



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 24, 2020
TO: Members of the Broward Refugee Task Force
FROM: Miriam Rosario (RS)
SUBJECT: November 19, 2020 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: January 21, 2021
Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Location: TBA
Contact: Miriam Rosario
Office: (561) 227-6722
Cell: (561) 459-6098
E-Mail: Miriam.rosario@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Broward area in the past few years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and volunteer groups. An average of about twenty to twenty-five 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 meeting!

Southeast Region - Circuit 15
111 South Sapodilla Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

BROWARD COUNTY REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was held via a conference call and Miriam Rosario, Southeast Region (SER) Community Liaison (CL), Refugee Services (RS) Program, Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) facilitated the Refugee Task Force (RTF) meeting. Miriam thanked and welcomed all participants. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves, services and the agency they represented. Approximately 40 people joined the meeting.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Jeffrey Hittleman, Staff Attorney in the Senior Citizen Law Project at Coast to Coast Legal Aid of Broward County, provided an overview presentation about housing issues during COVID-19 and the resources available through Coast to Coast Legal Aid. Legal Aid of Broward County is available to help with these housing questions and resources. Services can be offered in various languages. The phone numbers to call Legal Aid in Broward are 954-765-8955, 954-736-2496 and 954-736-2497.

Melissa Jaramillo, Manager, Community Outreach, Step Up For Students, provided a power point presentation regarding Step Up For Students and the scholarships still available. Step Up for Students administers five scholarship programs for Florida's schoolchildren:

- The Florida Tax Credit and Family Empowerment Scholarship for children K-12 from lower-income families.
- The Gardiner Scholarship for children ages 3-22 who have certain special needs.
- The Hope Scholarship for children K-12 who are victims of bullying.
- The Reading Scholarship Accounts for public school students in grades three through five who struggle with reading. Apply Now. Program funds are limited and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Visit www.StepUpForStudents.org to learn more and apply. Melissa Jaramillo can be reached at mjaramillo@sufs.org or 305-922-7575.

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Each agency discussed how services were being provided during the pandemic and plans to reopen offices. Palm Beach County remains under a Continuing State of Emergency. A reminder was given to enroll in the 2021 Health Marketplace by December

USCIS, Berta Cassidy, Community Relations Officer (CRO), Miami and Caribbean District U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, participated. She stated that USCIS asylum offices will automatically reschedule asylum interviews that were canceled during the temporary closures. Also, USCIS announced plans to implement a revised version of the naturalization civics test. Applicants who apply for naturalization on or after December 1st, 2020, will take the updated version of the test. Those who apply before December 1st, 2020, will take the current version of the test.

Broward County Library (BCL) - Vonda Ward Bryant, Broward County Library reported on all the resources available thru the Broward County Library. The Broward County Library offers citizenship classes and English Basics classes online.

American Red Cross (ARC), Jaime Cruz, Service to the Armed Forces & International Services Specialist stated all local ARCs are closed. ARC is also offering support and resources for Fire prevention and victim of fires in Broward County. If anyone has questions, they can call (M): 786-714-6796.

Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCHA) -Jerome Hill – Program Operations Administrator, - Bureau of Medicaid, informed the task force that their office is closed and AHCA continues to work virtually. However, all services are still being offered. Jerome.Hill@ahca.myflorida.com

Department of Health (DOH) – For referrals please contact, Migdalia Diaz, Office Operations Supervisor II, TB/Hepatitis, Refugee Coordinator, Florida Department of Health-Broward County for referrals and registration for the refugee Medical Health Assessment. These are time limited services and clients must be informed to contact DOH as possible. Office: (954) 412-7166, or Migdalia.Diaz-Nieves@flhealth.gov

KidCare, DOH- Miriam reminded the task force of Broward KidCare Hotline, 954-INSURES (954-467-8737), KidCare currently has additional numbers for families to access: Spanish:1-954-270-0279, Nicole & Ada; 954-809-4745. Marcelle; Creole 954-270-8272. If you want additional resources get in touch with Rebecca Miele, Florida KidCare Outreach Program Manager at Office: 954-847-8082 or Cell: 954-895-5563.

Broward County Family Success Center/ Community Action Agency (FSC/CAA)- Audrey Ljung, Community Coordinator, reported on Broward County Housing assistance resources. The CARES Act enables local governments to allocate emergency funding to residents who face pressing financial needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Broward's Family Success Division is reviewing and assessing claims received and amounts requested to determine next steps to further assist the public. Contact your city for Rent and Housing assistance. Questions call 954-357-5805. For the Utilities (LIHEAP) assistance program call 954-357-5025. For loss of income not related to COVID-19, please visit FSC/CAA website for what other resources are available. <https://www.broward.org/FamilySuccess>

Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services- Sabine Balmir-Derenoncourt, Program Coordinator, Florida Center for Survivors of Torture gave updates on their program and resources available for Survivors of Torture. Case management is available and now expanding to Palm Beach County. Sabine Balmir-Derenoncourt, can be reached at: sabine.derenoncourt@gcjfcs.org or 786-336-1120 or 786-336-1123. Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services Website: gcjfcs.org

ESS/DCF- Wilber Roney; introduced Claudia Arce to the Refugee Task Force. She is helping with the ACCESS benefits applications. DCF's Statewide Customer Call Center is also available for customer questions and application assistance at 850-300-4323 (TTY 1-800-955-8771), Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

RS/DCF – David Draper, Community Liaison Manager thanked everyone for being there. He encouraged task force members to visit the DCF website for resources on COVID-19. David gave updates on the presidential determination on refugees (15,000 for this FFY). He also stated that the CDC eviction moratorium is still in place, however he encouraged agencies to continue assisting refugees with housing so that it wouldn't become a bigger issue when the moratorium ends.

RS Contracted providers: Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS):

Project RENEW /Broward College (PR/BC)- Jocelyne Martinez, Director, indicated that Adult Education (AE) class sessions are currently online. Adult Education currently has 158 enrollments. The students have also learned computer skills. PR/BC is assessing options for the coming semesters (whether to offer in-person, online, or hybrid classes). PR/BC is also providing laptops to students that need them.

Church World Service (CWS), Oscar Rivera, Director Southern Programs, provided information on the Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS) and Match Grant (MG) programs in Broward. CRS and MG are fully operational, and clients are being seen by appointment only. Virtual appointments are also available. CWS also offers referrals to community resources and assistance with benefits. Oscar stated that Cuban and Haitian arrivals are increasing. CRS is assisting them with employment, childcare, mentoring services and CRS and offering many other referrals in the community. CWS/Broward telephone number is 954-689-6466.

St. Thomas Human Right Institute (STHRI), Cristine Reis, Director Attorney, stated that offices are open (via appointment) to assist with all legal matters. USCIS changes and delays are impacting families. These issues have been shared with USCIS representatives. STHRI can be reached at 866.491.6737.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Meeting: Thursday, January 21, 2021

Time: 10:00 AM to 12PM

Location: TBA

Contact: Miriam.Rosario@myflfamilies.com Phone: (561) 227-6722
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