



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carrol**  
Secretary

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** July 7, 2016  
**TO:** Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Taddese Fessehayee, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** May 25, 2016 TF Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** August 10, 2016  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Orange County Health Department – South Side  
6101 Lake Ellenor Dr, Orlando, FL 32809  
**Contact:** Taddese Fessehayee  
**Office:** (407) 317-7335  
**Fax:** (407) 245-2766  
**E-Mail:** Taddese.Fessehayee@myflfamilies.com

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

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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

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

This meeting was held at the Florida Department of Transportation Building, located at 133 S. Semoran Blvd; Orlando, FL 32807. Thirty-Six people were in attendance. Patti Grogan, Program Director, George Lewis, Program Administrator, Taddese Fessehaye, Community Liaison Manager, Debbie Ansbacher (Northeast), Janet Blair (Suncoast), Miriam Rosario (Southeast), Lourdes Leconte (Southern), Theresa Leslie (Northwest) and Pedro Padua (Central), Community Liaisons represented the Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Everyone introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

### **SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

Ms. Tasha Casaccio, Director of Marketing and Promotions gave an overview about True Health. She started off by saying that True Health is Federally Qualified Health Center that provides health care to the insured and non-insured regardless of their immigration status. They have clinics for Adults, Pediatrics, OB-GYN, Podiatry and dental services. Dental services for adults is limited to routine cleaning, fillings and emergency extractions. Most of their clinics have X-Rays and Laboratory as well as pharmacy on site. They have 9 locations (7 in Orange and 2 in Seminole); it includes two school based programs. A copy of their brochure was distributed. There is a main phone for all location to set up appointments or information 407-322-8645. More information can be found on their website: [www.mytruehealth.org](http://www.mytruehealth.org)

### **GENERAL UPDATES**

**USCIS – No one present to report.**

**DCF ESS/ACCESS:** Lodia Rojas, RAP Unit Supervisor for ACCESS indicated there were no major issues to report. She added that sanctions for noncompliance with work requirements for ABAWD have been substantially reduced or eliminated.

**Area Health Care Administration (Medicaid):** Milagros (Millie) Chervoni, was present but she had no update.

**World Refugee Day:** Copies of invitation flyers in Spanish, Arabic and Kreyol were made available for people to take back to their offices for distribution. A copy of the program was provided to everyone. Pedro said a limited number of exhibitors (9) have been selected to set up informational tables inside the auditorium, but extra efforts will be required to keep movement and noise to a minimum during stage presentations or performances. He made it clear that exhibitors must shut down prior to the Naturalization Ceremony that is scheduled to start at 3:00 PM.

### **AmeriCorps VISTA Project:**

Taddese Fessehaye provided an update about the Vista Project. Two have been already placed – one in Clearwater and the other in Jacksonville. Three will hopefully start their service on Friday, May 27, 2016 and four are currently being recruited.

**Refugee Services Update:**

Patti Grogan commented that World Refugee Day provides an excellent opportunity to dispel myths and misconceptions people may have with regard to refugees.

First, it is not true that large groups of refugees are crossing the border in to the U.S. illegally. All refugees that come to the U.S. have been vetted and the process takes 18-24 months to be approved for resettlement. Several different federal agencies are involved in the vetting process to ensure security. Second, it is important to understand the context in which the U.S. resettles refugees. More than 140 countries, including the U.S. signed the Refugee Convention of 1951 as a result of the atrocities of World War II. The Convention defines the term “refugee” and describes the responsibilities of nations towards those displaced by war and persecution; one of the most important is that nations cannot deport refugees who are in danger. Some countries are absorbing most refugees, including Turkey which has more than 2.5 million refugees. The U.S. supports the international effort by accepting a relatively small number of refugees, this year 85,000, to help alleviate the strain that countries like Turkey bear.

**RS-CONTRACTED PROVIDER UPDATES****Catholic Charities of Central Florida- Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS):**

Debbie Cruz, CRS Program Coordinator, reported April was a very busy month as they continue to deal with steady flow of arrivals. They have adjusted some schedules to add more orientation sessions in Osceola and Orlando. She added there has been an increase of individuals with chronic medical issues. They have develop a collaborative relationship with Vocational Rehabilitation for assistance with training and employment. Regarding the Youth Program, Debbie commented it was expected the Vista Volunteer will do outreach to youth not enrolled in program and try to connect them with existing services.

**Legal Services** – Noemi Guzman, Program Coordinator, they have encountered some difficulties trying to print I-94s for Border Entrants. The problem is aggravated when their names are misspelled and they have to make appointments with CBP to correct spelling mistakes. She commented that some of the fees charged for immigration related services will be increase and the amount of papers for each process will also increase; which will require more time to complete.

**Employment** – Daisy Clemente, Program Coordinator, reported the program continues to exceed monthly placement goals and 90 days retention.

**Adult Education** – Katherine Diaz, ESOL Program Coordinator, reported the in-house 8 weeks ESL (Introductory and Pre-Literacy) has an 85% retention. She added the Summer School program at ALCO (Adult Learning Center of Osceola) is full. There will be no enrollment of new clients until the fall term.

**PALMAS** – Rose Exantus Boisrond, Program Coordinator, reported that refugee specific teacher took 43 students to Sanford Zoo. All has never been to the zoo before. As part of ESOL Leadership Team, students raised funds to cover the cost of the trip.

PALMAS teacher had national recognition by U.S. Department of Education, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, for being an inspiring and outstanding professional. She is also one of the district’s “High Impact Teacher” and was recognized and given an award by the OCPS Superintendent.

She mentioned, summer classes will only last 12 days and added that 13 vocational students and 36 ABE students will be graduating at their various college campuses.

**Community Coordinated Care for Children (4C)**, Michael Montgomery, Family Support Specialist, reported they enrolled 7 children in March, 11 in April and 3 in May. They currently have 13 children on wait list.

#### **County Health Departments**

**Osceola** – Lizzette Plaud, Health Services Representative, reported they saw 36 clients in April and 41 in May.

**Seminole** – Diana Ruiz reported they saw 61 clients in March. She added that screening numbers are down for the past two months.

**Orange** – No one was present to report.

#### **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

##### **NEXT MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday, August 10, 2016

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

**Location:** Orange County Health Department – South Side  
16101 Lake Ellenor Dr, Orlando, FL 32809

**Contact:** [Taddese.Fessehay@myflfamilies.com](mailto:Taddese.Fessehay@myflfamilies.com) (407) 317-7335