



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carroll**  
Secretary

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**DATE:** March 23, 2015  
**TO:** Members of the Collier Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** January 14th Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** April 1, 2015  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Lee County Health Department  
83 Pondella Road, North Ft Myers, FL  
**Contact:** Janet Blair  
**Phone:** (813) 545-1716  
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This task force has been active in the Collier 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 attend 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, 9393 North Florida Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33612-7907

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

## COLLIER REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was held at CareerSource located at 3050 Horseshoe Drive, Naples, FL and was facilitated by Janet Blair, Community Liaison for Refugee Services at the Florida Department of Children and Families. A total of only 13 members were present due to technical issues with the Task Force email. The meeting was called to order at 10:15am.

### PRESENTATIONS

Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) management team gave a presentation on the new Comprehensive Refugee Services model that will be implemented as of March 2, 2015 in the South West Florida area ranging from Manatee/Sarasota counties down to Collier County. The new LSF program will cover a total of 10 counties and have offices located in the three key counties – Collier, Lee and Sarasota. A few of the current services will be subcontracted including youth and adult education but all other refugee services will be provided by LSF staff and programs. This new model will allow for one client intake to be done for all programs and will be family systems oriented and strength based. Contact information for all new LSF offices will be sent to the Task Force prior to March 2<sup>nd</sup>. LSF will work closely with existing providers to ensure a smooth transition for all clients currently being served.

Berta Cassidy gave a USCIS update on services and programs. It was stressed that the need for clients to update their addresses with USCIS is critical. There are upcoming changes in the Cuban Family Reunification Program and USCIS will send out the information as soon as possible. There is now a Temporary Protective Status for individuals currently residing in the U.S. from Syria and El Salvador. The Task Force on New Americans is identifying best practices models on a national basis and looking to hear from local providers.

### REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE

Janet Blair encouraged all Task Force members to attend the statewide Refugee Services Consultation to be held in February in Jacksonville. She also announced that new brochures will be published to reflect all changes in contracts as soon as possible and that she will send out electronic flyers with points of contact for the new LSF offices in the meantime. Janet also went over the upcoming Task Force meetings for 2015 and discussed a plan to reach out to locally elected officials in South West Florida. Task Force members will send any existing contacts to Janet.

### PROGRAM INFORMATION & UPDATES

**Resettlement Program:** Not present.

**Health Department:** The Refugee Clinic saw a total of 47 new arrivals in November, 2014 and a total of 75 new arrivals in December of 2014.

**Adult Education:** (Project STRIVE): Registration for the Spring semester ends tomorrow. There are currently 65 students enrolled in ESOL.

**Refugee Youth**

The youth program has approximately 50 students enrolled at this time. They are doing after school tutoring at both Golden Gate High School and Golden Gate Middle School. Several students are also enrolled in virtual high school and are being tutored by the youth program staff.

**Employment:** (REAP): Not Present

**Childcare:** Not Present.

**CareerSource:** There is a new GED program available where clients can have all fees paid by CareerSource if enrolled. They are also able to get a \$25 gas card as a benefit. There are changes in the length of time that able bodied clients without children can be enrolled in SNAP, this time frame has been limited to 3 months unless clients are enrolled in CareerSource programs.

**Employability Status Assistance/Legal:** Not Present.

**OPEN DISCUSSION**

Most discussion revolved around the changes in Refugee Services contracts and the transition to a Comprehensive Refugee Services model. LSF suggested holding a Town Hall or Open House in each of the key areas. The next Task Force meeting will also be promoted as a networking meeting.

**NEXT MEETING:**

Date: Wednesday, April 1st 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Location: Lee County Health Dept. 83 Pondella Road, North Ft Myers, FL

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