



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carrol
Secretary

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: February 15, 2017
TO: Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: Taddese Fessehayee, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: Feb 8, 2017 TF Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: February 8, 2017
Time: 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon
Location: Florida Department of Transportation
133 S. Semoran Blvd., Orlando, FL 32807
Contact: Taddese Fessehayee
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This task force has been active in the Orlando 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 thirty to thirty-five 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, characteristics or movements, help create good communication among service providers; get informed about upcoming community events at the local, state and national level, request for proposals, training, workshops, conferences, discuss refugee service needs and explore solutions to those needs. Meeting participants 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!

400 W. Robinson Street, S1111C, Orlando, Florida 32801

Mission: Work in Partnership with Local Communities to Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

ORLANDO AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

This meeting was held at the Florida Department of Transportation Building, located at 133 S. Semoran Blvd; Orlando, FL 32807. Thirty-one people were in attendance. Taddese Fessehayee, Community Liaison Manager and Rosa Chaves, Community Liaison for the Central Region represented the Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Everyone introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Ms. Veraunda Jackson, Criminal Justice Coordinator at DCF/Central Region provided an overview about Human Trafficking. She reminded everyone about what happens with the commercial sexual exploitation and labor trafficking. Statistics show how two thirds of all runaways will be recruited by the sex industry after 48 hours. The majority of these kids 11-14 years old use to be commercially exploited and 11-19 years old become “independent”. She shared the national Hotline 1-888-3737-888.

GENERAL UPDATES

USCIS – Ms. Kimberly Dean, Orlando Field Office Director, reported that the Executive Order regarding to stop refugee admissions was suspended. Also, Cuban national and citizens that applied to USCIS before Jan 12, 2017 can continue in the country. After that date CBP will be in charge again.

DCF ESS/ACCESS: No one was present.

RS-CONTRACTED PROVIDER UPDATES

Catholic Charities of Central Florida- Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS):

Ms. Debbie Cruz, CRS Program Coordinator reported that last month requests for services from Haitians increased (CC hired a Creole speaker to attend to these clients) but in general, in the past 2 to 3 weeks all clients’ requests for service decreased. Serious medical issues of three or four clients were resolved.

- **Case Management** Ms. Monica Araujo, Case Management Supervisor of the Comprehensive Refugee Services reported there was an increase in demand for service from newly arrived refugees in January, mostly Arabic Speakers. Applications for Social Security submitted were denied for some of them.
- **Youth program** is helping refugee youth 16 to 19 years old and the VISTA program is helping with volunteers –17 volunteers are providing tutoring services to the youth at this time.
- **Legal Services** – Ms. Noemi Guzman, Program Coordinator stated that executive orders are affecting C/H entrants and crowding their system in certain way because so many more clients are asking questions about their families who are yet to join them here in the U.S.
- **Employment** – CC will be implementing new orientation right before clients get employed to

teach clients proper manners, personal hygiene, etc., in order to cause better impression on employers.

- **Adult Education** – CRS reports in adult education the opening of two new classes in January 2017; one at 3975 S. Orange Blossom Trail, Suite G and the second one at in the Pine Hills area 1N Power Dr. which is called “Orlo-Vista”. There is good attendance in the Introductory Level.
- PALMAS program requires Florida ID and a second picture ID. However, it takes two to three months for students to get the ID causing a delay in registration. They have 600 students enrolled for Spring 2017 and have more than 200 on waiting list. Ms. Mercedes Ayala, Senior Constituent Services Representative, Office of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, commented that we can contact DMV in Tallahassee to help speed up the process. Taddese is going to contact DMV Tallahassee.

Community Coordinated Care for Children (4C) - No one was present.

Community Health Centers – Ms. Ada Tirado, Marketing and Outreach Lead announced their Pine Hills Center has moved to new location and will offer Pediatrics, Family Medicine, OB/GYN, Pharmacy, Lab, and Dental service for children and adults. In addition, the center will offer Optometry and behavioral health services in the future. The new office is located at 840 Mercy Dr. in Orlando. Community Health Centers accepts Medicaid, Medicare and most private insurance plans. A Sliding Discount Program is available for those meeting income guidelines. To schedule an appointment or for more information, please call 407-905-8827.

County Health Departments

- **Osceola** – No one was present to report.
- **Seminole** – Reps. reported they had lower number of clients compared with the last period.
- **Orange** – Ms. Martha Ruiz, Government Operations Consultant at the Department of Health for Orange County, WIC and Nutrition Services had good news because there no changes in eligibility for program benefits. They opened a new clinic on the West side of Orlando at Pine Hills.

Lutheran Services Florida (LSF)

Jarir Dawi, Program Manager reported they are encountering the same issues as Catholic Charities. The form I-94 is taking 2 to 3 weeks to get it online. Everything seems to be going slow. Housing is also an issue. It is critical at this time because they just get 48 hours notice when families are coming.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Taddese spoke about the eligibility of Cubans and Haitian. Despite the recent policy changes, Cuban/Haitian entrants remain eligible. According to RS program director, the budget of contracted services will not be affected for the coming year as allocations of federal funds are based on the last two years of arrivals. Florida received over 62,000 arrivals in FFY2016 and over 48,000 in FFY2015.

- Martha Ruiz reported that the WIC & Nutrition Services of Orange County is offering to provide food right away; clients don't have to wait. Seminole County also have a pantry and offers the same services.

NOTES: A follow up call was made to Ms. Rose Exantus-Boisrond, PALMAS Program Coordinator at Mid Florida Tech and she confirmed that the waiting list for PALMAS program is 36 clients and not 200 as reported in the meeting.

NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday, April 12, 2017

Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

Location: Florida Department of Transportation
133 S. Semoran Blvd., Lake George Conference Room
Orlando, FL 32807

Contact: Taddese.Fessehay@myflfamilies.com (407) 317-7335