



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carrol
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 24, 2015

TO: Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force

FROM: Pedro Padua, Refugee Services (RS)

SUBJECT: February 4, 2015 TF Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR: -

Date: Wednesday, April 8, 2015
Time: 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon
Location: Orange County Health Department
832 W. Central Blvd., Orlando, FL 32805
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 “Special” meeting was held at the Florida Department of Transportation Building, located at 133 S. Semoran Blvd, Orlando, FL 32807. Twenty-four people were in attendance. Hiram Ruiz, Director, Taddese Fessehaye, 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.

REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE

2015 Refugee Services Consultation:

Hiram Ruiz stated that over 370 people have registered to attend the 2015 Refugee Services Consultation. He mentioned that more than 50 speakers and 5 State Coordinators will be attending and added that there will be workshops on such areas as employment, mental health, other states’ programs, colleges and universities as resources, strategies in advancing refugee integration, and domestic violence with an emphasis on Youth – challenges faced by older refugees, what happens after they leave our program? Eight (8) youth will be speaking about their experiences. He also mentioned that there will be site visits to significant community initiated programs.

Outreach to Colleges and Universities

UCF College of Medicine – Pedro mentioned Richard Logue, Director of Refugee and Immigration Services at Catholic Charities, Kathy Walker, TB Program Manager at Orange County Health Department and Patrice Boon, TB Program Manager at Seminole County Health Department had accompanied him to a meeting with Dr. Judith Simms-Cendan at the College of Medicine to present the health needs of our refugee population. Dr. Simms-Cendan was very receptive and indicated there might be an opportunity to have a resident continuity clinic that could provide care to refugees; but we need data from Florida Hospital to document improper ER visits. Data request has been presented to Florida Hospital and a follow up meeting has been set up for Monday, March 9 at the College of Medicine. Richard Logue added that they want to make sure the clinic can be sustainable. Hiram mentioned a Multicultural clinic had been established in Jacksonville and suggested to reach out to them as they could be of assistance to the group in Orlando.

UCF College of Education – Pedro added that Maria Diez, Katherine Diaz, ESL Coordinator and Rose Exantus-Boisrond (PALMAS) had accompanied him to a meeting with Dr. Bryan Zugelder, Executive Director of Undergraduate Affairs and Partnerships for the College of Education and Human Performance, to explore possible collaboration to meet the educational needs of our refugee population. Dr. Zugelder was welcoming and supportive. This was followed by a conference call with Dr. Joyce Nutta, Program Coordinator of World Languages Education and ESOL at UCF College of Education, who expressed a personal interest and offered to partner in support of immigrants and refugees in Central Florida. She mentioned the college provides service learning experiences with English learners for all College of Education students through a required course about teaching students who are learning English as a second language. In addition, they have TESOL PhD students that are looking for opportunities for research. She has agreed to personally volunteer in Osceola, do a site visit to our programs and send pertinent information to get the process going.

Rose Exantus-Boisrond expressed her thanks to Pedro for coordinating the meeting and added she has already gotten some calls from students that want to volunteer.

Mental Health Services:

Central Florida Mental Health Association – Pedro mentioned Debbie Cruz and Martha Ortiz had accompanied him to a meeting with Ms. Charlotte Melton, Vice President to discuss refugee mental health needs and possible collaboration. The association coordinates mental health referrals in the tri-county area. They also run the Outlook Clinic for non-insured clients. She was most receptive and offered to add our providers to their data base for referrals. Their electronic referral form has been provided.

Eligibility Training:

Pedro mentioned that Yolanda Coto, Refugee Services Senior Attorney, will be conducting the next round of Eligibility Training. Orlando has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 1 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM at 400 W. Robinson Street, **Suite S-1006**. He asked providers to send him a list of the employees that will be registering for the training.

Special Presentation

Step Up for Students – Amanda Lopez, Assistant Director of Community Outreach, gave a thorough description of the program. She mentioned it consist of two K to 12 state approved scholarship programs.

The Income Based Scholarship is geared to low income families to give them a choice if a student is having difficulty in public school and they would like to send them to (1) a Private School or (2) an Out of District Public or a Chartered School. The \$5,272 scholarship pays tuition and fees for enrollment in **private school** or a \$500.00 scholarship is offered to pay for **transportation cost to send children to a public school outside of their county or district or a chartered school**. She mentioned there is a \$29.00 application fee and is paid when the process is completed. She said they'll start taking applications for the 2015 -2016 School year in early March and people can apply online (English or Spanish). Applications will be considered on first come first serve basis. She added the cost of private schools varies and people should check with the school of interest to find out if they'll accept the scholarship amount offered by Step Up.

Hiram mentioned that high school juniors and sophomores that are not likely to pass the FCAT could be good candidates for the program. Taddese added that low performing students or those that are attending schools in overcrowded and need special attention could be potential candidates as well.

Here's the link to participating schools:

<http://stepupforstudents.org/income-based-scholarship/for-parents-guardians/participating-schools>

The **“Special Needs Scholarship”** establishes a new **Personal Learning Scholarship Account (PLSA)** for students accepted that allows parents to individualize or personalize the educational plans for their children with special needs based on their unique abilities by directing money toward a combination of programs and approved providers. The scholarship can be used for **private schools tuition**, therapists, specialists, curriculum, technology—even a college savings account.

The scholarship amount varies according to grade, county and disability; but the average amount for most students in 2014-15 is \$10,000 (and may increase in 2015-16). Students with the most severe disabilities are eligible for a higher scholarship amount.

Students can continue to receive scholarship until they graduate from high school, reach age 22 or return to public school. Money in the account can roll over from one year to the next, and the account can remain in place until a student graduates from a postsecondary educational institution, such as college or technical institute, or has gone four consecutive years after high school with no further education. At that point, the account is closed and any remaining money reverts to the state.

For more information, please visit:

<http://stepupforstudents.org/about-us/mission>

GENERAL UPDATES -

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS): -

Donald Jarrell, Community Relations Officer, mentioned that the Orlando Field Office will host an Open House on Saturday, March 14 from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM. INFOPASS will be open for appointments from 7:30 AM to 2:30 PM. There will be a Community Stakeholder meeting at 12:00 PM to provide updates on Executive Immigration Actions.

Donald said that updated information flyers on DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans) are now available at:

www.uscis.gov/executive-actions-immigration/executive-actions-immigration-resources

ACCESS:

There was no one present for updates.

Area Health Care Agency (Medicaid):

Fitzroy Bacchus, Program Administrator with AHCA reported that the implementation of the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care (SMMC) program was completed in August 2014. The Medicaid program has now moved to a streamlined comprehensive delivery system in which 81% of our recipients (and growing) are served in SMMC. The Agency was required to develop a reorganization plan for realignment of administrative resources of the Medicaid program which resulted in the closure of two offices in 2014 and for 2015 the offices in Panama City, Alachua and West Palm Beach will be closed; these closures will affect 45 employees.

ACHA is contracting with three vendors to coordinate **non-emergency transportation services for individuals enrolled in the fee-for-service Medicaid** (i.e., those not enrolled in a managed care plan) starting 2/1/15 for Regions 10 and 11 and 3/1/15 for the rest of the State. They are Access 2 Care, MTM, Inc. and LogistiCare. Access 2 Care will cover 45 Counties; including Brevard, Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties starting 3/1/15.

New Refugee Arrivals:

Catholic Charities – Jennifer Powers, Resettlement and Match Grant Program Coordinator, reported 18 arrivals in Dec (9 Cuban and 9 Congolese) and 19 arrivals in January (16 Iraqi, 2 Syrian and 1 Ukrainian). She noted an increase of refugees with medical problems which require intensive case management and limited employment possibilities. Hiram advised her to talk to the PRM representative at the Consultation about the challenges and limitations for these types of clients.

Lutheran Services Florida – Esubalew Dadi, Orlando Resettlement Program Manager, reported they have resettled 10 cases (31 individuals) during the second quarter (11 Afghani; 11 Cuban; 1 Iraqi

(Out-migrated though); 2 Burmese; 4 Rwandan and 2 Ugandan).

He added they are making an effort to overcome staff shortages and indicated he is in the process of filling two vacancies to adequately serve clients.

RS-CONTRACTED PROVIDER UPDATES

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

Richard Logue reported the program has 2,600 active clients. He added they have closed some ESOL clients for lack of attendance. He noted the program is meeting its performance numbers and employment placement goals; but they are not pleased with retention. He said they are looking for suggestions to improve the program and will host a "Community Stakeholders Meeting" on Friday, February 27 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon at 1819 N. Semoran Blvd., Orlando, FL 32807.

Daisy Clemente, Employment Program Coordinator, added they have modified their Pre-Employment Training to include Job Requirements/Expectations (Safety, Housekeeping and Attitude) to better prepare participants and improve outcomes. She said the ESOL program is also including work related language in their curriculum.

Maria Diez, Youth Program Coordinator, reported the program is working hard trying to meet the goal of 8 tutoring hours; while maintaining quality services to clients. She mentioned they serve 120 to 130 clients per month. They have access to two classrooms at "San Pedro Center" on Wednesday since October 2014 where they do group tutoring and allows students to interact and speak English among themselves and with their caseworkers.

Taddese asked if volunteer tutors were used in the program. Maria replied that they do and added that some volunteers have been good; but in other instances there are no long term commitments. Richard Logue added they have actually hired some of them; but at the present time, they need a volunteer coordinator.

Taddese mentioned it would be a good time to announce that the National Corporation for Community Service told him to expect an award letter soon about the VISTA Project he has been working on. Catholic Charities has two positions in the request and one of them is for a volunteer recruiter. Lutheran Services has one position.

Noemi Guzman, Legal Services & Immigration Services Program Coordinator, affirmed the increase of refugee arrivals, as evidence by the numbers of requests for EAD (Employment Authorization Documents). She added they have made EAD a priority and noted fee waivers are taking longer. She mentioned they are conducting Citizenship information workshops on Weekends to serve large numbers of clients.

Debbie Cruz, Case Management Coordinator, added that health problems affect client employability and self-sufficiency.

PALMAS - Rose Exantus-Boisrond, Program Coordinator, reported they are serving close to 900 students. The new arrivals class is on a rotating schedule and next class begins on February 9th. She added that she has received several phone calls as a result of meeting we had with UCF College of Education from students wanting to volunteer at PALMAS. They have been instructed to follow procedures for school volunteers.

Katherine Diaz, CRS ESOL Coordinator, reported they have 3 ESOL classes for illiterate adults: two in-house at Catholic Charities and one in Orlo-Vista Pine Hills Area. Current enrollment is 25 students (Haiti, Congo, Cuba, Iraq and Egypt).

Community Coordinated Care for Children (4C) - Per-Shara Milord, Family Support Specialist, reported there are 33 children currently enrolled in the program and there's no waiting list.

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

HIRAM'S FAREWELL:

Hiram expressed his gratitude to everyone on the task force for their collaboration and support during his tenure and their commitment to the successful resettlement of refugees in the Orlando area. Esubalew Dadi presented Hiram a gift of appreciation on behalf of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force.

NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday, April 8, 2015

Location: Orange County Health Department
832 W. Central Blvd.
Orlando, FL 32805

Contact: Pedro.Padua@myflfamilies.com Phone: (407) 317-7336
Taddese.Fessehay@myflfamilies.com (407) 317-7335