



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Caroll**  
Secretary

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** March 28, 2016  
**TO:** Members of the Miami-Dade Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Lourdes Leconte, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** February 12, 2016 Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** April 08, 2016  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Miami-Dade College  
Building 3, Room, Room 3208-09  
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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## MIAMI-DADE REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 12, 2016

### ATTENDEES:

Bojan, Bajic; Sabine, Balmir-Derenoncourt; Ileana, Bustelo; Jackie, Carrion; Berta, Cassidy; Suzy, Cop; Jorge, Costas; Maria Dominguez; Aileen, Esparra ; Maria, Esparza; Monica, Farias; Martha, Ferrer; Miriam J., Garcia; Felica, Gil; Emilie, Goesser; Jacqueline Gabriel; Lourdes, Leconte; Julio Igleisas; Alen, Janjus; Silvia, Lopez; Guillermo, Luna; Dasiely, Marrero; Dorothy, Martin; Carmen, Medrano; Janet, Nichols; John, Parsons; Yeen, Perez; Oscar, Rivera; Erica, Perdomo; Cristobal, Perez; Marcela, Quintero; Christine, Reis; Maria, Rodriguez; Veronica, Rodriguez; Luisa, Sanchez; Rosaida, Galano; Ruth Valenzuela; Peggy, Cadeaux; Sherry Capers; Zoraida, Ballestas; Raquel, De la Huerta; Ingrid, Suazo; Niurca, Duncan; Millie, Cartelle; Pamela, Agudelo; Jorge, Guzman; Luz, Reyes; Dan, Briggs; Kerry M., Allen; Annette, Alvarez; Antonio, Wagner; Sue, Higgins; Anderson B., Gay; Clerda, Cajuste; Carlos, Narranjo; Michelle, Godoy; Patricia, Ferreira; Jilma, Roiz; Captain, Ifode; Cassandra, Suprin; Amber, Gamarra; Lilian, Coto.

### INTRODUCTION:

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

### PRESENTATION:

#### **FBI - International Human Rights Program**

Raquel M De La Huerta, FBI, Intelligence Analyst, Miami Division did a presentation on the International Human Rights Program that the federal agency she works for has jurisdiction over. This program identifies, investigates, locates, and prosecutes perpetrators of serious human rights violations, including genocide, torture, war crimes, the recruitment or use of child soldiers, and female genital mutilation. The focus area of the program is on US communities with large refugee populations from countries that have experienced a mass atrocity.

Areas of recent or ongoing conflict that remain of particular interest include: **Africa:** Sudan/South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Liberia, Gambia, Nigeria, Libya, Central African Republic, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi; **Middle East:** Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan; **Asia:** Philippines, Burma, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh **Americas:** Mexico, Guatemala, Cuba, Colombia, El Salvador, Venezuela, Honduras, Haiti; and **Europe/Eurasia:** Bosnia, Serbia, Ukraine, Croatia, Russia. She reassured the group that the FBI's purpose in asking diaspora communities about human rights abuses is only to gather information about perpetrators who may be in the U.S. and no one should feel intimidated to speak to the FBI. Individuals have the flexibility to speak to the FBI at the date, time, and location of their choosing.

#### **SNAP E&T**

Lilian Coto, Program Coordinator for the implementation of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) at Career Source South Florida did a presentation on the implementation of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 that requires Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) to engage in work-related activities in order to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. She noted that a person who meets the ABAWD criteria; but is receiving

Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and is participating in the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) is exempt from SNAP E&T participation.

**REFUGEE SERVICES (RS) UPDATE:**

- Sue Higgins the Director of the Refugee Health Assessment Program was present

**ANNOUNCEMENT:**

- Volunteers are still needed for the planning of World Refugee Day 2016

**REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE (*Sent via E-Mail in March & April*)**

- Reporting Public Assistance Fraud and Security of Client Data and other Information Resources
- USCIS Invitation: Implementing Quality Citizenship Instruction, 02/23/2016
- Refugee Health Updates
- Seminar on Refugee Livelihoods: Innovations in Career-Laddering
- ORR Mental Health Training Workshop and TA Providers
- USCIS Invitation: Citizenship and Integration Grant Program, 03/16/2016

**Meeting adjourned at 12:10 PM**

**SOUTH FLORIDA REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES MINUTES – FEBRUARY 2016****SOUTH FLORIDA VOLAG CONSORTIUM**

None

**LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – MARCH 2016****MIAMI AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE****Immigration and Legal Issues Sub Committee****Minutes for meeting on March 10, 2016**

By Miriam J. Garcia

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**Attendance:** Randell Akins, Oscar Alvarez, Haydee Canas, Berta Cassidy, Veraliz L. Cotto, Nancy Denis, Maria R. Dominguez, Patricia M. Ferreira, Miriam J. Garcia, Yanelys Garcia, Brad Ginter, Marie Jean, Lourdes Leconte, Sandra Maldonado, Dorothy Martin, Amelia Ramirez, Christine Reis, Alexandra O. Yaya.

The Immigration and Legal Issues Subcommittee meeting was held on March 10, 2016 at the offices of World Relief where Berta Cassidy introduced Randell Akins, Field Office Director for Kendall and provided the USCIS update and Maria R. Dominguez provided the Miami Asylum Office update, and they answered questions as follows:

- **FORM N-565.** There is a new form edition dated 05/07/2015. Starting April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016, only the new form will be accepted.
- **LOCAL LEADERSHIP.** USCIS Kendall Field Office Director is Randell Akins, Andrew Davidson is the Acting Chief of Staff for the District Office and Elizabeth Ferro is the Acting Field Office Director for Miami.
- **CITIZENSHIP AND INTEGRATION GRANT PROGRAM.** USCIS is now accepting applications for two competitive funding opportunities under the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program for fiscal year 2016. Through these two funding opportunities, USCIS will offer up to \$10 million in competitive funding for citizenship preparation programs in communities across the country. USCIS is inviting stakeholders to a teleconference on Wednesday, March 16, 2016 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. to discuss the notices of Funding Opportunity. Applications are due by April 22, 2016. For further information, please visit [www.uscis.gov/grants](http://www.uscis.gov/grants).
- **MIAMI RESIDENT CHARGED WITH ORCHESTRATING AN IMMIGRATION FRAUD SCHEME.** Josefa Siverio was indicted with 5 counts of mail fraud and 3 counts of conversion of postal money orders. Siverio is alleged to have prepared at least 146 fraudulent petitions and stolen checks and money orders entrusted to her to pay the

fees associated with the petitions and applications for immigration benefits. It is alleged that Siverio's clients provided her with blank checks and money orders for the application fees and Siverio made the checks and money orders payable to herself and deposited the checks and money orders into her own personal bank accounts.

- **CHANGE OF VENUE TO HOLD FUTURE MEETINGS.** As World Relief Immigration Program is going to be closed by March 15, 2016 and they graciously provided their conference room to hold meetings, all members were asked for ideas and suggestions to locate a new venue. Americans for Immigrant Justice and Church World Services offered to find out if they can host the meetings. They will be informing the legal subcommittee in the next couple of days.
- **MIAMI ASYLUM OFFICE.** The Miami Asylum Office announced the office is recruiting individuals interested in federal employment and there are several job opportunities posted at [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov); individuals are encouraged to review the job site periodically for new openings. Training Officer Maria Dominguez explained that as part of a regular rotation schedule, Immigration Analyst Veraliz Cotto will be replacing Patricia Ferreira, who will rotate to a new task in May. A participant asked when affirmative asylum interviews in priority 3 will begin. It was explained this information is published in our public website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) and a sample of the document was shared with participants.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 7, 2016 from 10:00 A.M. until 12:00 P.M. Location TBA.

#### EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – FEBRUARY 2016

- REVEST successfully began classes for the current cycle on January 6th, 2015 and we currently have over 2900 student registered for VESOL classes in our four Centers.
- REVEST will begin conducting new student orientation/testing sessions for the upcoming cycle (summer term) May-August 2016. There are 45 orientation sessions scheduled and about 1650 students will be tested using the Pre CASAS placement test. There are 137 VESOL classes programmed for the Summer Term 2015-3, Cycle 71. Classes are scheduled for A.M., Midday, P.M. and Weekend time slots.
- The REVEST Program has continued to increase the number of vocational registrations for the current contract year (September 2015 to August 2016), and up to this date, we have enrolled over 340 Vocational students in over 800 courses.  
Likewise, we are getting ready to begin on March 7th the new registrations for the Summer Term 2015-3. To this end, we have been conducting group and individual

training sessions, as needed, in order to keep our staff updated about the new Program goals and performance measures.

- Faculty meetings were conducted with all REVEST instructors Jan. 13, 14, 15, and 2016. Topics included establishing I.D. requirements for instate tuition residency and professionalism in the workplace. All REVEST instructors are currently using the new Black Board Learning Management System in all VESOL classes.
- REVEST participated in the New Future for New Americans Information session held at InterAmerican Campus Miami Dade College on 02/11/16. Prospective MDC students had the opportunity to gain more information about programs available to them and specifically services offered by the REVEST Program. We are very pleased to have participated in this important outreach event.
- REVEST is very concerned with demand for services and lack of funding increases. It is clear that an increasing amount of clients are demonstrating need for services and the need is growing.
- The total SAVES Program enrollment as of January 27, 2016, is 3,596. Of these, 1,781 are new students to the program and 249 are 16 to 18 youngsters in the six SAVES GED in Spanish Program centers. The current trimester ends on April 21, 2016. The next academic trimester will begin on April 25, 2016.
- A SAVES external audit conducted for fiscal year ending in 2015 had zero findings. These results were shared with the M-DCPS Audit Committee and the M-DCPS Board. We are very proud of these results.
- SAVES centers offering the GED in Spanish program continue to refer students to register to take the GED test. The success rate for students passing the subtests taken is very high. The cut off passing score was lowered by the State of Florida from 150 points to 145 points. GED students are hopeful that those of them who had a score between 145 and 150 will be grandfather in to allow them to pass the subtest without having to retake the test. These students are very motivated to continue their education either by attending college or vocational classes.
- SAVES and the REVEST program are collaborating to assist students who completed their GED and are interested in pursuing a college education. Miami-Dade College will provide counseling services to students refer by the SAVES program to help them with registration, applying for financial aid and mapping their career goals.
- Vocational opportunities are being expanded for SAVES students to take vocational courses not offered at their home schools at George T. Baker and Miami Lakes Technical Colleges.

- A SAVES District meeting was held on January 27, 2016. Important information was discussed with the school staff. Next SAVES District meeting is scheduled for March 30, 2016.
- A Degree Translation/Validation session was held on January 26, 2016. Thirty eight (38) students attended the session to receive this service. The next Degree Translation/Validation session will be held on April 12, 2016
- New SAVES success stories, which highlight the achievements of some of our students, have been uploaded to the SAVES website (<http://saves.dadeschools.net>)
- If you have any questions about our program, you can call us or visit the SAVES website at <http://saves.dadeschools.net>

**REFUGEE HEALTH CLINIC REPORT – FEBRUARY 2016**

None

**EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REPORT – FEBRUARY 2016**

None

**USCIS UPDATE – DECEMBER 2015****USCIS Miami****February 2016 Update**

- **USCIS Headquarters Office of Citizenship Training Sessions in Miami** - On Feb 16th and Feb 18th the USCIS Headquarters Office of Citizenship will be in South Florida providing FREE full-day training sessions to ESL/Citizenship professionals and librarians via a 2016 Winter Institute. You can choose to participate in the Institute taking place on Feb 16th at Florida International University (FIU) or Feb 18th at the African-American Research Library & Cultural Center in Ft. Lauderdale. Each full-day event will provide librarians and adult ESL, EL/Civics, and citizenship teachers and administrators with –
  - Information on the naturalization process and test;
  - Free materials for the library and adult education classroom;
  - Practical ideas to enhance library and adult education services to immigrants;
  - Opportunities to meet and interact with USCIS District Office staff;
  - Information on coordination and collaboration initiatives and activities between libraries and adult education programs;
  - Tips to help design “citizenship corners” and immigrant-friendly programs;

- A detailed overview of the new USCIS Citizenship Content Standards to Build a Comprehensive Curriculum;
- Facilitated discussions between librarians and adult educators to better acquaint each other with their roles, responsibilities, and possibilities;
- Detailed descriptions of resources, where to find them, how to use them, and the appropriate audiences.

For additional details concerning these sessions and to register for either event, please visit - <http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/organizations/libraries/training>

- **Four Miami-Dade Residents Indicted for Participation in Fraud Schemes** - Four Miami-Dade residents have been indicted for their participation in various schemes to defraud the United States government. Fernando Mendez Villamil, 48, of South Miami, Maritza Exposito, 57, of Miami, Arnaldo Oscar Jimenez, 57, of Hialeah, and Yomara Vila, 45, of Miami were charged in a twenty-one count indictment for their participation in a scheme to defraud Medicare, Medicaid, the United States Social Security Administration (“SSA”), and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”). The defendants are charged with conspiracy to commit health care fraud and wire fraud, substantive counts of health care fraud, conspiracy to defraud the United States and make false statements with respect to immigration matters, conspiracy to defraud the government with respect to claim, theft of government funds, false statements to SSA, and making false statements with respect to immigration matters.

To read more, please visit - <http://www.justice.gov/usao-sdfl/pr/four-miami-dade-residents-indicted-participation-fraud-schemes>

- **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)
  - February 8 from 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm – USCIS Library Information Desk at Doral Branch Library, 10785 NW 58th Street Miami, FL.
  - February 9 from 8 – 10 am – USCIS Information Desk at Miami Gardens Community Center, 16405 NW 25 Ave. Miami, FL.
  - February 9 from 4 – 7:30 pm - USCIS Library information Desk at West Dade Regional Library, 9445 Coral Way, FL.
  - February 16 from 6 – 8 pm – Naturalization Information Session at Southwest Regional Library, 16835 Sheridan St. Pembroke Pines, FL.
  - February 18 from 4 – 7:30 pm – USCIS Library Information Desk at Kendale Lakes Branch Library, 15205 SW 88 St. Miami, FL.



- February 22 from 5:30 – 7:30 pm – USCIS Library Information Desk at Tamarac Branch Library, 8701 W. Commercial Blvd. Tamarac, Fl.
- February 23 from 5:30 – 7:30 pm – USCIS Library Information Desk at West Regional Library, 8601 W. Broward Blvd. Plantation, Fl.
- February 24 from 5:30 – 7:30 pm – USCIS Library Information Desk at Miramar Branch Library, 2050 Civic Center Pl. Miramar, Fl.
- February 29 from 5:30 – 7:30 pm – USCIS Library Information Desk at North Regional/Broward College Library, 1100 Coconut Creek Blvd. Coconut Creek, Fl.
- March 1<sup>st</sup> from 5:30 – 7:30 pm – USCIS Library Information Desk at International Mall Branch Library, 10315 NW 12 St. Doral, Fl.
- **Upcoming Naturalization Ceremonies** - Below are scheduled dates for on-site administrative N-400 oath ceremonies and the corresponding field offices where the ceremonies will take place. 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** – Feb 12, 19 and 26
  - **Hialeah Field Office** – Feb 19 and 26
  - **Oakland Park Field Office** – Feb 19 and 26
  - **Kendall Field Office** – Feb 5 and 26