



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott  
Governor

Mike Carrol  
Secretary

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** May 29, 2015  
**TO:** Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Pedro Padua, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** April 8, 2015 TF Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** June 10, 2015  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Mid-Florida Technical School – Building 700  
2900 W. Oak Ridge Rd, Orlando, FL 32809  
**Contact:** Pedro Padua  
**Office:** (407) 317-7336  
**Cell:** (407) 625-8205  
**Fax:** (407) 245-2766  
**E-Mail:** pedro.padua@myflfamilies.com

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

---

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

This meeting was held at the Orange County Health Department, located at 832 W. Central Blvd, Orlando, FL 32805. Thirty people were in attendance. Patti Grogan, Director, Tera Bivens, Contract Manager, Taddese Fessehay, Community Liaison Unit Manager 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.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

Christina M. Savino, McKinney-Vento Program Specialist for Orange County Public Schools gave an overview of the program. She explained the program helps to facilitate school enrollment of children that could be living in any of these situations:

- In a shelter, motel, vehicle or campground due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- On the street
- In an abandoned building, inadequate trailer or similar accommodations
- **Doubled up with friends or relatives** due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason.

Unaccompanied youth (youth not in the care of a parent or legal guardian), students awaiting foster care placement and migratory students living in the listed circumstances also qualify for the program.

Under the McKinley-Vento Act, children in housing transition have a right to;

- Go to school and receive the same public education as all students
- Attend the local school in their current location or their school of origin
- Receive transportation to and from their school of origin (if over 2 miles).
- Enroll in school immediately, even with the documents usually required (proof of residence, birth certificates, etc.)
- Remain in school while enrollment disputes are being settled
- Access all educational programs and services available to all students.

Students in the program receive free meals and the program may assist in providing:

- Backpacks and school supplies
- Funding for school related fees and expenses (Field trips, specific class required items)
- Clothing and hygiene products
- Bus passes and gas cards (to obtain school records, support parental involvement in school event, and provide transportation until OCPS bus route is set up
- Referral to community agencies to meet basic needs.

## **REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE**

Patti Grogan, Director of Refugee Services, gave the following update:

1. Older Youth – She mentioned the recently held Statewide Consultation focused on this group because they come with educational deficits that are compounded by their lack of English and have difficult time with academics or graduating from High School. She asked providers to submit any ideas for strategies or interventions that will work.
2. University Outreach – Patti indicated there has been an excellent response from universities across the state from professors that want to be engaged with the refugee community (Interns from Social Work, Anthropology Students, Tutoring and conducting research). She highlighted the University of South Florida School of Engineering that built a greenhouse for the Tampa Bay Garden. She was glad to see a similar response in Orlando as evidenced by the attendance of Dr. Joyce Nutta from UCF College of Education.
3. Uptake Analysis – Patti mentioned that Refugee Services has begun to conduct uptake analysis of its various services to look at what is or isn't working, which client populations are accessing or not accessing services or what needs to be refocused. As an example, she mentioned that in one part of the state evidence demonstrated that Burmese clients were not accessing services and measures were taken to reach out and serve this population.
4. Stay at home women – Patti explained there is also a concern about this group as it has a direct correlation to family self-sufficiency. She indicated Orlando is in a unique position because the Comprehensive Refugee Service model is based on long term outcomes. She asked for any ideas or suggestions to better serve this population.

Maria Diez, Catholic Charities Youth Program Coordinator, asked if 16 year olds could be enrolled in vocational training as they do in Cuba. Rose Exantus-Boisrond, PALMAS Refugee Program, replied that 16 year olds can be dually enrolled in employment and technical training at Tech Centers.

Dr. Joyce Nutta from UCF College of Education offered to send some ideas about service learning initiatives.

### **Outreach to Colleges and Universities**

**UCF College of Medicine** – Pedro mentioned a meeting is scheduled for April 28 at UCF College of Medicine to continue the discussion of a clinic. He mentioned that data regarding improper ER visits at Florida Hospital East has been secured. Also, Orange and Osceola County Health Departments have submitted data regarding screenings conducted and referrals made due to conditions requiring follow up. So far Florida Hospital East, Orange County and Osceola County Health Departments have provided data – Seminole County Health Department is gathering information.

**Free Florida ID** – Pedro distributed information regarding the program for low income people to be able to get a Florida ID free of charge at local Department of Motor Vehicles or Local Tax Collectors Office. Patti Grogan indicated most colleges and universities in the state required one year residency and having a state issued ID is most important for refugees. Resettlement agencies were encouraged to share information and assist arriving refugees to get an ID as quickly as possible.

### **RS-CONTRACTED PROVIDER UPDATES**

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

**Stakeholders Meeting** - Richard Logue, Director of Refugee and Immigration Services for Catholic Charities, reported they received some positive and constructive ideas from the stakeholders meeting held on February 27, 2015. He explained that 60% of the clients served by CRS are Cuban; 20% are Haitian; 10% are Arab and 10% from Africa. Orientation was one of the areas of concern; some people felt it was too much information in a short span of time at a time when clients are dealing with a lot of other things. Spanish Orientation for Latinos and Haitians are well attended and there is no need to change much of it. Richard said that some changes are necessary to better serve Iraqis, Egyptians, Syrians and people from Africa with special attention to those that come from refugee camps because they haven't worked in a long time and want to go to school instead of seeking employment.

Taddese suggested that when prolonging or extending period for orientations, getting people to remain engaged and come back should be considered.

Richard mentioned that employment retention is another area of concern as it hurts the program when people quit their jobs. Ibtihal Ibrahim from Islamic Center of North America (ICNA) indicated that sometimes people leave their jobs because they are not used to the work environment (being yelled at or not treated with respect). It was suggested that this kind of situations be incorporated into the Pre-Employment Training to better prepare participants.

In absence of Noemi Guzman, Legal Services & Immigration Services Program Coordinator, Richard indicated the increase of refugee arrivals have caused a backlog for EAD applications. He added program staff are working on weekends to get caught up.

Maria Diez, Youth Program Coordinator, reported the program is encountering problems with high school students having difficulty with Math requiring more one-on-one tutoring. In addition, she mentioned that there are students with dental problems and some children with disabilities.

Pedro asked Rebecca Millan and Christina Savino from OCPS if their program could help with tutorial assistance. Rebecca indicated her program works with parents and they make available Rosetta Stone software so parents can learn English. Christina indicated her program could provide after-school tutorial assistance. Maria mentioned that many students don't want to stay after school because of lack of transportation. Dr. Nutta indicated that UCF students are providing tutorial assistance at the library and many of the learning centers in

Orange County, including Colonial High School. She asked for the schools where students attend.

Note: Upon follow up, Christina Savino clarified her program **does not** have the capacity at this time to provide transportation services for after-school tutoring activities; however, they are planning to include such support via city bus passes in new grant application. They will know if it's approved by August 2015.

Katherine Diaz, ESOL Program Coordinator, reported they currently have 2 pre-literacy classes on site that started with an enrollment of 12 students and is down to 4 students. She explained students often drop out when they get a job. She added the on-site Introductory Level started with 8 students and is down to 3; while attendance at Orlovista class has remained constant at 7 students.

Monica Araujo, New Case Management Coordinator, indicated they have been dealing with some instances of homelessness as a result of host families and friends not being able to provide extended stay housing. In addition, she mentioned that they have a few SSI cases denied. Pedro asked Monica to send him the information about these clients so he can reach out to SSA office.

PALMAS - Ms. Rose Exantus-Boisrond, Program Coordinator, reported that Five Adult General Education students will be inducted into the National Adult Education Honor Society on May 6, 2015 @ MFT campus. In addition, Five Technical students will be inducted into the National Technical Honor Society on May 7, 2015 at Mid-Florida Tech campus. Graduation for technical students will be June 2, 2015 at 7:00pm at Oakridge High School.

She added a total of 105 students enrolled between February and March. Current enrollment in New Arrival Class at Jason St. and CCCF is 26. She mentioned that PALMAS is collaborating with Multilingual Student Services to have workshops for parents with students in K-12 system on April 14<sup>th</sup>, May 14<sup>th</sup>, and May 28<sup>th</sup>. In addition, PALMAS is collaborating with Orange County Health Department to have health prevention workshops for clients. She indicated that approximately 50 students will be going to Sea World on April 24<sup>th</sup> for free.

Michael Montgomery, Family Support Specialist, for Community Coordinated Care for Children, reported they have 43 children enrolled in services and 4 pending cases. They enrolled 5 children in January, 2 in February, and 11 in March. They are scheduling enrollment for the following two weeks for the ones that are pending.

**World Refugee Day** – Debbie Cruz, CRS Program Coordinator, reported the event is being planned for Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at Oak Ridge High School Cafeteria. Donald Jarred indicated USCIS would be most willing to collaborate by planning for a Naturalization Ceremony.

**GENERAL ANNAOUNCEMENTS**

Rebecca Millan from Orange County Public Schools reminded everyone about the Multilingual Family Resource Fair that will take place on Saturday, April 25 from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM at Colonial High School, located at 6100 Oleander Dr., Orlando, FL 32807

**ACCESS:**

Gloria McCrimon sent an email excusing program for not having representation at this meeting as a result of staff shortage.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM due to time limitations. Pedro asked providers to send him their reports electronically so he can include them on the minutes

**GENERAL UPDATES** – Were postponed.

**Resettlement Agencies submitted the following reports. -**

**New Refugee Arrivals: -**

Catholic Charities – Jennifer Powers, Resettlement and Match Grant Program Coordinator, was not present but sent the following report: 19 arrivals in January (16 Iraq, 2 Syria, and 1 Ukraine); 8 arrivals in February (6 Syria and 2 Afghanis); and 3 Iraqi arrivals in March for a total of 30 arrivals for the second quarter. Year to date arrivals = 89 and Match Grant Enrollment = 86.

Lutheran Services Florida – Esubalew Dadi, Orlando Resettlement Program Manager, was present but due to time constraints was not able to present his report. He submitted the following report: Despite staff limitations, the office is aggressively working to make sure services are provided in a timely manner with the required quality. Hiring of new employees is still in progress. The office is getting tremendous support from the Tampa office. He reported 13 arrivals (5 cases) for March to April 2015 (9 Congo, 2 Iran, 1 Cuba and 1 Ukraine).

**County Health Departments** – Reports from County Health Departments were postponed.

**NEXT MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday, June 10, 2015

**Location:** Mid-Florida Technical School  
2900 W. Oak Ridge Rd; Bldg. 700.  
Orlando, FL 32809

**Contact:** [Pedro.Padua@myflfamilies.com](mailto:Pedro.Padua@myflfamilies.com) Phone: (407) 317-7336  
[Taddese.Fessehaye@myflfamilies.com](mailto:Taddese.Fessehaye@myflfamilies.com) (407) 317-7335