



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott  
Governor

Mike Carrol  
Secretary

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** September 28, 2015  
**TO:** Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Pedro Padua, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** August 12, 2015 TF Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** October 14, 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***

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**ORLANDO AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING****INTRODUCTIONS**

This meeting was held at Community Health Center-Pine Hills, located at 1800 Mercy Drive; Orlando, FL 32808. Seventeen 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**

**Community Health Centers:** John Riordan, Director of Marketing and Community Relations, welcomed everyone to the facility and explained that CHC has 13 clinics at various locations in Orange and Polk Counties. He provided printed information about CHC and the various services provided at their locations (Primary and Specialty Care for Families and Children, OB/GYN, and dental care). He said they accept all forms of insurance including Medicaid and provide service to noninsured clients on a sliding fee scale. People can look up specific information on their website at: [www.chcfl.org](http://www.chcfl.org). For appointments please call 407-905-8827

**Florida Department of Transportation ReThink Your Commute Program:**

Reginald Mells, Outreach Specialist, explained that reThink is a commuter options resource for Central Florida. It is a service of the Florida Department of Transportation, with **four** essential goals:

Saving YOU money; Reducing congestion; Improving air quality and Conserving natural resources.

To achieve these goals, the program promotes commute options like: Riding SunRail; Sharing a ride by carpooling or vanpooling; Biking & Walking; Telecommuting and Riding the bus.

reThink helps you reThink your commute with a variety of programs and services like:

**Ridematching** – It consist of On-line assistance to connect commuters to share the ride to work by carpooling or vanpooling. He said riders have a mutual meeting location and must be 20 to 30 miles one way. He added that arrangements can also be made to lease a van for carpooling: 8 passengers for \$490.00 a month; a 10 passenger for \$510.00 month or a 12 passenger for \$540.00; leasing cost includes maintenance and insurance.

**Find A Potential Carpool/Vanpool Partner**

Finding someone to share the ride to work is easy – plus, it's free. Just go to:

<http://www.rethinkyourcommute.com/share-a-ride/>

Click SIGN ME UP to get started right away and Create Your Very Own Commuter Profile. Let us know where you are coming from (home address), where you are going (work address), and your work schedule. This information will be used to match you with other commuters with similar profiles. Once your profile is created, you can see your personal list of matches along with a map of their approximate locations. Your personalized match list will also include ways to contact your future carpool or vanpool partners, which is a very important step towards reThinking your commute. You can e-mail or call the people on your match list, letting them know that you're interested in sharing the ride to work.

reThink recommends that you set up a time to meet your potential carpool/vanpool partners before committing to share the ride to work. Remember, these are people that live and work near you – they might even be your co-workers – so why not meet for lunch or before work to discuss the

details! Meeting in advance in a public place is a good opportunity to safely decide if you have truly found a good match and to set the ground rules of your carpool group.

<http://www.rethinkyourcommute.com/find-me-a-match/>

**Employer Outreach** – reThink works in Identifying worksite & employee transportation challenges to develop programs to reduce employee commute trips, which helps reduce a company’s carbon footprint, as well as saving money for both the employer and the employee. reThink also provides training of Employee Transportation Coordinators (ETCs) to implement transportation benefit programs.

<http://www.rethinkyourcommute.com/employer-services/>

### **Tax Benefits**

By sharing the ride to work, your employees will be saving a lot of money.

Under Section 132(f)(2)(A) of the Internal Revenue Code – known as Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefits – employers can offer “Commuter Tax Benefits.” This program saves the employer payroll-related taxes, as well as saving the employee money on federal income taxes.

#### **Commuter Tax Benefit Programs**

- **Employer Covers the Cost**

Employers can offer their employees up to \$130\* a month to pay for a transit pass or vanpool expenses. There is also an option to reimburse employees up to \$20 a month for qualified bicycling commute expenses. If Employers were to provide this amount to employees as additional income, the company would be taxed on it. By providing the money as a Commuter Tax Benefit, your company is able to take a tax deduction.

- **Allow Employees to Set Aside Money Pre-Tax**

This option is similar to setting money aside to pay for health expenses. The employer allows employees to use pre-tax income (up to \$130 a month\*) to pay for a transit pass or to cover vanpool expenses. Allowing your employees to designate part of their income as “pre-tax” lowers the amount your company pays on payroll taxes.

**Commuter Outreach** - reThink conducts Commuter Outreach to empower commuters by providing information on commute options other than driving alone in a car. It also provides useful information about safe cycling, walking and how to ride the bus. In addition, it provides guidance on how to approach your employer about telecommuting and alternative work schedules.

For additional information or presentation at your site; please contact Reginald Mells at (866) 610-7433 or by email at: [Reginald@reThinkYourCommute.com](mailto:Reginald@reThinkYourCommute.com)

### **Pacific Interpreters:**

Katie Addison, Strategic Account Executive for Pacific Interpreters, greeted everyone and indicated she is available to conduct training and provide orientation on how to best use the services provided by Language Line/Pacific Interpreters. She’ll be coming to the October 14 task force meeting to make a detail presentation.

### **GENERAL UPDATES**

**World Refugee Day** – Debbie Cruz, CRS Program Coordinator at Catholic Charities, reported an estimated 450 people attended the World Refugee Day event and suggested there should be more task force involvement in future events. Pedro commented the location (inside Cafeteria-away from heat), layout and attendance was excellent. There were no other comments.

**USCIS** – There was no one present to report.

**DCF ESS/ACCESS** – There was no one present to report.

**Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)** – Pedro mentioned that Fitzroy Bacchus, Program Administrator, had told him that as a result of consolidation he cannot continue attending task force meetings as he's expected to spend more time at the office.

**Refugee Arrivals:**

**Catholic Charities** – Jennifer Powers, Resettlement and Match Grant Program Coordinator, indicated overall arrivals have been down but they are expecting higher numbers for August and September. By the end of the third quarter, they had 132 arrivals and the projected total for the fiscal year is 162. She indicated they had 17 arrivals in June (5 Burundians, 10 Congolese and 2 Iraqis) and 22 arrivals in July (8 Cubans, 6 Colombians, 4 Burmese and 4 Burundians).

**Lutheran Services Florida** – There was no one present to report.

**RS-CONTRACTED PROVIDER UPDATES**

**Catholic Charities of Central Florida**- Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS) Debbie Cruz, CRS Program Coordinator, reported on the following services:

**Case Management** - They conducted intakes on a total of 102 head of household or 116 individuals in June and 104 head of household or 161 individuals in July. Most arrivals are Cubans and single adults. She added there has been an increase of referrals from the resettlement programs and it has been difficult to do intakes for families within 2 weeks from arrivals. In addition, they had to establish additional orientation times and days to meet demand and languages. She indicated there have been a few instances where clients were on the verge of becoming homeless; but they were able to help clients with alternate funding. She indicated there was an instance where they encountered difficulty in finding space at women's shelters at the time of need; but they eventually got back to them.

**Employment** – The employment component continues meetings its goals and continues to pursue OJT in the Child Care Industry and organizing Job Fairs.

**Youth** – The youth program is meeting its goals as well. They had two Career Planning Activities - one with the University of Central Florida, College of Education and the other with Valencia Community College.

**Adult Education** – Clients participated in Introductory/Pre-Literacy Level classes during the summer. In particular, that the Congolese refugees are actively participating and remain enrolled.

**Legal Services** – CRS Legal has partnered with ICE/CBP to help Haitian Parolees not in proceedings to obtain extensions on I-94's. A procedure has been put in place to help those clients.

**PALMAS** – Adrian Fedna, Program Assistant, reported they have been busy registering students and verifying continued eligibility status for returning students.

**Community Coordinated Care for Children**, Michael Montgomery, Family Support Specialist, reported they have 48 children enrolled in services (6 were enrolled in May, 8 in June and 7 in July). There are 5 pending; but scheduled for enrollment.

**County Health Departments**

**Orange** – Martha Ortiz, Case Manager, reported they continue doing 70 to 80 assessments per month.

**Seminole**- Tanya Slade, Epidemiology/TB/Refugee Health Program Manager, arrive a bit late and had no chance to present her report; but provided the following electronically: We screened 89 refugees; most of them were Cuban parolees and there were some from the Congo and some Burundians. She mentioned that they are starting to get some Colombians.

**Osceola** – Lizzette Plaud, Health Services Representative, could not make the meeting but sent the following report: They did 26 screenings in July (20 from Cuba, 3 from Iraq, 2 from Venezuela and 1 from Congo) and 23 so far for August (22 from Cuba and 1 from Venezuela).

**REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE**

**National Welcoming Week (Sept. 12-20)**

Pedro mentioned UCF College of Education has expressed an interest in planning an event on campus. Alex Davis will be exploring possibilities and touching base with key people to see what can be done.

**GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

**NEXT MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015

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

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