



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 13, 2020
TO: Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: David Draper, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: August 12, 2020 Task Force Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: Wednesday, Oct 14th, 2020
Time: 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon
Location: To be Announced
Contact: David Draper
Office: (407) 317-7335
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E-Mail: David.Draper@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Orlando area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An average of about thirty to thirty-five people 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 at the local, state and national level, request for proposals, training, workshops, conferences, discuss refugee service needs and explore solutions to those needs. Meeting participants 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!

400 W. Robinson Street, S1111C, Orlando, Florida 32801

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

ORLANDO AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

This task force meeting was held via conference call. Approximately 18 people were in attendance. David Draper, Community Liaison Manager, represented the Florida Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Rosa Chaves, Community Liaison for the Central Region, was also present. Everyone introduced themselves and the agencies they represented.

GENERAL UPDATES/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Sandra Algarin, Community Health Centers**, stated that they recently opened a new center in Clermont, which covers three counties. At the center, they are providing internal medicine, pediatrics, and optometry. They have also opened COVID testing centers in Pine Hills and Apopka. These services are provided by appointment only.
- **Anne Packham, Marketplace Project Coordinator** informed the task force that special enrollments are being offered for clients who have lost their jobs and need insurance now. Open enrollment will begin in a couple of months. A flyer in Haitian Creole was also distributed to task force members.
- **Vesna Bozic, USCIS Community Relations Officer**, informed the task force that fees will be increasing on October 2. USCIS is also experiencing a furlough which has impacted many employees of the agency. Because of this, processing times for applications will be impacted.
- **Wellington Ovalle, Department of Labor (DOL)**, stated that they are working on cases related to the Family First Coronavirus Response Act. They are ensuring that employees have the right to take sick leave when needed. If individuals have questions, they can call 407-648-6471 or visit www.dol.gov/whd. There are staff members that speak multiple languages.
- **Safriya King-Greenshaw, BAYS Family Connections Circuit 9 FFT Program Director** informed the task force that they still have availability to serve more youth (ages 11-18). All services may be provided via Telehealth. The program is free of charge and no insurance is required. Spanish speakers are on site and services are being offered Monday through Friday.
- **Kirsty Ortega, Summit Church**, stated that they are distributing cards to recent refugee graduates. In coordination with AFCO, they also conducted a back-to-school event.

- **Asli, Yalim, University of Central Florida**, announced she is conducting a study to identify barriers refugees face when accessing health care services. She is currently searching for health care providers that are able to participate. She will send out an email with more information soon.
- **Debbie Vega, Catholic Charities of Central Florida** informed the task force that operations continue and that the lobby is open to clients. Generally, clients are seen via appointment. Catholic Charities is currently serving many Haitian and Cuban clients that recently arrived. They are working with many of these clients to help them obtain employment authorization. They are working with the social security office to ensure clients receive social security cards necessary for employment. The Catholic Charities refugee employment program are working with partner agencies to ensure clients are employed. The adult education program will begin providing in-person English classes on September 1. Virtual classes will continue to be offered. The Youth and Mentoring programs continue recruiting and training mentors and matching them with mentees. The Legal Program is working remotely (face to face meetings are by appointment only). Catholic Charities has also produced training videos in Creole and Spanish that are being used to help orient clients and connect them with important resources. Catholic Charities family stability program is also helping clients with rent issues in an effort to avoid evictions.
- **Maria Diez, Catholic Charities Mentoring and Youth Program, and Rae Wilburn, Vista Program**, are designing curriculum and attempting to recruit more mentors. Over the summer, they provided workshops and mentoring support groups. They brought in professionals from various careers to speak with the youth. They have worked with youth (especially those that are not technologically savvy) to ensure they were all connected with a computer and internet. Regarding mentor recruitment, background checks are taking a very long time (which is delaying mentor/mentee matching). Also, because of the pandemic, many mentors are reluctant to meet with mentees in-person. Questions regarding the mentoring and youth programs may be directed to Maria (407-310-7614) or Rae (786-401-3884).
- **David Draper, Department of Children and Families Refugee Services Community Liaison Manager** stated that future task force meetings may be conducted via a virtual platform (Zoom or Microsoft Teams). Options are currently being explored. The DCF COVID 19 webpage continues to be updated with important operational information. Clients eligible for P-EBT should have received their benefits. The governor's moratorium on evictions has been extended an additional month.
- **Rosa Chaves, Department of Children and Families Community Liaison Central Florida** stated that clients who needed to renew benefits in August are receiving an automatic extension through January 2021.

NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday Oct 14th, 2020

Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

Location: TBA

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