



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carrol
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 10, 2015
TO: Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: Pedro Padua, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: October 14, 2015 TF Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: December 9, 2015
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

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 people were in attendance. 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.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Homeless Services Network: Ms. Martha Are, Executive Director of Central Florida Homeless Services Network gave an overview of the agency and its mission. She explained the agency has been around for 20 years and it acts as a conduit of federal funds (primarily from HUD) to address the housing needs of the homeless population in the tri-county area (Orange, Osceola and Seminole).

Continuum of Care (CoC) Program

The Homeless Services Network (HSN) manages The Continuum of Care (CoC) Program, which is designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; coordinate funding efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness; promote access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Are mentioned there are children, veterans and families that are homeless. She went on to explain **HUD's Definition of Homeless**: A person is considered homeless only when he/she resides in one of the places described below:

- In places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings (on the street).
- In an emergency shelter.
- In transitional or supportive housing for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelters.
- In any of the above places but is spending a short time (up to 30 consecutive days) in a hospital or other institution.
- Is being evicted within a week from a private dwelling unit and no subsequent residence has been identified and lacks resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.
- Is being discharged within a week from an institution, such as a mental health or substance abuse treatment facility or a jail/prison, in which the person has been a resident for more than 30 consecutive days and no subsequent residence has been identified and the person lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.

For example, a person being discharged from prison after more than 30 days is eligible ONLY IF no subsequent residence has been identified and the person does not have money, family or friends to provide housing.

- Is fleeing a domestic violence housing situation and no subsequent residence has been identified and lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.

http://www.thn.org/continuum_care_docs/HUD_Definition_of_Homelessness.doc

The following **DO NOT** meet the HUD definition of Homeless:

- Persons living in housing, even though they are paying an excessive amount for their housing, the housing is substandard and in need of repair, or the housing is crowded.
- Persons living with relatives or friends.
- Persons staying in a motel, including pay-by-the-week motels
- Persons living in a Board and Care, Adult Congregate Living Facility, or similar place.
- Persons being discharged from an institution that is required to provide or arrange housing upon release.
- Wards of the State, although youth in foster care may receive needed supportive services which supplements, but does not substitute for, the state's assistance

She explained there has been a shift in HUD's interest moving away from shelters and transitional housing to programs that get people out of homelessness to permanent housing.

Coordinated Entry Resources

Ms. Are indicated there are 50,000 people on their data base that are homeless and they must set priority based on permanent housing outcome for families or individuals that meet HUD's definition of homeless and have a better chance to remain in permanent housing with initial support. They used a coordinated entry system used by all providers to enter information of clients that need services; known as "Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)". She stated if any of the agencies present have clients that could potentially be eligible, they must be trained and given authorization to access and enter client information on HMIS.

Ms. Martha Are can be reach at 407-893-0133 x 602 or by email: Martha.Are@hsncfl.org

GENERAL UPDATES

USCIS – Donald Jarrell, *D10 Community Relations Officer (West Palm Beach and Orlando areas)* mentioned there have been reports of applicants having issues in retrieving their electronic I-94 from Customs and Border Patrol. He asked providers if they have any problems retrieving I-94 to please let him know so he can forward the information up the chain of command and document this for CBP.

Wesline Valentine from the Haitian Outreach Program asked if the deadline for Haitian TPS had been extended. Don indicated there has been no extension of the deadline for Haitians to reapply for TPS. The deadline is October 26, 2015. You can find the latest updates for TPS and other USCIS issues at: <http://www.uscis.gov/news-releases>

DCF ESS/ACCESS – Lodia Rojas, RAP Unit Supervisor, reported there was a spike in denials and case closures in September caused by delays of Work Registration confirmation. Arrival increases have caused a backlog and CRS has been scheduling appointments close to 30 days out. ACCESS only has 30 days to complete review of applications and verifications are coming past deadline.

Refugee Arrivals:

Catholic Charities – Jennifer Powers, Resettlement and Matching Grant Program Coordinator, reported they had 44 arrivals in the last quarter. There were 22 in July (8 Cubans, 6 Colombians, 4 Burmese and 4 Burundians). There were none in August; but they had 27 in September (10 Iraqis, 5 Burundians, 3 Eritreans, 3 Burmese, 2 Cubans, 2 Colombians, and 2 Congolese). They close the year with 157 arrivals.

Lutheran Services Florida – Esubalew Dadi, Orlando Resettlement and Matching Grant Program

Manager, reported 3 arrivals in July, 18 in August and 18 in September for a total of 39 for the quarter.

RS-CONTRACTED PROVIDER UPDATES

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

Debbie Cruz, CRS Program Coordinator, reported a total of 105 head of household or 161 individuals were intake in July; 96 head of household or 137 individuals were intake in August and 116 Head of Household or 160 individuals were intake in September. She indicated Housing remains a constant challenge – difficulties finding affordable rents for large families or clients in crisis due to medical reasons or losing jobs. Emergency shelter for women (Coalition for the Homeless) is requesting ID or SSN and new arrivals don't have these documents (passports are not accepted). Arrival numbers continue to show an increase – September was the highest of the year.

Debbie provided updates on the following services:

Adult Education – Clients continue to participate in Introductory/Pre-Literacy Level classes. They have a total of 47 active students currently enrolled. There are 56 students enrolled at ALCO and 58 enrolled at Seminole State College.

Legal Services – EAD for new arrivals is a priority. There have been some delays from USCIS adjudicating LPRs forcing applicants to update medical as it is valid for a year. Clients are receiving unnecessary requests for evidence: Officer seeking evidence of Fiancé Visa (K1) in the case of Cuban Adjustment. Issue with clients relocating after packet is submitted to immigration which could hamper follow up and risk documents getting lost.

Employment – CRS held several on-site hiring events for laundry and food service positions –new restaurant opening at airport. They have also developed new on-site job training for child care, maintenance technician for people with electricity background and laundry garment finisher. Some Career Laddering participants have obtained excellent wages.

Youth – Funding reductions forced a restructuring of the youth program. The program will now be focusing on High School students. Staff was reduced from 6 case workers to 3. Currently there are 54 clients enrolled and 6 on waiting list.

PALMAS – Rose Exantus-Boisrond, Program Coordinator, reported a total of 358 students are enrolled in the program this semester. She added that collaboration with UCF College of Education has proven most beneficial. A total of 4 students volunteered to assist students during the summer. PALMAS has been working in collaboration with Dr. Marie Jose Francois to present some health and nutrition education workshops for students.

Reverend Gabriel Ipasu mentioned that African students are complaining about feeling lost and disengaged in the classroom because the majority of other students speak a language other than English. Rose indicated she has discussed the issue with teachers so they can keep a balance in the classroom. She said she'll discuss it with the volunteers to make sure no one feels excluded.

Community Coordinated Care for Children, Michael Montgomery, Family Support Specialist, reported they have 50 children enrolled in services (8 were enrolled in July, 9 in August and 2 in Sept.). There is no waiting list.

County Health Departments

Orange – Martha Ortiz, Case Manager, reported they do 20 to 25 assessments per week; mostly Cubans, some Congolese and some Iraqi's. She added it has been a challenge to get wheelchairs for a few cases of children with disabilities.

Seminole- Tanya Slade, Epidemiology/TB/Refugee Health Program Manager, reported they are doing about 75 screenings per month; some Cubans, some Burmese and some Congolese.

Osceola – Lizzette Plaud, Health Services Representative, reported 29 screenings in July, 31 in August and 31 in September. She added Osceola County Health Department has added two new clinics: Mental Health and Optometry. Both accept Medicaid.

REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE

National Welcoming Week (Sept. 12-20)

Alex Davies from UCF College of Education reported there wasn't enough time to coordinate use of facilities to hold an event on campus this year. He added they are committed to plan and hold an event next year.

World Refugee Day

Pedro asked task force members to nominate one person from each organization 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

Day of Dignity – Sponsored by Arab-American Cultural Center, Islamic Relief USA and St. George Orthodox Church – on Saturday, December 12 from 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM at 24 N. Rosalind Ave., Orlando, FL 32801

Dinner Conference – Africans United Council will hold a Dinner Conference on the present immigrant crisis in Europe and around the world on Friday, October 23, 2015 from 5:30PM – 8:00PM at Holden Heights Community Center, located at 1201 20TH Street, Orlando, FL 32805. Registration is required. The Keynote Speaker, Professor John Malala, Ph.D., of the University of Central Florida, is a renowned international scholar, a passionate missionary and a Community leader. Please call 407 369 0150 for registration and information.

NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday, December 9, 2015

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

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