthur, Holly Merrick, Sergio Mora, Elmer Morales, Gabriela Musiet, Carlos Naranjo, Erica Perdomo, Yeen Perez, Cristobal Perez, Connie Perez-Borroto, Christine Reis, Oscar Rivera, Luz Reyes, Fernando Reyes, Valerie Rhoden, Veronica Rodriguez, Miriam Rosario, Viviane Saide, Patricia Sinischalchi, Leydi Sosa, Evelyn Soto, LeAndra Stafford, Paula Stambuk, Edgar Tobon, Carmen Torres, Evelyn Trujillo, Lucy Tucker, Leticia Ubillus, Ileana Vallejo, Jorge Vielman, Cheryl White

INTRODUCTION:

In Lourdes Leconte's absence, David, DCF Refugee Services Community Liaison supervisor, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called the meeting to order.

Community Updates:

Department of Children and Families, ACCESS Office – Luz Reyes:

Luz reported that since March 2020, ACCESS has seen an increase in the number of individuals accessing public benefits due to the pandemic. Medicaid recipients have also increased. ACCESS Service Centers are currently closed to the public. They plan on being reopened in January 2021. Some ACCESS service centers and storefronts will be moving to new locations to make them more accessible to clients. Clients can currently drop off paperwork at drop boxes or scan or fax them.

Church World Services, Matching Grant – Carlos Naranjo:

Carlos gave an update on refugee resettlement and the Matching Grant program. He mentioned that the current presidential determination for refugee arrivals was set at 15,000 for FFY 2021. He mentioned assisting clients as they work with USCIS remotely. Also, he described challenges in helping clients obtain social security cards (they are being asked to provide letters from an employer).

USCIS – Berta Cassidy:

Berta reminded the task force that clients are being seen in-person via appointment only. If a client ever misses an appointment due to an unexpected USCIS office closure, USCIS will arrange a new appointment (and that individual will be given priority). For more information and any other general questions, please contact: Miamiasylum@USCIS.VHS.gov

Legal Services Subcommittee – Christine Reis, St. Thomas University:

Christine stated that parolees continue to have difficulty obtaining work permits in a timely matter. Because of the pandemic, there are also delays in scheduling court hearings. In-person hearings will begin again in late October.

Adult Education Subcommittee – Sergio Mora, Miami-Dade College:

Sergio reported that Miami-Dade college successfully implemented hybrid ESOL classes (both virtual and in-person). Enrolled students are responding well to these changes. There are currently 580 refugee/entrant students enrolled in ESOL and Adult Education services at Miami-Dade College. At Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Dr. Valmarie Rhodes reported 700 refugee and entrant students are enrolled this semester. Some are enrolled in ESOL and others in a GED program. Public schools re-opened physically on October 5.

Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Services – David Draper, Community Liaison Supervisor:

David reported that DCF Refugee Services currently has three active procurements. Any inquiry related to these procurements must be sent through the procurement manager. He reminded task force members to continue to check the DCF Covid-19 webpage for updates on benefits and operations. He reiterated that the new presidential determination for refugee arrivals in the US has been set at 15,000. However, it is also expected that around 290,000 individuals may be approved for asylum. Florida generally receives some of these asylee arrivals each year (as well as Cuban and Haitian parolee arrivals). David also stated that Florida's moratorium on evictions has ended.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM