



**State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families**

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carroll**  
Secretary

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**DATE:** August 14, 2015  
**TO:** Members of the South West Florida Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** June 10th Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** August 19, 2015  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** CareerSource Southwest Florida,  
3050 Horseshoe Drive N Bldg. A Suite 110  
Fort Myers, FL 34104  
**Contact:** Janet Blair  
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This task force has been active in the South West Florida area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An Average of twenty 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, request for proposals, training, workshops, conferences, etc., at the local, state and national level; discuss refugee program service needs and possible solutions to meeting those needs. Meeting participants also 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 next meeting!*

SunCoast Region, 11351 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL 33778

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

## SWF REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was held at the Career Source Southwest Florida office located in Naples, FL and was facilitated by Janet Blair, Community Liaison, and Patti Grogan, statewide director, of Refugee Services at the Florida Department of Children and Families. Twenty-four members were in attendance and the meeting was called to order at 10:05am.

### PRESENTATIONS

A presentation was given by program director Rose Marie Connor on the new Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) Comprehensive Refugee Services model that was launched on March 2, 2015 in the South West Florida area ranging from Manatee/Sarasota counties down to Collier County. The new LSF program covers a total of 10 counties and has three office locations in Collier, Lee and Sarasota counties. Office managers from all three sites attended the meeting and distributed their contact information to Task Force members. Refugee Services is creating brochures for each newly opened office to be distributed at the next Task Force meeting.

The second presentation was given by Beth Barger, Center Supervisor of the Career Source SWFL Naples office regarding their various programs and services. Career Source is working closely with refugee services providers in Naples and offers a variety of programs that refugee clients can take advantage of including paid internships for youth and On-the-Job Training programs. One key point made by Beth was that as of January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016, food assistance will only be distributed for three months to those not enrolled in work related activities with CareerSource. After a three month period, all those receiving food assistance will have to be enrolled with CareerSource and engaged in work related activities.

Berta Cassidy from U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) gave an overview and update on the Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program (HFRP). The HFRP program offers certain beneficiaries of approved family-based immigration petitions the opportunity to be reunited with family in the U.S. up to approximately two years before their immigration visas are expected to become available. A fact sheet on the program was distributed to all participants.

### REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE

Patti Grogan gave a Refugee Services Program update. Patti went over the numbers for arrivals this year to date and noted that Cuban arrivals were much higher in the first six months of this fiscal year than in previous years. She estimated that we would be looking at possibly over 40,000 total arrivals for Refugee Services eligible clients this fiscal year if this trend continues. Patti explained that these larger numbers create a serious challenge for our employment programs as we are looking a likely cut in funding.

In addition, Patti went on to identify the challenges facing older refugee youth as a major focus for Refugee Services this year. Approximately 3,000 older refugee youth, ages 14 and up, enter the state each year

and find limited opportunities for education. Patti would like to see subcommittees at each Task Force established to look locally at the options for this particular group of clients. Janet will coordinate this subcommittee in the near future.

### **PROGRAM INFORMATION & UPDATES**

**Resettlement Program:** The program director from Catholic Charities (CC) Reception & Placement /Match Grant program attended the meeting and reported low arrivals for this year to date. A total of 41 have been enrolled in Reception & Placement, 60 clients in Match Grant and 14 in the Cuban/Haitian program. Naples & North Port staff also continue to work with unaccompanied minors.

**Lutheran Services Florida Inc. (LSF) Comprehensive Refugee Services Program:** The program director, Rose Marie Connor, announced a total of 731 individual clients in the three offices set up in Naples, Fort Myers and Sarasota. 50% of these clients are new arrivals with entry dates between March and May of 2015. Employability Immigration Services has had 893 clients file within the past three months.

**Health Department:** The Refugee Clinic in Collier County provided services to an average of 80 new arrivals each month for the past three months. The majority of clients are Cuban. Lee County Health Dept has seen a few Iranian and Syrian asylees.

**Adult Education:** (Project STRIVE): This program is in the final stages of transition as adult education services are now covered by the LSF Comprehensive Refugee Services Program. Currently there are 78 clients enrolled for the summer term at two locations.

**Community Providers:** Jacquie Hart, a Health Care Navigator from the Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida, announced that the computer system has been upgraded to better process applications this year. Currently the focus is on community outreach to ensure that the underserved and uninsured portions of the population have access to services.

### **OPEN DISCUSSION**

Janet Blair and Rose Marie Connor facilitated a brief discussion around plans for the World Refugee Day event the following day.

### **NEXT MEETING:**

Date: Wednesday, August 19th 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Location: Career Source Southwest Florida 4150 Ford Street Extension, Fort Myers, 33916

Contact: [Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com](mailto:Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com) or (813) 545-1716