



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

DATE: December 19, 2019

TO: Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force

FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)

SUBJECT: **December 10th**, 2019 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: January 28th, 2020
Time: 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Location: Main Auditorium, 9393 North
Florida Ave, Tampa, FL
Contact: Janet Blair
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This task force has been active in the Tampa area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations, academic institutions and faith community representatives. An average of 55 people attends 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 and needs, facilitate strong communication among refugee services and community 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.

I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting!

TAMPA BAY AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MINUTES

Mission Statement: Helping Refugees to settle, integrate and thrive through support, education and community.

The meeting was held at the Department of Children and Families located at 9393 North Florida Ave, Tampa, FL. Janet Blair represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Service Program. A total of 74 were present and the meeting was called to order at 1:35pm.

- The outgoing DCF Suncoast's Regional Managing Director, Walter Sachs, said good bye and introduced the incoming Suncoast Regional Managing Director, Frank Prado.
- Janet Blair opened the meeting with a review of the mission of the task force and a list of membership accomplishments in 2019. The Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force is a coalition of organizations and individuals working together to help refugees settle, integrate and thrive in our community. This task force has over 60 organizational members & over 125 individual members and meets quarterly in Tampa. In these larger meetings & other smaller committee meetings throughout the year, the task force seeks to connect & coordinate community initiatives that assist refugees. The Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force is the umbrella organization that convenes and coordinates multiple partnerships between faith communities, provider agencies, educational institutions, community organizations & individual volunteers in order to develop and promote events, projects and programs that achieve our mission statement.
- Task Force accomplishments and individual achievements were recognized and celebrated.

Presentations:

- This task force meeting focused on the new Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS) model implemented in Tampa Bay on Oct. 1, 2019. A panel of presenters led by Lourdes Mesias, statewide director of refugee services for Lutheran Services, Florida (LSF), spoke about the service delivery in both Hillsborough and Pinellas counties. Panelists providing an overview of the CRS program included Sylvia Acevedo from Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services and Ronald Cruz from the CARIBE program, Hillsborough County Public Schools. Other services for refugees on both sides of the bay were also highlighted and Florence Ackey from the Dept. of Public Health's Refugee Clinic and Amira Salama from Coptic Orthodox Charities were also panelists. A handout of all refugee services and contact information for each program was given to all in attendance and will also be emailed to all task force members.
- New programs and processes were also outlined. The Refugee Services (RS) assessment is administered by all Match Grant & resettlement agency programs and in this area that includes Coptic Orthodox Charities, Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services and Lutheran Services, Florida Inc. The new mentor program is offered on both sides of the bay and offers mentorship services to young people ages 15-24. The new Tiered Case Management program is also offered in both counties and includes 3 levels of services, depending on the intake assessment.

Following is a chart depicting the RS funded program in Tampa Bay.

New CRS Service Delivery Model for Tampa Bay

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Lutheran Services Florida, Inc. Tampa Office provides:

- RS Assessment
- Tiered Case Management
- Employment Assistance
- Immigration Services
- Youth Services
- Mentoring Program
- Childcare Services

Hillsborough County Public Schools-CARIBE

- Adult Education at 5 Tampa locations

PINELLAS COUNTY

Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services Clearwater office provides:

- RS Assessment
- Tiered Case Management
- Employment Assistance
- Youth Services
- Mentoring Program

LSF St. Petersburg Office provides:

- Adult Education Services (voucher program)
- Legal Services
- Child Care Services

Additional programs for refugees in Tampa Bay are included in this chart:

| <u>Hillsborough County</u> | <u>Pinellas County</u> |
|--|--|
| Resettlement Program: LSF | Resettlement Program: GCJFCS |
| Match Grant Employment Program: LSF & Coptic Orthodox Charities (COC) | Match Grant Employment Program: GCJFCS & Coptic Orthodox Charities (COC) |
| Preferred Community Case Management Program: COC | Preferred Community Case Management Program: GCJFCS & COC |
| Refugee Health Clinic & Medical Case Management: Hillsborough County Dept of Health | Refugee Health Clinic & Medical Case Management: Pinellas County Dept of Health |
| Citizenship Program: COC & Caribe | Citizenship Program: COC & Caribe |
| Immigration/IDA Program: COC | Immigration/IDA Program: COC |
| Services for Survivors of Torture: GCJFCS | Services for Survivors of Torture: GCJFCS |
| Micro Enterprise Program: GCJFCS | Micro Enterprise Program: GCJFCS |
| Financial Literacy & Loan Program: Project Prosper, Inc. | Financial Literacy & Loan Program: Project Prosper, Inc. |
| Community program with case management, employment & counseling services: Radiant Hands | Sew Much Hope: faith-based community program for refugee women teaching them to sew |
| Psycho-educational program for refugee women & children: Refugee & Migrant Women's Initiative (RAMWI) | |
| Youth Empowerment Program: Youth Education & Development Program (YEDP) | |
| Education for women: Tampa Women Stars | |

General Updates

- Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services is hosting a Walk & Run for Refugees on Sunday, Feb. 2nd at War Veteran's Memorial Park in St Pete. Task Force members are encouraged to participate and can register at www.gcfjcs.org/run-for-refugees
- Coptic Orthodox Charities has a new Individual Development Accounts (IDA) program. This new service funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement will assist eligible refugee participants in opening and contributing to their IDA saving accounts for specified goals, such as home ownership, business capitalization, or purchasing vehicles for educational or work purposes. Coptic Orthodox Charities will partner with Project Prosper to implement the program locally.
- Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services announced a new micro-enterprise program for refugee women and a new domestic violence support program.
- The Dept of Children & Family's Economic Self Sufficiency Program (ESS) announced that as of May 1st 2020, the expedited food assistance waiver will expire and all applicants will be required to be interviewed prior to receiving any benefits. We need to prepare clients for this change in services delivery.
- USCIS is proposing new fees for a number of applications. The period for comment ends on December 30th. More information can be found at the following links:

Fees:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/12/09/2019-26521/us-citizenship-and-immigration-services-fee-schedule-and-changes-to-certain-other-immigration>

Asylum applications:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/11/14/2019-24293/asylum-application-interview-and-employment-authorization-for-applicants>

Upcoming Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force Meetings in 2020:

January 28th, April 21st, August 18th and Nov. 17th

Time for all meetings: 1:30-3:30pm

Location for all meetings: Main Auditorium at the Department of Children & Families
9393 N Florida Ave in Tampa.