



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Caroll**  
Secretary

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** December 29, 2017

**TO:** Members of the Miami-Dade Refugee Task Force

**FROM:** Lourdes Leconte, Refugee Services (RS)

**SUBJECT:** December 08, 2017 Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** February 09, 2018  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Miami-Dade College  
Building 8, the Idea Center, Room 8106  
300 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Miami, Florida 33132  
**Contact:** Lourdes Leconte  
**Office:** (786) 257-5173  
**Cell:** (305) 401-3374  
**E-Mail:** Lourdes.Leconte@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Miami area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An average of about twenty-five to thirty 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 meeting!***

401 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Suite N-812 Miami, Florida 33128

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

**MIAMI-DADE REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 16, 2016**

**ATTENDEES:**

Bojan, Bajic;; Kerry, Allen; Ileana, Bustelo; Berta Cassidy; Suzy Cop; Jackie, Carrion;; Jorge, Costas; Sonia, Davis; Gustavo, Diaz; Maria, Diaz; Maria, Dominguez; Arlene, Diaz; Miriam J., Garcia; Rosaida, Galano; Emilie, Goesser; Kelly, Levy; Lourdes, Leconte; Silvia, Lopez; Omar, Lugo; Dorothy, Martin; Dasiely, Marrero; Sergio, Mora; Erica, Perdomo; Cristobal , Perez; Marie, Philogene; Christine, Reis; Maria, Rodriguez; Veronica, Rodriguez; Edilia, Romeu; Luisa, Sanchez; Duncan, Sosa; Leidy, Sosa; Evelyn, Soto; Carmen, Torres; Ruth Valenzuela; Carmen, Gimenez; Hipolito, Arriaga; Caroline, Culloreth; Ulises, Pacheco; Omar, Arrego; Florencia, Dominguez; Maureen, Porras; Maria, Ortega; Andrea, Gordon; Darily Martinez; Zulma, Ruiz; Soneyta, Everett; Osmin, Bejerano; Paulina, Velez;

**INTRODUCTION:**

Lourdes Leconte, DCF Refugee Services Community Liaison for the Southern Region welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

**PRESENTATION:**

Kelly Levy, Training Specialist III, CareerSource South Florida did an awesome job presenting the Labor Market Report Presentation for the region, at the request of the attendees she has provided an electronic copy of the presentation, it is attached to the minutes.

Representatives from most of the Refugee services providers and Local resettlement agencies took turn sharing their accomplishments, challenges faced during 2017 and their hopes for the coming year. Refugee and Cuban Parolee arrivals are at an all-time, this current situation is creating uneasiness and uncertainties for service providers, but remain hopeful, that the situation will improve in 2018; and are more than ever poised and ready to face the challenges of the coming year working together.

After the meeting forty members converged to the Knife restaurant for the celebratory end of the year luncheon. Community Medical Group provided some Door prizes to attendees.

**REFUGEE SERVICES (RS) UPDATE:****ANNOUNCEMENT:**

- Volunteers needed for the planning of World Refugee Day 2018

**REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE (*Sent via E-Mail in November and December*)**

**Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM**

**SOUTH FLORIDA REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES MINUTES – NOVEMBER, 2017**

South Florida VOLAG Consortium

Nov. 15, 2017

## Attendees:

Name	Agency	Email
Silvia Lopez	CMG	<a href="mailto:Silvia.lopez@communitygrp.com">Silvia.lopez@communitygrp.com</a>
Ana Maria Teixeira	IRC	<a href="mailto:anamaria.teixeira@rescue.org">anamaria.teixeira@rescue.org</a>
Jose Sanchez	CWS	<a href="mailto:jsanchez@cwsglobal.org">jsanchez@cwsglobal.org</a>
Evelyn Soto	Catholic Charities	<a href="mailto:esoto@ccadm.org">esoto@ccadm.org</a>
Carmen Torres	LIRS	<a href="mailto:ctorres@lsfnet.org">ctorres@lsfnet.org</a>
Gustavo Diaz	Youth Co-op/USCRI	<a href="mailto:gustavo.diaz@ycoop.mail.org">gustavo.diaz@ycoop.mail.org</a>
Veronica Rodriguez	Youth Co-op/USCRI	<a href="mailto:veronica.rodriguez@ycoop.mail.org">veronica.rodriguez@ycoop.mail.org</a>
Lourdes Leconte	DCF/Refugee Services	Lourdes.leconte@myflfamilies.com

## Refugee Services:

Update on Food for Florida and people still applying for benefits. Cases from ACCESS can expect a delay, since Food for Florida needed DCF staffers to process benefits. October saw close to 200,000 people. All cases are being expedited.

Puerto Rico initiative is still happening at the airport. No news on proposals submitted for services. Pending information from FEMA.

## Parolee Orientation Program:

Month	Total	Cuban	Haitian	Left the county
Oct 2017	147	98	49	46
<i>YTD Jan-Oct</i>	<i>2110</i>			

Referrals continue to be provided, most clients hearing from POP at the Health Department.

## Reception and Placement Program updates

Agency	October 2017	FY 2018 Capacity
CC	0	0
CWS	0	120
IRC	3	125
LIRS	0	50
Youth Co-Op	0	0
TOTAL	3	295

Discussion on refugee program out of Havana. The program remains open for application filing, but no staff available to process. Applicants are able to download application and submit via drop box by annex in building.

Immigrant visa appointments are being done out of the US Embassy in Bogota, Colombia. Non-immigrant visas can be filed in any US Embassy.

Protection Transfer Agreement (PTA) Program is up and running out of Costa Rica. Managed by IOM and UNHCR for nationals of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Program is designed for durable solution in resettlement, not just US resettlement.

Matching Grant Program updates

Agency	October 2017	FY 2018 CAPACITY
CC	17	89
CWS	71	400
IRC	23	385
LIRS	17	299
Youth Co-Op	104	714
TOTAL	232	1887

Discussion on continuing EAD delays. All agencies commented on EAD delays past 180-day mark. All agencies have escalated issue to national headquarters, as well as USCIS liaison.

Other items:

- Community Consultations
- Announcements:
  - Community Medical is opening 2 Medical centers in Tampa area.
  - Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> @ 12pm RA and Community partners' luncheon
- Next meeting scheduled: TBD

**LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – NOVEMBER 2017****Minutes for the meeting on November 1, 2017**

By Lucio Perez-Reynoso

**Attendees: Brad Ginter, Dante Lendechy, Maria Avila, Bruce Marmar, Berta Cassidy, Adonia Simpson, Amelia Ramirez, Arno Lemus, Aileen Diaz, Christine Reis, Miriam Garcia, Lourdes Leconte, Dorothy Martin, Alexandra Yaya, Mariana Martinez, Lucio Perez-Reynoso, Maria Dominguez, Gloria Alonso, Kate Witt.**

The Immigration Subcommittee Meeting was held on November 1, 2017 at the offices of Church World Services (CWS). Berta Cassidy provided the USCIS updates and Maria Dominguez provided the Miami Asylum Office updates follow up by questions.

- USCIS has a new Director, L. Francis Cissna, who was sworn in on October 8, 2017. Berta also announced new staff changes in USCIS Local Offices: Kendall Field Office's new Director is Kristian Parker and a new Community Relations Director, Zulma Ruiz, was appointed to work with Berta Cassidy. Both will begin in December of 2017.
- Immigrant Visas for residents of Cuba will be processed at the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, Colombia.
- Employment based AOS and I-730s asylum-derivative interviews will be conducted at local field offices.
- EADs have been issued to applicants beyond the 90 days that it usually takes. Community organizations want guidance on this issue to advise their constituents whether Employment Application Renewals should be submitted 6 months in advance so that constituents are not left without an EAD.
- Maria Dominguez introduced Kate Witt; who was recently appointed to the position of Staff Assistant to the Miami Asylum Office Director.
- Maria Dominguez distributed the current Affirmative Asylum Scheduling Bulletin; the Bulletin indicates the priorities in scheduling asylum applications. Maria Dominguez also distributed documents indicating the number of asylum cases pending in the backlog as well as the top 10 nationalities filing asylum applications. The Miami Asylum Office has the most asylum cases pending with 58,071 cases as of June of 2017. Venezuela is the leading Country filing asylum claims.
- Kate Witt announced the next AILA Stakeholder Meeting will be held at the Miami Asylum Office on November 15<sup>th</sup> at 2pm. She will send the official invitation within the next few days.
- Also, Ms. Dominguez distributed notices of the next Asylum Division Quarterly Stakeholder Meeting which will be on November 3, 2017 from 2:00PM to 4:00PM.
- Asylum Cases: Applicants should submit additional documents at least 1 week in advance before the asylum interview. Submit two copies and the original.
- There were several questions regarding asylum cases and asylum process.

**The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday December 6, 2017 from 10:00 AM until 12:00 PM at the office of American for Immigrant Justice (AIJ): 3000 Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 400, Miami, FL 33137 (Parking Entrance by 30<sup>th</sup> Street)**

**EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – DECEMBER 2017****ADULT EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING****December 8, 2017**

- REVEST is enrolling students for the upcoming term beginning January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and ending April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018. So far over 1835 ESOL students have been enrolled program wide. Approximately 700 have been tested and more orientations are planned. So far, 23 Orientation sessions have been scheduled. For current Cycle 75 the enrollment is 2200, and for Cycle 76 is around 1835.
- REVEST Program has begun vocational registrations for the next Term Spring 2183 beginning in January 2018, and we have already been able to serve around 80 students registered in more than 100 courses.
- We continue to hold Vocational retraining sessions for advisors based on the new changes in the MDC Information System, and to find strategies to continue providing a comprehensive service notwithstanding the current budget adjustments.
- Faculty meetings were conducted with all REVEST instructors Nov. 16 and 17, 2017. All CASAS testing procedures were reviewed with instructors to ensure a successful testing session. CASAS testing is taking place the first week of December 2017. We expect completion rates to remain steady. All REVEST students were trained to use scantrons and employ basic test-taking skills. We are very proud of the hard work of our determined faculty and especially our students.
- REVEST is concerned that some misinformation about the status of the program may be circulating. Although REVEST is closing the West-Dade Outreach Center, all other centers remain open and are receiving students including the Wolfson, Kendal and Hialeah sites. We have seen a decrease in demand and it could be due to clients receiving false information that the entire REVEST program is closing. Please spread the word that REVEST remains open and is eager to serve students in our three remaining centers. Thank you for your support!
- The total SAVES Program enrollment as of November 28, 2017 was 2,832. Of these, 817 are new students to the program and 238 are 16 to 18 youngsters enrolled in the SAVES GED in Spanish Program. The current trimester began on August 21, 2017 and ends December 22, 2017. The next academic trimester begins on January 8, 2018.

- A SAVES District meeting was held November 29, 2017. Important information was discussed with the school staff. Next SAVES District meeting is scheduled for January 31, 2018.
- Graduations for the GED in Spanish program will be held at the end of the term. This program has proven to be an excellent alternative for refugee youth that would otherwise not make it in the regular high school programs. Students are graduating and continuing to study English and choosing a career pathway either through vocational/technical training or transitioning to MDC.
- Students who are ready or are interested in vocational/technical courses that are not offered at their current schools (ex: Aircraft/airframe Mechanics or truck driving) are being issued vouchers for books and tuition at Baker Aviation and Miami Lakes Technical Colleges.
- New SAVES success stories, which highlight the achievements of some of our students, are uploaded to the SAVES website ([www.savesdadeschools.com](http://www.savesdadeschools.com)).
- If you have any questions about our program, you can call us or visit the SAVES website at [www.savesdadeschools.com](http://www.savesdadeschools.com).

**REFUGEE HEALTH CLINIC REPORT – DECEMBER 2017**

None

**EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REPORT – DECEMBER 2017**

Labor Market Report presentation by Kelly Levy, Training Specialist III, CareerSource South Florida



RET Presentation  
September 2017 Fin:

**USCIS UPDATE – DECEMBER 2017****USCIS Miami****December 2017 Update****❖ Introducing our new Community Relations Officer!**

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, Zulma Ruiz, will join Berta Cassidy as our newest Community Relations Officer. In the coming weeks and months, you will be seeing both Berta and Zulma at community events and meetings. Zulma brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position with 15 years of government service in various roles ranging from work with the ICE Office of Chief Counsel, to USCIS as an Immigration Services Officer, Senior Officer, and Acting Supervisor.

**❖ New Kendall Field Office Director**

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, we will also welcome the new Kendall Field Office Director, Kristian M. Parker. Ms. Parker comes to Miami as the former Charleston Field Office Director. She also served as Section Chief for the Adjustment of Status Unit and Supervisor at the New York Field Office. Ms. Parker received her Juris Doctor from Duquesne University School of Law in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and has been with USCIS since 2008.

**❖ TPS Information**

**Haiti** –On November 20, 2017, Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke announced her decision to terminate the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Haiti with a delayed effective date of 18 months to allow for an orderly transition before the designation terminates on July 22, 2019.

To read more - <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/11/20/acting-secretary-elaine-duke-announcement-temporary-protected-status-haiti>

**Nicaragua/Honduras** - Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke announced changes to Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designations for Nicaragua and Honduras.

To read more - <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/11/06/acting-secretary-elaine-duke-announcement-temporary-protected-status-nicaragua-and>

**❖ Upcoming Outreach Sessions**

Below is a listing of our upcoming outreach sessions and events. These sessions are free and open to the public. If you need additional information, please contact –

[Berta.m.cassidy@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:Berta.m.cassidy@uscis.dhs.gov)



<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Type of Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
December 6th	4:00 - 7:30 pm	Library Information Desk	South Dade Regional Library, 10750 SW 211 St. Cutler Bay, Fl.
December 7th	5:00 - 7:00 pm	Library Information Desk	Shenandoah Branch Library, 2111 SW 19th St. Miami, Fl.
December 11th	5:30 - 7:30 pm	Library Information Desk	Doral Branch Library, 10785 NW 58 St. Doral, Fl.
December 12th	4:00 - 7:30 pm	Library Information Desk	West Dade Regional Library, 9445 Coral Way, Miami, Fl.
December 12th	5:00 - 7:00 pm	Library Information Desk	California Club Branch Library, 700 Ives Dairy Rd. Miami, Fl.
December 12th	5:30 - 7:30 pm	Library Information Desk	Tamarac Branch Library, 8701 W. Commercial Blvd. Tamarac, Fl.
December 13th	5:30 - 7:30 pm	Library Information Desk	West Regional Library, 8601 W. Broward Blvd. Plantation, Fl.
December 18th	1:00 - 4:00 pm	USCIS Information Desk	Kendall Driver's License Center 11735 SW 147th Ave. Suite #23, Miami, Fl.
December 18th	5:30 - 7:00 pm	Library Information Desk	Northwest Regional Library, 3151 University Drive, Coral Springs, Fl.
December 19th	10 am - 2:00 pm	USCIS Information Desk	Stephen P. Clark Government Center, Lobby, 111 NW 1st St. Miami, Fl.
December 19th	5:30 - 7:30 pm	Library Information Desk	North Regional/Broward College Library, 1100 Coconut Creek Blvd. Coconut Creek, Fl.
December 21st	4:00 - 7:30 pm	Library Information Desk	Kendale Lakes Branch Library, 15205 SW 88 St. Miami, Fl.
December 21st	5:00 - 7:00 pm	Library Information Desk	Arcola Lakes Branch Library, 8240 NW 7th Ave. Miami, Fl.

#### ❖ **Upcoming Naturalization Ceremonies**

Below are scheduled dates for administrative N-400 naturalization ceremonies and the corresponding field offices where the ceremonies will take place (unless otherwise listed). Please note that although these dates are current on the date of issuance of this update, the dates are subject to change without notice.

- Miami Field Office – December 8, 15, and 22
- Hialeah Field Office – December 16, 21, and 22
- Kendall Field Office – December 15
- Oakland Park Field Office – December 15 and 16