



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Secretary

**MIAMI-DADE REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES
March 6, 2015**

ATTENDEES:

Aldana, Diana; Bajic, Bojan; Barroso, Lupe; Baron, laura; Bervis-Cruz, Lilliam; Birman, Dina Dr.; Bustelo, Ileana; Canosa, Reina; Carrion, Jackie; Cassidy, Berta; Cartelle, Milly; Castañeda, Lourdes; Castro, Diego; Chavez, Eduardo; Chehab, Carine; Colon, Eileen; Cop, Suzy; Costas, Jorge; Coto, Yolanda; ; Delgado, Judith; Denis, Nancy; Diaz, Arlene; Diaz, Gustavo; Diaz, Maria; Dilme-Bejel, Adria; Dominguez, Maria; Echevarria, Mirtha; Esparra, Aileen; Farias Monica; Fajardo, Onelia; Ferrer, Martha; Fessehaye, Taddese; Figuerora, Francisco; Fish, Sandra; Garcia, Edith; Garcia, Miriam J.; Gil, Felicia; Gimenez, Carmen; Goeser, Emile; Guillaume, Marie; Guscovict, Kristen; Haarlammert, Miryam; Hernandez, Raul; Iglesias, Julio; Jaramillo, Clara; Jimenez, Raisa; Jorge, Irene; Keen, Mark; Kinet, Melodie; Leconte, Lourdes; Ledesma, Delfina; Lopez, Martha; Lopez, Silvia; Luna, Guillermo; Martin, Dorothy; McGroarty, Randolph; Medrano, Carmen; Mezadiou, Myriame; Michel, Charlande; Miranda, Maria; Mora, Sergio; Morales, Elmer; Moras, Eduardo; Munoz, Arnold; Paz, Carlos; Philogene, Marie; Pizarro, Marta; Reis, Christine; Rivera, Oscar; Rodriguez, Veronica; Ruiz, Hiram; Sanabria, Carlos; Sanchez, Jose; Sanchez Luisa; ; Silva, German; Someillan, Ana; Sosa, Leydi; Soto, Evelyn; Torres, Carmen; Ruth, Valenzuela; Vallejo, Ileana; Vargas, Alvaro; Vazquez, Doty; Yarce, Virginia; Ramirez, Yolanda; Sanchez, Luisa; Bustamante, Anabella; Guerrero, Yvan; Rosario, Miriam; Leon, Juana; Chaviano González, Francisco; Aguililla, Ana; De Miranda, Roberto; De La Riva, Soledad; Moliné, Nelson; Guerra, Kirenia; Álvarez, Pedro pablo; Díaz, Carmelo; Sigler, Guido; Ferradaz, Gilda; Perdomo, Erica; Prudent, Pamela; Oliphant, Ashley; Perez, Cristobal; Diaz, Maria; Charles, Danny; Hiciano, Angela; Padilla, Silvio; Rincon, Phillipe; Durarona, Adrian; Hernandez, Noel; Durarona, Kenya; Durarona, Norka; Judith Rios; Mouski, Mark; Ferro, Alernys; Lopez, Juan

INTRODUCTION:

Lourdes Leconte, DCF Refugee Services Community Liaison for the Southern Region welcomed the task force members.

PRESENTATION:

Bertha Cassidy, Community Relations Officer from USCIS and Yolanda Coto, the Senior Attorney for DCF Refugee Services did a joint presentation on the Haitian Family Reunification Program. Berta said that starting in early 2015, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will begin implementation of a Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program to expedite

401 NW 2nd Avenue, Suite N-812 Miami, Florida 33128

family reunification for certain eligible Haitian family members of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents of the U.S. and to promote safe, legal and orderly migration from Haiti to the United States. Sponsoring Families who have applied for immigrant visas for their beneficiaries will soon begin to receive invite letters. These letters will come directly to the relatives living in the US not in Haiti and will offer certain eligible Haitian beneficiaries of already approved family-based immigrant visa petitions, who are currently in Haiti, an opportunity to come to the United States up to approximately two years before their immigrant visa priority dates become current. There is a fee associated with each activities and the sponsor will be the one to make a determination to either accept the invite or have the beneficiaries wait in Haiti until their immigrant visas are ready.

Yolanda covered the portion related to the Receipt of Public Benefits, once in the US she said people may hear that Haitians coming in through the HFRP program should not receive any public benefits, because it will prevent them from getting their green cards. These assumptions are based on fear and fear is a darkroom where negatives develop. The public charge fear should be dispelled with knowledge. She said that USCIS looks at the totality of circumstances and considers a person's health, age, family status, assets, resources, education, and skills. The receipt of any one (or more) public benefit alone is not determinative of the public charge. Non-Cash Assistance benefits such as job placement assistance, school lunches, vocational training, SNAP, English classes, transportation vouchers, Immunizations, Medicaid do not demonstrate a primary dependence on the government and the receipt of these public benefits will not adversely impact the public charge determination. She did mention that the lack of an Affidavit of Support however is detrimental to the adjustment application filed in a family based category (e.g. HFRP beneficiaries).

REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE:

Hiram Ruiz, the RS Director spoke enthusiastically about the Refugee Conference that was held in Jacksonville and hoped that all task force members who attended had enjoyed it and had an opportunity to learn new things and connect with folks from other state or other parts of the country that are resettling or providing services to refugees. Throughout, the three-day conference, experts from around the country weighed in on best practices such as alternative education programs that don't require standardized tests, mentoring and GED courses. He gave a heartfelt thank you to all in attendance for their hard work on behalf of refugees. He said he is leaving hoping he had made a difference and had always tried to involve refugees in the decision making process and make it about them. He urged the group to always remember this one important fact that should drive all their decision: It is not about anyone else, it is only about the refugee, always put the refugee first.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- World refugee Day 2015 Work Group Meeting date is to be determined.

- The Center for Survivors of Torture will have a workshop on Program Building and how to access nontraditional funding by looking at different funding sources in a relevant interactive model on April 27th and 28th at University of Miami.

REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE (Sent via E-Mail in January and February)

- Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program - CBO/Stakeholder Meeting in Miami - March 3rd
- Cuba and the World in 2015: Between the Past and the Future
- Article re youth at Refugee Services Consultation
- Personnel changes at ORR
- Welcoming Refugees Communications Contest - You could win!
- DOJ's Webinar on Understanding EADs & the I-9 – Highlights
- Introducing CONNECTIONS: An ORR Newsletter | Help Shape Integration Strategy | Promoting Wellbeing through Gardening
- Registration Open for National Symposium
- Register for our Refugee Leadership and Engagement Webinar
- Refugee Helpful Responses Survey (\$10 Starbucks Gift Card for Completion)
- 2015 Refugee Services Consultation

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM

After the meeting, over 100 guests that included refugee service providers, community organizations, members of the group of 75 and the Ladies in White, family and friends. The Luncheon was a very uplifting and emotional farewell for Hiram Ruiz who is retiring at the end of March. The luncheon was sponsored by Access Community Services centers, Miami Dade College, Net Health Consultants, LLC, Church World Service, Jackson Health System and Youth Coop.

NEXT MEETING: April 10, 2015 @ 10:00 a.m.
Rhode Building
401 NW 2nd Avenue, North Tower, Room N -1007, Miami, FL 33128

SOUTH FLORIDA REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES MINUTES – MARCH, 2015

SOUTH FLORIDA VOLAG CONSORTIUM

March 4, 2015

ATTENDEES:

(CCS) Evelyn Soto
(CWS) Jose Sanchez
(EMM) Charlande Michel
(EMM) Marta Lopez
(LSF) Evie Varona
(IRC) Oasis Pena
(Youth Co-Op) Veronica Rodriguez
(Youth Co-op) Bojan Bajic
(WR) Guillermo Luna
(WR) Olga Borrego

GUESTS:

Marc Mousky – EMM National Office

The VOLAG meeting was held at EMM on March 4, 2015.

Jose Sanchez, chair of the consortium, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Minutes from previous meetings were approved.

Marc Mousky from EMM National Office was introduced as guest and participants presented the programs and services that each resettlement agency operates.

Jose Sanchez informed everyone, that MedPlan is drafting a new reduced fee rate plan exclusively for refugees. The plan will offer medical services to those exiting Medicaid that do not meet the eligibility criteria to qualify for Obamacare. It was also informed that MedPlan Access sites are fully operating throughout Miami Dade County.

❑ **Community Access Partners issues, and concerns**

Participants expressed concerned about some entities (notarios) providing immigration services in locations close to DCF Access sites. It was reported that some of these entities are providing services to refugees which are been referred to them by unknown sources. Chair will contact Community Medical Group regarding this matter.

❑ **Social Security**

Participants expressed their concern about delays in Social Security applications. Resettlement agencies informed that refugees are experience delays (up to 90 days) in receiving the social security cards. According to Social Security Officers, in order for them to issue a SS number, they must first have the

clearance from USCIS and these clearances are taking longer period of times for refugees, in particular for those that apply within the first 10 days after arrival.

**Matching Grant enrollments FY2015, MG Changes
Match Grant Enrollments**

No changes or issues were reported on the MG enrollments.

Case Type	MG ENROLLMENTS BY MONTH												YTD
	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPTEMBER	Total
1. Refugees	12	39	17	35	11								114
2. Asylees			1	1	0								2
3. VOT	0	0	0	0	0								0
4. Parolees/Cuban Entrants	231	223	453	302	284								1493
Total	243	262	471	338	295								1609

□ R&P arrivals, issues and concerns – Oct. 2014 – Feb. 2015

Agency	Clients
CWS	48
EMM	21
IRC	59
LIRS	36
USCCB	23
USCRI/YC	33
WR	29
TOTAL	146

VOLAG reported that R&P arrivals are very slow. Participants expressed concern regarding refugee arrivals from Cuba and everyone is looking into the possibility of resettling new populations into South Florida.

Resettlement agencies are receiving non-US ties refugees from Colombia and everyone is contemplating the possibility of building and expanding the capacity to receive non US ties refugees.

❑ **Parolee Orientation (POP)**

Jan-Feb – 408 people for a total of YTD - 759

❑ **Haitian Family Reunification Program.**

Participants went over the new Haitian Family Reunification Program, effective February 2015. The fee per applicant will be \$360.00 but waivers will be available for those that qualified – EAD and Parole will be issued for three years.

❑ **Hiram Ruiz, VOLAG recognition/ appreciation**

Jose Sanchez informed everyone that Hiram Ruiz will be receiving the Retirement Acknowledgement Award at the Lunch taking place this Friday at the Refugee Tasks force Meeting.

❑ **Central America Minor Program**

Resettlement Agencies are aware of the Central America Minor Program. IRC has few AORs submitted. CWS is interviewing the first family this coming week.

❑ **Other Items / Announcements**

Everyone agreed that we should invite Health Department to the next VOLAG Meeting. Jose Sanchez will extend a formal invitation to Edith Garcia.

Next Meeting

Next VOLAG Meeting is scheduled on Thursday – April 9th, 2015 at 2:00 pm
CWS, 1924 NW 84 AVE Doral, FL 33126 at 2:00 PM.

❑ **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned

IMMIGRATION & LEGAL ISSUES SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES – MARCH 2015

Minutes for meeting on March 5, 2015

By Miriam J. Garcia

Attendance: Haydee Canas, Rene Cardona, Berta Cassidy, Luz Castilla, Yolanda Coto, Miriam J. Garcia, Yanelys Garcia, Brad Ginter, Marie Guillaume, Marie Jean, Ali Paula, Amelia Ramirez, Alexandra O. Yaya.

The Immigration and Legal Issues Subcommittee meeting was held on March 5, 2015 at the offices of World Relief where Berta Cassidy provided the USCIS update and Rene Cardona provided the Miami Asylum Office update, and they answered questions as follows:

- **STAKEHOLDER MEETING ON HAITIAN FAMILY REUNIFICATION PAROLE (HFRP) PROGRAM.** The meeting took place on Tuesday, March 3, 2015 at the USCIS Miami Field Office. They had as special speakers Maura Nicholson, Deputy Chief, International Operations Division, Refugee Asylum and International Operations (RAIO) Directorate, Erin Fatica, District Director, Latin America, Canada and Caribbean (LACC) District and Allison Kent from the Office of the Chief Counsel. Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) program was designed for Haitian nationals with an approved I-130 petition on or before December 18, 2014 and it allows them to come to the United States up to two years before their immigrant visa priority dates become current. They are identifying cases that will become current within 18 to 30 months. 7,350 cases have been identified as potentially eligible. NVC invitation letters will go out in batches, but are expected to be issued at least once a year. We anticipate NVC invitation letters will be mailed out starting the week of March 9, 2015. Petitioners and beneficiaries in Haiti cannot initiate the process but must wait for the invitation letter. Once the invitation letter is received they can choose to participate in the program or wait for regular immigrant visa processing in Haiti. Form I-131 with a fee or fee waiver must be submitted. If they have an approved petition, it is important that petitioners update their addresses by emailing the National Visa Center at asknvc@state.gov or by calling (603) 334-0700. Immediate relatives don't qualify for the program only family sponsored-preference categories. Derivatives must be under 21 when they file the I-131 to qualify for the program. They will allow add ons if they were not included in the I-130 as long as they are considered add-ons in the immigrant visa context. Expected processing time is going to be 6 months from the time I-131 is submitted until parole is issued. The parole will be issued for three years. No appeals or motion to re-open will be accepted unless there is a service error.
- **CUBAN FAMILY REUNIFICATION PROGRAM.** Form I-131 with fee or fee waiver will have to be submitted after the invite is received.
- **TPS FOR SYRIA.** Re-registration runs thru March 6, 2015 and first time registration until July 6, 2015.
- **TPS FOR EL SALVADOR.** Re-registration runs thru March 9, 2015.
- **MIAMI ASYLUM OFFICE**—Rene Cardona indicated that the current priority of the Miami Asylum Office continues to be the adjudication of Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC). Rene also indicated that in an effort to continue addressing the increased workload, the Miami Asylum Office recently hired and additional 4 Asylum Officers. A question was asked regarding case statistics of the Asylum Office. This information can be found in the USCIS website by searching for “Asylum Workload” in the search engine.

http://search.uscis.gov/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&affiliate=uscis_gov&query=asylum+workload&commit.x=0&commit.y=0

Headquarters releases this information quarterly. The most recent information can be found in the following workload;

<http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Outreach/PED-AffirmativeAsylum-Oct-Nov-Dec2014.pdf>

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 9, 2015 from 10:00 A.M. until 12:00 P.M. at the Offices of World Relief located at 2150 SW 8th Street, 2nd Floor, Miami, Florida 33135.

EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – MARCH 2015

- REVEST successfully began classes for the current cycle on January 7th, 2015 and we currently have over 2490 students registered for VESOL classes in our four Centers.
- For the current term Spring/ 2014-1, REVEST has already registered over 230 students in more than 400 vocational courses. Since vocational enrollment is ongoing, we continue processing new requests. In addition, REVEST is getting ready for the following College term (Summer/ 2014-3) which will begin on March 9th, 2015. We continue to conduct training sessions with advisors in order to update them with the new vocational offerings, as well as, new current steps and procedures. New initiatives (communicative activities) have been put into practice to provide students with more information about their post Level 3 choices.
- REVEST will begin conducting new student orientation/testing sessions for the upcoming cycle Summer term starting May 6th and ending Aug. 22nd 2015. So far, 51 orientation sessions are scheduled and about 1500 students will be tested using the Pre CASAS placement test.
- Faculty meetings were conducted with all REVEST instructors Jan. 15, 23, and Feb 26,27, 2015. Topics included establishing I.D. requirements for instate tuition residency, professionalism in the workplace, and techniques in conducting vocational training such as preparing a resume, executing a job search and student preparation for job interviews.
- REVEST instructors attended the USCIS Training for Civics and Citizenship at Lindsey Hopkins Adult Education Center on Jan. 16, 2015. The training was very informative and many new instructional resources were presented that will enhance current Citizenship Preparation courses offered at REVEST. We would like to thank all involved.

- REVEST management, staff and students attended the 2015 Refugee Services Consultation (*Challenging Change*) in Jacksonville, Fl. February 11-13, 2015. We would like to thank all involved in creating the opportunity for greater interaction between agencies and sharing valuable knowledge and expertise. The experience was enriching and informative.
- REVEST would like to recognize Hiram Ruiz, Director of Refugee Services, for his excellent leadership and heartfelt support in the efforts to support Refugees. We will truly miss him and wish him the best in his future endeavors.
- The total SAVES Program enrollment as of March 3, 2015, is **3,282**. Of these, **1,634** are new students. The current trimester 2014-2 ends on April 23, 2015. The next academic trimester 2014-3 will begin on April 27, 2015.
- Registration for the present trimester has closed. Registration for the summer term will begin in April. The program expects to register and provide services to about 4,000 students next trimester.
- SAVES is offering the General Educational Development (GED) in Spanish program at five adult education centers to provide an opportunity for newly arrived Spanish speaking youngsters 16 to 18 years old to learn English and receive a high school equivalency diploma. The students are self-contained in a fast track GED, ESOL program in technology enriched classrooms. They are housed in a traditional high school setting where they benefit from experiencing socialization with other regular students their age and other regular school activities. SAVES provides funding for tuition, instructional materials, books and other services. Two students, Angel Muniz and Carlos Padilla were invited by DCF to attend the 2015 Refugee Services Consultation Challenging Change in Jacksonville, Florida, February 11-13, 2015. They both presented their stories at workshops and plenary sessions. Carlos also performed at the conference. Their presentations were very well received, and the SAVES program was highlighted.
- SAVES continues offering evaluation and translation services to its students through Joseph & Silny. The last two sessions were held on January 26 and March 2, 2015. Twenty four (24) students were served in total. The next session is projected to take place by mid-May. Students greatly benefit from these services since they facilitate the process of finding employment.
- As a result of new initiatives, student accountability and commitment to the program, career pathways orientations, data-driven instruction, case management, and continuous follow up, the program continues to improve the completion rate of its ESOL and AGE

students. The goal for this academic year is to reach and surpass the performance measures established in the contract.

- 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 – MARCH 2015

During the FFY 2014 we provided service to:

- 22,552 refugee clients
- 97 % of the newly arriving refugees received health assessment within 90 days of arrival
- During the last two months of FFY 2014 the number of new refugees crossing borders increased to 40% and 44% respectively

Due to an increase of new refugees we have been opening two night clinic per week since January 2015. The next available appointment at the time of the meeting was end of April.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REPORT – MARCH 2015

Here is the breakdown of Employment providers Intakes Oct- January have experienced a 42% increase , there is a very large influx this first quarter.

Intakes RCA Only 2014 -2015	Intakes RCA Only 2013 -2014	Increase (+)
October - 1575	October – 1127	448
November - 1368	November – 1040	328
December - 1905	December - 1387	518
January - 1891	January – 1180	711
Total = 6739	Total = 4734	

2005 (42% Increase from last year)

Placements have also been impacted since we've had to shift staff from Placements to attend new clients and complete intake and required contract documentation by the 14 day from Intake (Employability Plan and Self Sufficiency).

- October - 641
- November - 605
- December - 578
- January – 621

Total = 2445 - Averaging about 92% of contract placements monthly.

USCIS UPDATE – FEBRUARY 2015

The following update was provided by Berta Cassidy.

USCIS Miami

February 2015 Update

- A federal court has issued a preliminary injunction preventing USCIS from accepting requests for the expansion of DACA on February 18, as originally planned.
- To read the statement by Secretary Jeh C. Johnson concerning the District Court's ruling concerning DAPA and DACA - <http://www.dhs.gov/news/2015/02/17/statement-secretary-jeh-c-johnson-concerning-district-courts-ruling-concerning-dapa>
- Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program Stakeholder Meeting – On March 3rd, the Miami District Office will host a stakeholder meeting on how the HFRP program is being implemented. For further information about the meeting, please contact Berta.M.Cassidy@uscis.dhs.gov.
- TPS Extended for El Salvador – Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson has extended Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for eligible nationals of El Salvador for an additional 18 months, effective March 10, 2015, through Sept. 9, 2016. Current TPS El Salvador beneficiaries seeking to extend their TPS must re-register during the 60-day re-registration period that runs through March 9, 2015. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) encourages beneficiaries to re-register as soon as possible. For further information, please visit – <http://www.uscis.gov/news/temporary-protected-status-extended-el-salvador>
- 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.
- 3/3/2015 from 7:00 – 9:00 pm – Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program Town Hall at North Miami Adult Education Center Auditorium, 13110 NE 8th Ave. N. Miami, Fl. Creole translation will be available.
- 3/10/2015 from 4:00 – 7:30 pm – USCIS Information Desk at West Dade Regional Library located at 9445 Coral Way Miami, Fl.
- 3/12/2015 from 6:30 – 8:00 pm – Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program Session in Creole at William H. Turner Technical Arts High School Media Center, 10151 NW 19th Ave. Miami, Fl.

- 3/12/2015 from 7:30 – 9:00 pm - Naturalization Information Session in Spanish at Hialeah Adult Education Center Auditorium, 251 East 47 St. Hialeah, FL.
- 3/19/2015 from 4:00 – 7:30 pm - USCIS Information Desk at Kendale Lakes Branch Library located at 15205 SW 88 St. Miami, FL.
- 3/24/2015 from 6:00 – 7:30 pm – USCIS Information Desk at Weston Branch Library located at 4205 Bonaventure Blvd. Weston, FL.
- 3/25/2015 from 1:00 to 5:00 pm – USCIS Information Desk at Homestead Branch Library located at 700 N. Homestead Blvd. Homestead, FL.
- 3/30/2015 from 5:00 – 6:30 pm – USCIS Information Desk at Northwest Regional Library located at 3151 University Dr. Coral Springs, 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 – February 27
March 13, 20 and 27

Hialeah Field Office – February 27
March 13 and 27

Oakland Park Field Office – February 27
March 13, 20 and 27

Kendall Field Office – March 6, 13, 20 and 27