



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Secretary

DATE: August 30, 2018
TO: Members of the Southwest Florida Refugee Task Force
FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: August 29th Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: November 7, 2018
Time: 1:00-3:00pm
Location: USCIS Fort Myers Field Office
4220 Executive Circle, Suite 1
Fort Myers, FL 33916

Contact: Janet Blair
Phone: (813) 545-1716
Fax: (813) 558-5598
E-Mail: Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com
David.Draper@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the South West Florida area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An Average of 20 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, 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 next meeting!

SWFL REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was held at the Florida Department of Health's Sarasota office located at 2200 Ringling, Blvd, Sarasota, FL 34237. Janet Blair, Community Liaison represented the Florida Dept. of Children & Families (DCF). Twenty-three people were present and the meeting was called to order at 1:05pm.

PRESENTATIONS

- The first presentation was given by Sandra Wells, the Limited English Proficient Coordinator for Florida Covering Kids & Families. Sandra explained all aspects of the program including assisting with enrollment & renewal for the Health Insurance Marketplace, Medicaid and Florida KidCare. In addition, she can assist with applications and referrals to county health programs and provide information & applications for financial assistance. The upcoming enrollment period begins on November 1st and ends on December 15th this year. More information can be found at <http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/chiles/fckaf/>
- The second presentation was given by Julie Crowder, a volunteer coordinator for the Jesus Christ Church of Latter Day Saints in SWFL. This faith community has worked with local refugee families and has a highly organized volunteer program. Julie gave an overview on recruiting, training, supervising and retaining community volunteers. She also gave information on the Just Serve volunteer website which organizations can use to list volunteer needs. More information on this web based volunteer tool can be found at: <https://www.justserve.org/about>
- A recap of the World Refugee Day celebration in Sarasota was given by Jody McBrien, a University of South Florida (USF) Sarasota professor and Ivis Triana, the manager of the Lutheran Services, Florida (LSF) Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS) program in Sarasota. Due to the leadership of Jody McBrien, USF's Sarasota campus sponsored the event and provided funding through the Diversity Committee. The event was a cultural festival celebrating the community's diversity with cultural performances and food as well as a panel of refugee speakers. This event was a tremendous success and Janet Blair gave both of the organizers certificates of appreciation signed by Patti Grogan, statewide refugee services director.

PROVIDER & COMMUNITY UPDATES

- The SWFL Task Force's Welcoming Week event will be held on Sept. 17th and will include a luncheon with locally elected officials including the Mayor of Fort Myers and awards for employers and refugee employees.

- Don Jarrell from USCIS shared that an upcoming teacher training session will be held in Tampa on September 13th and still has open registration to attend. He also shared that the Fort Myers Field Office is now conducting Saturday interviews in order to address their backlog for appointments, so if clients do receive letters for Saturday appointments, this is accurate. Finally, Don shared that in spite of rumors, at this time clients receiving benefits such as food assistance who are considered a “public charge” are not being hampered in their applications for either permanent residency or citizenship. Although this could occur in the future, no policy is in place at this time.
- The ACCESS/ESS program of DCF was represented by Denise Garbin and Kristi Miller who explained that the RAP unit for the entire Suncoast Region is now only one staff member due to the low number of arrivals. There is a plan in place to cross-train the entire unit on refugee assistance so that all will know how to best handle these cases. At the same time, there is still a backlog from the hurricane last year and so it is taking an average of 9-11 days to process expedited cases. It is best to fax documents for new applicants and to follow up with the special email designated for issues with cases: SCR.CASH.ISSUES@myflfamilies.com For clients enrolled in match grant, refugee services providers can mark their applications as RAP/Receiving MG so that they will get routed to the RAP unit.
- Janet shared that Refugee Services data from October 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018 showed a total of 96 new arrivals to Collier County, 88 arrives to Lee County and 47 arrivals to Sarasota/Manatee Counties with 7 additional arrivals in outlying counties in SWFL. This is a total number of 238 arrivals for the first three quarters of the FFY.
- Janet also announced that a similar program model to the CRS model here in SWFL will soon launch in Duval County. As a result, Refugee Services staff will be working on a technical assistance tool kit for this newly forming CRS model and will be setting up interviews with LSF staff and leadership in SWFL to get their input.

NEXT MEETING: November 7th, 2018 from 1:00-3:00pm in Fort Myers

Contacts: Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com or David.Draper@myflfamilies.com