



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 17, 2019

TO: Members of the Tallahassee Refugee Task Force

FROM: Theresa Leslie, Refugee Services (RS)

SUBJECT: Task Force Meeting Minutes for September 10, 2019

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: December 10, 2019
Time: 10:00 AM to 11:30 PM
Location: Department of Children and Families
1317 Winewood Blvd, Bldg. 3, Rm 201
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
Contact: Theresa Leslie
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E-Mail: Theresa.Leslie@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Tallahassee 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 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, 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.

TALLAHASSEE AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING**INTRODUCTION**

The meeting was held at the Department of Children and Families Conference Room, 201, Building 3 and Theresa Leslie, Community Liaison represented the Department of Children and families (DCF), Refugee Services (RS) Program and led the meeting. The meeting was called to order.

PRESENTATIONS and UPDATES

The Site Manager for International Rescue Committee (IRC) is currently on maternity leave and will return on December 30, 2019. In the meantime, Tara Catanach the Reception and Placement Case Manager, will act as the site manager.

Ms. Leslie mentioned that IRC is on track to welcome 140 new arrivals for the coming fiscal year (October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020). IRC has requested additional Match Grant slots.

IRC continues to focus on recruiting employers that offer on-the-job training, career ladder, and mentorship/internship opportunities. These outreach efforts are coordinated by Molly Woodsum, the IRC Employment Case Manager. This is an ongoing effort.

Chase Beasley, the AmeriCorps Vista volunteer assigned to IRC, provided an update on volunteers tutoring refugee students at both middle and high schools in Leon County. Mr. Beasley expressed his commitment to work with the tutors developing educational supports and other experiences for refugee youth. As mentioned during the last task force meeting, he has already met with teachers and administrative staff working with ESOL students.

Mr. Beasley provided volunteer recruitment flyers for each task force participant to distribute to others who may be interested. Volunteer prospects are encouraged to email Ms. Beasley to ask for additional details and seek an appointment if further interested.

Mr. Beasley explained that volunteers can commit to tutoring during the day or volunteer in the evening at Walker Ford Community Center (for high school students). He explained that each volunteer will need to get a background screening per IRC policy.

Tutoring efforts at the schools have been enhanced as Leon County School was awarded grants to provide for a Translation Line and other teaching materials.

Mr. Beasley also announced that two of the apartment complexes where many refugees live will be making community rooms available for English classes.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

Krista Bailey, Human Trafficking Coordinator has been hired by IRC to provide case management services to clients assigned to the provider. She will be starting soon and will be introduced at the December Task Force Meeting.

Karen Strange (from the city of Tallahassee's Adult Literacy Volunteer Program) discussed their efforts to offer evening classes for ESOL and GED prep at the Perry Library. These classes have been well attended by refugees. There will be an Annual Holiday Meeting and Social event in December where literacy volunteers and their students are encouraged to attend as well as the community.

American Red Cross: Restoring Family Ties, North Florida Region, Larry Messinger.

Mr. Messinger spoke about the Red Cross "Restoring Family Ties" program. The Red Cross and Red Crescent network operates internationally to "alleviate the suffering of family members separated by war, disaster, and other humanitarian emergencies". Through this program, the Red Cross attempts to reconnect families that have been divided. Mr. Messinger explained that a request is initiated by a client at a local Red Cross Office. The case is then sent to the American Red Cross Headquarters Office and then a search is conducted by a Red Cross caseworker overseas. A case is only closed if the family ties are restored; an open case can be investigated and worked on for several years.

More details on the program can be found on the American Red Cross website: <https://www.redcross.org/about-us/our-work/international-services/reconnecting-families.html>

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

10:00 to 11:30 AM

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