



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott  
Governor

Mike Carrol  
Secretary

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** January 28, 2016  
**TO:** Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Pedro Padua, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** December 9, 2015 TF Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** February 10, 2016  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Florida Department of Transportation Building  
133 S. Semoran Blvd., Orlando, FL 32807  
**Contact:** Pedro Padua  
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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, S1111D, 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. Forty-eight people were in attendance. Patti Grogan, Director of Refugee Services Program and Pedro Padua, Central Region Community Liaison represented the Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Everyone introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

**REFUGEE SERVICES**

Patti clarified the mission of the refugee task force is to coordinate delivery of services and share best practices. In addition, she stated that task forces are not policy making bodies. She explained the Refugee Services Program is 100% federally funded and indicated that 90% of refugees in Florida are Cuban or Haitian Entrants.

**GENERAL UPDATES**

**USCIS** – Donald Jarrell, *D10 Community Relations Officer for West Palm Beach and Orlando areas* mentioned the agency launched a Virtual Assistant Program named Emma to facilitate customer's access to information. He explained Emma can answer many questions in English but her knowledge base is still growing.

**DCF ESS/ACCESS** – Janet Foggs, ACCESS Community Partner Liaison talked a little about the implementation of the work registration requirements for "Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents" (ABAWD) on food stamps or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. She explained starting January 1, 2016 all adults 18 to 49 who are on the program or apply for assistance will be required to register for work or perform work related activities to receive assistance.

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

Monica Araujo, Case Manager Supervisor, reported new arrivals remains constant, especially Cuban Parolees, coming through Texas. The program has made some changes to see clients as soon as possible; DCF ACCESS applications first, then schedule appointment for intake to see a Case Manager. Case Managers now see clients all day (mornings and afternoons) in order to register clients within the 30 days period to comply with DCF application timeframes. In reply to a question from Patti Grogan regarding possible health concerns pertaining to Cubans that come through many different countries, Monica indicated clients are referred to the appropriate health department for health screening as soon as registration is completed. She added that a new case manager has been hired to increase capacity.

**Employment** – Daisy Clemente, Program Coordinator indicated the program has been successful in placing refugees in a variety of employment such as Laundry Attendant, Production, Housekeeping, Drivers, Maintenance, Cooks, Security Officers, Merchandiser, Cashiers, Care Givers, Data Analysis, Laboratory Specialist, Pharmacy Intern, Accounts Receivable, Day Care Assistants and Substitute Teachers. Salaries range from \$8.00 to \$25.00 an hour. She added OJT has helped to open some doors and Career Laddering has improved 90 day retention rate.

**Adult Education** – Katherine Diaz, ESOL Program Coordinator, reported that clients continue to participate in Introductory/Pre-Literacy Level classes. They have 38 students currently enrolled. Twenty-five out of 51 students in previous semester were enrolled at PALMAS to continue their education.

**Legal Services** – Noemi Guzman, Program Coordinator announced they have an opening for Case Manager in the program. She added they have been able to reduced backlog to 60 days

**Youth** – Debbie reported the program has been working to phase out middle school students since the focus has been shifted to older youth or High School students.

**PALMAS** – Rose Exantus-Boisrond, Program Coordinator, reported they have been working closely with CRS to facilitate transition and enrollment of students from introductory class to PALMAS. She added that ESOL classes are full and any student seeking enrollment will be placed on wait list for classes beginning mid-January.

She mentioned PALMAS has been providing informational/educational workshops to students regarding health and domestic violence by working closely with Harbor House and Dr. Marie Joseph Francois. She has also instituted a program to motivate students by having previous graduates come back and talk to current students about their experience and success.

**Community Coordinated Care for Children**, Michael Montgomery, Family Support Specialist, was present but did not have a chance to present his report. On follow up he indicated they have 52 children enrolled in services and 23 on wait list. They are in process of rolling over some clients; but it has been complicated because clients need to go on **family portal** to reapply and some families are not doing it. CRS is working to find a solution.

### **County Health Departments**

**Orange** – Martha Ortiz, Case Manager, reported that case management has been focusing on cases that require ongoing treatment after their Medicaid expires.

**Seminole**- Tanya Slade, Epidemiology/TB/Refugee Health Program Manager, excused herself from attending meeting due to schedule conflict.

**Osceola** – Lizzette Plaud, Health Services Representative, reported they screened 25 clients in November and 15 in December (mostly Cubans).

### **REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE**

#### **World Refugee Day**

Pedro asked task force members to nominate one person to be a part of the planning group for the 2016 WRD celebration. He suggested there should be representation from resettlement, CRS, and health departments.

### **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**LSF** – Lourdes Mesias announced today was Esubalew Dadi's last day as Manager of the Orlando Office and introduced Steven Cecchetti, as new Program Manager.

**CAIR** – Rasha Murabak, Orlando Regional Coordinator, reported they are providing 6 months housing assistance to 3 families; two of them Iraqis.

**4c-Haitian Outreach** – Wesline Valentin, Program Coordinator, reminded everyone their office is available to provide assistance and support to families and individuals.

**AUC-** Reverend Gabriel Ipasu asked resettlement programs for improved communication to better assist recent arrivals. He indicated AUC can help ease people’s fears and help them tap community resources effectively and prevent feelings of isolation. Gabriel took the opportunity to extend an invitation to all TF members to attend the Family Christmas Festival scheduled for Saturday, December 19 from 12:00 to 6:00 PM at 8401 Valencia College Lane, Orlando, FL 32825.

**NEXT MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday, February 10, 2016

**Location:** Florida Department of Transportation Building  
133 S. Semoran Blvd., Orlando, FL 32807

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