



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 25, 2020
TO: Members of the Palm Beach Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: Miriam Rosario (RS)
SUBJECT: November 20, 2020 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: January 22, 2021
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 Palm Beach 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

PALM BEACH AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was held via a 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 calling in and joining the meeting. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves, services and the agency they represented. Approximately 40 people called and joined in the call.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services- Sabine Balmir-Derenoncourt, Program Coordinator, Florida Center for Survivors of Torture provided a presentation on the Survivors of Torture program. Sabine updated on their program and resources for Survivors of Torture. Sabine Balmir-Derenoncourt, can be reached at: sabine.derenoncourt@gcjfcs.org or 786-336-1120 or 786-336-1123. Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services Website: gcjfcs.org The power point presentation was distributed as per members request.

Gerald “Jerry” T. Roden, ESQ., Staff Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc.(LAPBC), in the Rapid Response Eviction Assistance Housing Program, provided an overview presentation about housing issues during COVID-19 and the resources available with the Legal Aid of PBC. On September 1st, the Centers for Disease Control (C.D.C) announced a national eviction moratorium for virtually all tenants in the U.S impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The order will be in effect from September 4, 2020 through December 31, 2020. Legal Aid of PBC is available to help with these housing questions and resources. As requested by the members the “Eviction Moratorium” power point presentation was distributed to the RTF members’. The landlords can contact their program as well. LAPBC can assist with keeping the tenant to prevent the additional spread of COVID-19 in their residence and negotiating a deal to pay the back rent owed to the landlord. The phone numbers to call Legal Aid in Palm Beach are Apply Online: www.legalaidpbc.org/eviction Call hotline: (561)655-8944, Ext. 328. Email: Covid19Response@legalaidpbc.org

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Agencies discussed how they are providing services during the pandemic and plans for reopening offices. Palm Beach County remains under a Continuing State of Emergency. Miriam indicated that PBC School (PBCS) continue with all new security protocols. A reminder was given on the deadline to enroll in 2021 Marketplace Coverage (December 15). Clients can also visit “Find Local Help” for a full list of agents and brokers and other assistance in the area by contacting the HealthCare.gov Team.

USCIS, Don Jarrell, Community Relations Officer (CRO), Tampa District U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, participated. Don stated that USCIS asylum offices will automatically reschedule asylum interviews that were canceled during the temporary office closures. Also, USCIS announced plans to implement a revised version of the naturalization civics test. Applicants who apply for naturalization on or after December 1st, 2020, will take the updated version of the test. Those who apply before December 1st, 2020, will take the current version of the test. For further information, please visit the 2020 Version of the Civics Test page. Please visit uscis.gov/coronavirus for the latest facts and other USCIS updates. Please feel free to share with anyone who might be interested, and the 2020 Version of the Civics Test. <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/2020test>

USCIS West Palm Beach Field Office is resuming quarterly stakeholder meetings. Please join them on Thursday, December 3, 2020 from 10-11am in a virtual stakeholder meeting.

To register for the event, please go to:

<https://uscis.webex.com/uscis/onstage/g.php?MTID=efa102d13cff1cb4e0158eb50716234d8>

Palm Beach County Library System (PBCLS) – Maribel De Jesus, Multicultural Coordinator, PBCLS reported on available resources. Palm Beach County Library offers citizenship packages and will be updating these to reflect changes with the USCIS new test. The Palm Beach Library are open and are following CDC guidelines. She also shared the following:

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has expanded benefit sign-ups to eight Library locations. Palm Beach County Food Bank benefit specialists assist with the SNAP application process and conduct the food stamp interview. Specialists can also help with other benefit applications available through the ACCESS Florida system including Medicaid and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. the link to the Food Service Program page, please share with the Task Force members.

<http://www.pbclibrary.org/food-service-program>

Maribel De Jesús, Multicultural Outreach Services Librarian, [Palm Beach County Library System](http://www.pbclibrary.org), 561-233-2783 | dejesusm@pbclibrary.org

Mandel Public Library of West Palm Beach, Tara Moreno, Multicultural Liaison Librarian reported on all the resources available. She invited members to a presentation by a local Colombian writer (Luz Mery Montes).

US Committee of Refugee and Immigrant, Ruth Ambrose, LCSW, Assistant Director, US Committee of Refugee and Immigrant stated USCRI are hiring for Multiple Positions. www.Refugees.org. Ruth Ambrose , can be reach at; rambroise@uscmail.org or 561-906-3883.

Optimum RTS, Eduardo Gruvman; Recruiter stated Optimun RTS is a premier medical and professional recruiting, training, and staffing firm. <http://www.optimumrts.com> He can be reached at ed@optimumrts.com or 561-866-6504.

Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCHA) -Jerome Hill – Program Operations Administrator, - Bureau of Medicaid, informed the task force that the office is closed and AHCA continues working virtually. However, all services are being offered. Jerome.Hill@ahca.myflorida.com

Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County, Inc., Rachel Mondesir, MPA, Community Engagement Manager, Palm Springs Office reported, so excited to partner with other agencies to use a wonderful resource and strategies like those offered through the 3T's to improve language and brain development for all children in Palm Beach County. She extends an invitation to the team to partake in the 3T's Ambassador Training so that members may help spread the word and increase this initiative's visibility and impact. Please let her know if you are interested in taking part in this one-hour training and we can schedule a time that works best. Please by email or phone if you have any questions 561) 600-9423 * cell (561) 381-1094 * rachel.mondesir@elcpalmbeach.org. All information will be distributed by email.

Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County, Inc., Raquel Leonard, Early Head Start Family Advocate from Early Head Start Program. She shared information regarding their program. They are currently serving women who experienced domestic violence and others. The priority is to offer services to families that are experiencing homelessness, children with disability and foster children. All information will be distributed via email and flyers in English, Spanish and Creole. Please feel free in order to contact her: Raquel.Leonard@elcpalmbeach.org or (561) 514-3377.

Palm Beach State College, Robin C. Johnson-Blake, Director, Community Relations stated that the Office of Community Relations would like to invite all members to join them on Zoom December 3, 2020, from 2- 3:45 pm for the Identity Theft Preventive Measures forum. Please share with your contacts. All zoom registration link and flyer will be distributed via email. She can be reach at (561) 868-3377 or johnsonr@palmbeachstate.edu

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, Marcia Bahia, Gang Prevention Coordinator, informed the task force of their activities. She invited the organizations to participate in PATCH meetings. They are currently offering virtual workshops on anti-bullying, gang/crime prevention/lifetime of consequences, and parents against gang. Please reach out to Marcia Bahia, M.S, bahiam@pbso.org or Phone: 561 688-4002.

Puerto Rican Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (PRHCC), Juan Pagan, President reported on the Thanksgiving event's sponsor by the PRHCOC. Please call Juan at Office: (561) 889-6527 or visit the for additional information <http://www.PRHChamber.com>

ESS/DCF- Claudia Arce (claudia.arce@myflfamilies.com) was introduced as the new ESS/DCF Program Office Specialist Refugee Task Force meetings & Refugee Services (RS) representative for ESS/DCF. She is helping with the latest regarding ACCESS benefits applications. **Gus Artau**, Florida Dept. of Children & Families, Community Partner Liaison also provided updates on the ESS/DCF benefits.

RS/DCF – Ileana Bustelo, Deputy Director RS, thanked all for being here. She encouraged all to visit the DCF web site for resources on COVID-19. Ileana offered updates regarding RS and on the Presidential Memorandum on refugee arrivals. The CDC eviction moratorium is still in effect, however she encouraged agencies to find ways to assist refugees before it ends. Updates can be found here: www.myflfamilies.com/COVID19.

RS Providers:

Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS): Church World Service (CWS), David Claros, Supervising Attorney, provided information on the Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS) and Match Grant (MG) in Palm Beach. CRS and MG are fully operational, and clients are being seen by appointment only. Virtual appointments are also available and referrals to community resources and assistance for any benefits. He stated that the number of arrivals is increasing, especially with the Cubans & Haitians. CRS is assisting them with employment, childcare, mentoring services and CRS and many other referrals in the community. Legal Services are open with appointment to assist with all legal matters. USCIS changes and delays are impacting families. These issues have been shared with USCIS representatives. CWS can be reached at 561-266-0624. **Youth Co-Op, Inc.** Sindy De Leon, Programs Supervisor reported that their office is now open every day and all CDC guidelines are enforced. Clients are being seen by appointment, but walk-ins are not rejected. **Career Sources of Palm Beach County**, Marta Roque, Senior Career Consultant, TANF, reported on the services available to refugee families and the TANF benefits. She discussed the TANF refugee program. Their collaboration and their partnership with Youth COOP. **Catholic Charities, Dioceses of PBC (CCDPBC)**, Sandra Perez, Program Administrator, informed the task force of the services they are providing. The CCDPBC continue with all services, Employment/Match Grant, serving Cuban & Haitian, and Special Grant for Human Trafficking. FFY2021 project numbers based on the enrollment include 30 slots.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Meeting: **Friday, January 22, 2021**

Time: 10:00 AM to 12PM

Location: TBA

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

David.Draper@myflfamilies.com Phone: (407) 317-7335