



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carrol
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 24, 2017
TO: Members of the Broward County Refugee Task Force
FROM: **Miriam Rosario (RS)**
SUBJECT: March 16, 2017 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: May 18, 2017
Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Location: Family Success Administration Division
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 Broward County 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!

11 So Sapodilla Ave, FL 33401

BROWARD COUNTY REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING**INTRODUCTION**

The meeting was held at the Urban League of Broward County (ULBC). Miriam Rosario, Community Liaison represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Services (RS) Program. Miriam thanked Raul Sigler and ULBC for hosting the meeting. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS:

A presentation given by Raul Sigler Jr, Housing Division Manager, ULBC on their Individual Development Account Program (IDA) /Housing program. The IDA Program is an assets building program designed to help low income families build wealth assets. The program provides an 8:1 match for Education (\$500 must be saved by participant); 4:1 for Business (\$1,000 must be saved by the participant); 2:1 match for home purchase (\$2, 000 must be saved by the participant). All participants must be in the program for at least six months before funds can be spent. The participants must be Broward county residents., members of the house hold must be eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Earn Income Tax (EITC) or have an adjustable income that is less than twice the federal poverty guidelines at the time of application. Participants must be employed for at least three (3) months and must be able to save at least \$50. per month (three consecutive months of bank statement are needed). This is an excellent program for first time home buyers and those in need help with education. Help can be in form of educational equipment including computer, books, school scholarship, automobile, housing closing cost. The homebuyer workshop are available on the 2nd Saturdays of each month and the IDA Orientation is held every 4th Thursday at 6PM, must be taken according to the program they are applying. For additional information please call Karen McClain at 954-625-2538 or 954-584-0777.

A presentation given by Sabine Balmir-Derenoncourt, MSW, Florida Center for Survivors of Torture, Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services (GCJFCS), Program Coordinator. Sabine did an excellent presentation in helping identifying and working with victims' survivors. The program is responsible for the provision of intensive case management services for eligible torture survivors to help them become self-sufficient in the United States. This also includes follow up and advocacy with the providers, coordination of services, and interpretation / translation services. The program helps those refugees and asylum searchers 'who have been inflicted pain or suffering by someone else or government officials. There are 148 countries subject to torture with no self-disclosure, such as Congo, Colombia, Cuba and Israel. Victims may suffer in lack of trust, fear and security issues, adjustment & coping issues, trauma and financial issues. The programs include; intensive case management and individual counseling and referrals to services in the community such as legal, medical, mental health, employment, educational, victims of rape services, LGTB, and/or social services. Services can be render from Miami, Broward and Palm Beach Counties. For additional information please call Sabine at GCJFCS, sabine.derenoncourt@gcjfcs.org, Telephone: 305-349-1200. Referrals form were distributed and outreach materials.

NEW ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN:

Step Up Scholarships: Melissa Jaramillo presented an update and outreach material for distributions. The SU4Students has two scholarships for Florida school children; FL Tax Credit Scholarship (FLTCS) and the Gardiner Scholarship (Gardiner). FLTCS is income-based and low-income families can choose between two K-12 scholarships for 2016-2017 school year. The FLTCS covers up to \$5,886 for tuition and fees and \$500 for transportation. The Gardiner is for children with special needs is based on personal learning scholarship accounts (PLSA). Annual awards average \$10k and can go toward a combination options including private schools or home education, therapists, curriculum and technology. For more information, contact the Hotline; 1-877-735-7837. Or visit www.StepUpForStudents.org

World Refugee Day-June 16, 2017: Jocelyn Martinez, Project RENEW Broward College (PR-BC) reported on the Broward WRD Day events, this year the event will be held same as last year at the Broward College. The date is schedule for 6/16/17 in the morning. The program starts at around 10:00 am. with USCIS Naturalization Ceremony and afterwards the actual WRD Award Ceremony program will start. The USCIS Citizenship ceremony will be at 10:00 AM and USCIS has its own program. Also the planning committee is working on a Symposium the Topic is Refugee Keeping the American Dreams on June 6, 2017. All are welcome to be part of this celebrations by extending the invitation members of the RTF to be part of the planning events.

RS Eligibility Training-

Miriam Rosario stated we are assessing Refugee Services Eligibility training needs in the Palm Beach & Broward. If you have an estimated number of staff that is in need of RS Eligibility training, please we need the staff names, title and contact information including their emails. The RS Eligibility Training is an advance training and is required to be take an online training prior to enrolling in the classroom training. This is offered to new RS contracted providers, DOH and DCF staff and as a refresher training.

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS

USCIS- Berta Cassidy with USCIS indicated reminder of USCIS new fees took effect 12/2016 and published updated versions of forms. Starting Feb. 21, 2017, USCIS will only accept new editions of these forms. See complete list of the new fees at uscis.gov/forms/our-fees and make sure you are including the correct amount. You must include the new fee or USCIS will reject and return your filing. The updated forms are currently available at uscis.gov/forms, where all of our forms can be downloaded for free. She also discussed starting February 16, 2017, USCIS began reissuing receipt notices (Form I-797) to individuals who applied to renew their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) between July 21, 2016 and January 16, 2017, and whose applications remain pending in certain categories. USCIS is automatically extending the validity of certain EADs issued under Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for El Salvador for an additional 6 months.

The Executive Orders on Immigration and Refugees and policy changes in immigration and their effect in the refugee and immigration community was discussed. Members indicated some have opted out of reaching for assistance in fear these may jeopardize their benefits for Lawful Permanent Residence and/or US Citizenship. CWS offered to members to participate during one of their community Radio Talk Show and present to the Haitian community on this topic. Most participants were aware of these orders and changes as they were highlighted on newscasts in other media. Members discussed the effect of the Executive Orders on the local Refugee programs. Miriam Rosario reported on a previous meeting among statewide RS staff and Employment providers. Employment providers and RS staff would work together to reestablish contract goals and tasks. These updates primarily focus will be on more intense efforts to establish stronger and more promising job opportunities for refugees to gain a stronger sense of self sufficiency. All regions in Florida would be engaging in this effort.

DCF/ESS- Wilber Rodney stated on the importance to inform DCF on any action on these specific cases and to report any change on line as soon as possible. Briefly informed on the ABAB, SNAP and Medicaid clients requirements for Career Source or RS employment participation.

Career Source (CSB) -Keisha Hall Program Manager briefly provided an overview on their Entrepreneur, TANF and Summer Youth programs. She invited members to their Career Source Fair coming up next 3/23/17.

RS Contracted Providers:

Employment Services: Gladys Sanchez, supervisor **Youth Co-Op, Inc. (YCI)** reported on their intakes still high numbers but not as previous quarters. They have experience increases in the Haitian community intake and they demonstrate highly desires to join the work forces. Their **Youth Pathway Program (YPP)** has commenced and now have 8 cases. She exulted the members to refer the youth over 16 -19 years old to their YCI for Career or Academic assessment.

Adult Education: Jocelyn Martinez, **Project RENEW** presented the report and indicated the Adult Education ESOL is stated the schools' commitment to teaching English to the refugees while also making them feel welcome in their new community.

Integration Assistance (IA) & Legal Services: Silvio Padilla, director **CWS** provided briefly oversight regarding their Legal and IA program. Their IA program have experience an increase in the Haitian community. However, they need to wait for their EAD adding additional stress as new arrivals. He stated they have been working closely with their volunteer and the community outreach thru their Community Outreach Coordinator to help their refugees and clients.

Miriam Rosario took this opportunity to remind participants of the importance to network as a resource for refugees. Miriam reminded on the announced some new initiatives that has been established by the PBC Library System offering opportunities in various resources including cultural school aged children activities and grant research. Many other group of volunteers including Faith Groups and have also been approaching RS program and offering to help and volunteering their skills and talents to tutor refugees including Congolese and Syrian students. RS/DCF is tracking these opportunities and all have been referred to the RS providers and Resettlement Organizations (R&P) in their respective regions.

Ms. Yasmin Saib with the Muslim Women's Organization of South Florida indicated they are a volunteer organization and is helping around 10 families in Miami. She asked for additional social services in the community. RS contracted providers offered and provided brief information on their available services. Sabine with GCJFCS provided the referral form to Ms. Saib to refer these families to the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture, Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services (GCJFCS), Program. Discussion regarding the important to recognize that some of these volunteers may need refugee services awareness and collaboration among these organization's volunteer programs and the RS providers volunteer programs.

Department of Health: Not present but reported on medical assessments for all newly arriving refugees are required; they are still assisting local public health units even while there has been a reduction in these appointments.

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 18th 2017
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Family Success Administration Division
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311

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