



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carroll**  
Secretary

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**DATE:** February 14, 2018  
**TO:** Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** January 30th Meeting Minutes

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**THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:**

**Date:** Tuesday, April 24, 2018  
**Time:** 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.  
**Location:** Bldg 1  
6100 154th Ave N, Clearwater, FL  
**Contact:** Janet Blair  
**Phone:** (813) 545-1716  
**Fax:** (727) 588-7063  
**E-Mail:** [Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com](mailto:Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com)

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 and mutual assistance associations. An average of 50 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!*

## TAMPA BAY AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MINUTES

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

This meeting was held at Pinellas Technical College located at 6100 154th Ave N, Clearwater, FL. Patti Grogan and Janet Blair represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Service Program. A total of 66 were present and the meeting was called to order at 1:35pm.

### Presentations:

- A Mental Health Minute was offered by Florence Ackey, co-chair of the mental health subcommittee. This educational presentation gave a definition of trauma and a brief overview of the range of responses.
- Our first special presentation was given by Doug Griesenauer from the United Way Suncoast and focused on the ALICE Report. This report provides an overview of asset limited, income restrained employed individuals living in Florida. The ALICE Report provides county by county information on families who are working hard but still struggling to stay just above the poverty line. This data can be useful to providers who are compiling grants and reports and also helps refugee families better understand the context of their new community. More information can be found at <http://unitedwaysuncoast.org/what-we-do/alice-suncoast-2017/>
- The second presentation was provided by Gayane Gaylon, who gave an overview of the Lutheran Services, Florida's (LSF) human trafficking programs. LSF has two programs. One program focuses on community education to help community members learn to look for signs of trafficking and report it. The other program assists victims of human trafficking with case management services and assistance in filing for certification. More information on these programs can be found at <https://www.lsfnet.org/trafficking-victims-assistance-program/>
- The final presentation was from Don Jarrell at United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS). Don shared that due to changing priorities, USCIS is now prioritizing asylum cases and cases are settled quickly. However, legal permanent residency applications are taking over a year to process and naturalization applications can take from 4-9 months to process. Info pass appointments are also being phased out and a pilot project is underway in Jacksonville to determine its effectiveness. All updates can be found at <https://www.uscis.gov/>

### Refugee Services Update

- Patti Grogan gave an update on refugee arrivals and the Refugee Services program. Due to the current pace of arrivals, it does not look like the goal of admitting 45,000 refugees and 15,000 SIVs to the U.S. will be met this year. Additionally, Florida has lost over 15 million in funding and we are uncertain about the impact of this on the next federal fiscal year. We do expect to face budget cuts in all programs and some will be impacted more than others. For now, we need to continue serving our clients and reach out to those who arrived in the past few years who may

still need our services.

- The Task Force will hold the first Faith Summit in April to gather all faith communities now working with refugee programs on both sides of the bay and those who are interested in doing so. The summit planning committee consists of Sylvia Acevedo, Janet Blair, Ghadir Kassab and Rev. Patrice Curtis. More details will be forthcoming.
- Clint Elbow, president of the UN USA Tampa Bay Chapter, gave an overview of the Picture My Life refugee youth photo project. This project has been underway since June of 2017 when 12 youth began meeting to learn both photography from professional photographer and to learn how to deal with emotions regarding the trauma they experienced with a professional therapist. An exhibit of the photos from this project will be shown on February 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Tampa Photographic Museum. All proceeds from the event and the sales of the photography will support the Refugee and Migrant Women's Initiative which supported the project and the families of the photographers.

### **General Updates**

- World Refugee Day: event will be held at Pinellas Technical College on June 22<sup>nd</sup> from 1:0-3:30pm. Pinellas Technical College has generously offered four scholarships to their program for four refugee adult education students who meet the requirements. Scholarship application forms will be distributed in April and the awards will be given at the event.
- Greg Musselman from LSF was recognized for his many years of service to the task force and refugee community in Tampa Bay. We are honored to work with such a dedicated individual as Greg.

### **Upcoming TF Meeting**

- April 24th, 2018 at the Department of Children & Families located at 9393 North Florida Ave in Tampa, FL