



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 24, 2020
TO: Members of the Miami-Dade Refugee Task Force
FROM: Lourdes Leconte, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: August 14, 2020 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: October 09, 2020
Time: 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon
Location: Via teleconferencing
888-585-9008 Access code 951-031-034 #
Contact: Lourdes Leconte
Office: (786) 257-5173
Cell: (305) 401-3374
E-Mail: Lourdes.Leconte@myflfamilies.com

This taskforce has been active in the Miami area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. Approximately 30 individuals 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!

401 NW 2nd Avenue, Suite N-812 Miami, Florida 33128

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

**MIAMI-DADE REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 14, 2020**

ATTENDEES:

Sabine Balmir; Berta Cassidy; Eduardo Chavez; Diego Castro; Kerry Allen; Martha Ferrer; Monica Farias; David draper; Maria Dominguez; Inelda JHS; Maria Lobo, Lourdes; Miriam Garcia; Maria Ortega; Sheria Goodman, Kamalah Fletcher; Sherry Capers; Emilie Goeser; Maria Hernandez; Silvia Lopez; Elmer Morales; Sergio Mora; Cristine Reis; Eduardo Morras; Yeen Perez; Leydi sosa; Edgar Tobon; Carmen Torres; Sandrina Portillo; Diana Formoso; Maria Fernanda Garcia; Claudia Marquez; Fernando Reyes, Paula Sobrero; Paulina Velez; Sol Fauve; Roketa Mansfield; Peter Marin; Angelique Williams; Maria Arriaga; Adriana Calzada; Dianelys Gomez; Rosaida Galano; Maria Negreas; Oscar Rivera; Elaine McArthur; Sheryl White; Lourdes Leconte ; Myriam Garcia; Janet Catholic Charities; Sylvia Lopez , Iliana Vallejo; Nidia Arias; Christine Reis; Bajic Bojan; Christy Padron; Jamie Everett

INTRODUCTION:

Lourdes Leconte, DCF Refugee Services Community Liaison for the Southern Region, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

PRESENTATIONS:

American Red Cross - South Florida Region:

An overview on Hurricane preparedness and the International Services (which includes the Restoring Family Links program) was given by Kamalah Fletcher, Regional Partner and EMA Program Support Manager. Regarding disaster preparedness, she stressed the importance of preparing all individuals so that they have the critical skills necessary to meet basics needs during a crisis or disaster. She stressed the importance of learning lifesaving skills such as First Aid and CPR. She said the Red Cross has a variety of online classes to help learn these skills.

The American Red Cross also helps reconnect loved ones that are separated (internationally) as a result of conflict, disaster, migration, or another humanitarian emergency. Families that have already tried normal channels of communication to reconnect are able to utilize this service. Services are free and confidential. The Red Cross works with the inquiring family member to search for and locate the families' loved ones. The American Red Cross does not provide financial assistance for family members as a result of a successful reconnection.

REFUGEE SERVICES (RS) UPDATE:

ACCESS Program office ESS Updates:

As of March 9, 2020, the governor issued an executive order declaring a state of emergency. Florida wants to ensure that clients continue to receive benefits while practicing social distancing to curb the spread of the virus. The recertification period has been extended. Policies and procedures have not changed but the program is using some flexibility to expedite the application process for some and extending benefits for others, while customer service offices remain closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

None

REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE (Sent via E-Mail in March and April)**Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM****SOUTH FLORIDA REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES MINUTES – AUGUST, 2020****South Florida VOLAG Consortium****Updates from VOLAG:**

The situation with COVID-19 continues to impact the number of new clients getting into the Matching grant program. We are still providing services; we are getting people into jobs Intakes are done virtually and document processing are done electronically.

LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – JULY 2020

Legal Subcommittee Meeting

July 15, 2020

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Discussion of experiences with agencies
 - a. EOIR
 - b. USCIS
 - c. ICE
 - d. CBP
 - e. Asylum Office
3. Moving forward with meetings during COVID closures

Attendees:

- Danielle Befeler – Americans for Immigrant Justice
- Adonia Simpson – Americans for Immigrant Justice
- Christine Reis – St Thomas University
- Lcanizares (Lucia) – Church World Service Virginia
- Oscar Alvarez – Americans for Immigrant Justice detention program
- Brad Ginter – Catholic Legal Services
- Fritzl Julme – American Friends Service Committee
- DcLAROS (David Claros) – Church World Service
- Jorge Vileman – Maronite Central Committee
- Kelly Chauvin – Church World Service North Carolina
- Kristie-Anne Padron – Catholic Legal Services Vulnerable Populations
- Leconte-lourdes – Dept of Children and Families
- Maureen Porras – Church World Service
- Mirian J Garcia – St Thomas University
- MJean (Marie) – American Friends Service Committee
- Natalia Cruz Murati – Church World Service Doral
- Natalia Patino - Church World Service

- Natalie Limon – Church World Service New York
- Pastora Iris de Jesus – Pastoral Care Insititute
- Tjdra (Tim) –Lutheran Services on west coast Florida
- Viviane Saide
- Maria Pena – Church World Service
-

EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – AUGUST 2020

**2020 REFUGEE TASK FORCE
EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

- REVEST began offering remote learning as of the closure of facilities (MDC) in mid-March,2020 and will continue through the beginning of the Fall term. REVEST/Miami Dade College will assess the possibility of offering hybrid classes at the end of October. Instructors and students have given positive feedback regarding the use of the virtual classroom as it allows for greater scope of access in a safe environment. Students are attending scheduled classes and participating in on-line learning through a variety of on-line resources including the Blackboard learning management system, My-Lab (Pearson Education) and Burlington English. We are proud of our staff and students for the success of remote learning at REVEST.
- REVEST continues enrolling students for Fall Term from September 1 until December 18, 2020. So far around 660 VESOL students are enrolled program wide in this current Term of Summer 2020, and around 750 are going to be re enrolled for Fall 2020 considering the number of new clients requesting our services. We continue to do Intakes and registrations online as well as instruction.
- The REVEST Program has been able to process over 230 vocational registrations so far in the current MDC term/Summer ending on August 31st. REVEST continues with a campaign aimed at increasing the number of registrations for the rest of the Summer, and the new Fall Term 2207, beginning on September 1st. Therefore, we continue to provide our students with information about our courses through the email, or by phone, during this remote work environment; and continue to help them complete the college required processes, including the update of their residency status for tuition purposes.
- REVEST continues to offer on-line ESOL classes through scholarships at Community Education (Miami Dade College) Kendall and West Campus. Our current sites in Hialeah and Wolfson are also offering classes and we are ready to serve clients. All classes will remain on-line until the end of September 2020 at which point hybrid classes may be considered. Please continue to refer any interested client to REVEST for services.
- Negotiations continue for the 2020-2021 contract year. We would like to thank Ms. Andrea Gordon and all involved at DCF and Refugee Services for their assistance and support.
- The SAVES Trimester 2019-3 started on May 18, 2020d and ended on July 28, 2020. The total enrollment as of July 30, 2020 was 659. As you all know, classes have been conducted through distance learning. SAVES students are participating in on-line classes and the SAVES District office is working with the SAVES school contact persons and their

administrators to provide the support and help needed to ensure that all services to students are provided.

- The next Trimester 2020-1 is expected to start with virtual classes on August 24, 2020 and will end on December 18, 2020. Instruction will be provided online in Miami-Dade County; and Adult Education will move to an on-site, or hybrid mode, as soon as it is safe.
- Contract negotiations are being finalized for the 2020-2021 school year.
- All courses are offered on-line. M-DCPS provides electronic devices to most students to be able to access the distance learning platform. Students who are taking classes through the platform are monitored by their teachers and are also able to record and report their attendance. Students are enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), General Basic Education, SMA GED in Spanish, and a wide range of vocational/technical programs.
- Translation and validation services continue to be offered to qualified students. During the 2019-2020 school year, SAVES provided degree translation and validation services for 120 students. These services are provided to students with high school diplomas, associate degrees, and four-year degrees and higher, including licensing. Due to COVID 19, students report directly to Silny and Associates for services.
- The SAVES program continues to serve clients through distant learning offered at 14 schools, where there are SAVES contact persons working from home and reporting to work once or twice a week by appointments; and three other technical colleges, George T. Baker Aviation, Miami Lakes, and D. A. Dorsey, Technical College, where eligible students receive services through vouchers. To better serve our clients, the voucher program has been extended to all adult education centers and technical colleges in M-DCPS.
- SAVES is engaged in a massive marketing/advertising campaign to reach refugees and asylees that are still within the five-year eligibility period, who are not being served and to supports those that are already enrolled. This campaign includes having the school contact personnel reach out to students via email and telephone, SAVES website, Spanish and Haitian radio, and digital media in multiple platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This campaign is yielding good results for recruiting, registration, re-enrollment, and retention.
- SAVES District personnel and school contacts follow up with students to ensure that they are accessing the Distance Learning platform. Information is gathered on students who are participating in on-line classes, as well as those students who did not re-enroll to motivate them to continue their education.
- More information is being uploaded to the SAVES website for students to access all the services and benefits of the program. New SAVES student success stories were uploaded, and congratulation letters were sent to the schools to be forwarded to the students. Visit our SAVES website at saves@dadeschools.com

- A Zoom meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 26, 2020 from 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM with all SAVES District staff and school contacts to give direction, review procedures, and establish priorities for 2020-2021. This mode will be used until it is safe to meet on-site.
- You can reach the SAVES District office by contacting Dr. Felicia Gil at gilfelicia@dadeschools.net

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REPORT – AUGUST 2020

None

USCIS UPDATE – AUGUST 2020

USCIS Miami & Caribbean District August 2020 Update

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is extending the flexibilities it announced on March 30, 2020, to assist applicants and petitioners who are responding to certain:

- Requests for Evidence;
- Continuations to Request Evidence (N-14);
- Notices of Intent to Deny;
- Notices of Intent to Revoke;
- Notices of Intent to Rescind and Notices of Intent to Terminate regional investment centers;
- Filing date requirements for Form N-336, Request for a Hearing on a Decision in Naturalization Proceedings (Under Section 336 of the INA); or
- Filing date requirements for Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion.

Notice/Request/Decision Issuance Date:

This flexibility applies to the above documents if the issuance date listed on the request, notice or decision is between March 1 and Sept. 11, 2020, inclusive.

Response Due Date:

USCIS will consider a response to the above requests and notices received within 60 calendar days after the response due date set in the request or notice before taking any action. We will consider a Form N-336 or Form I-290B received up to 60 calendar days from the date of the decision before we take any action.

We are adopting several measures to protect our workforce and community and to minimize the immigration consequences for those seeking immigration benefits during this time.

USCIS will provide further updates as the situation develops and will continue to follow CDC guidance. Education and precautions are the strongest tools against COVID-19 infection. Please visit uscis.gov/coronavirus for USCIS updates.

Message regarding two funding opportunities under the Citizenship and Assimilation Grant Program.

WASHINGTON—U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is accepting applications for two funding opportunities under the Citizenship and Assimilation Grant Program. The grant opportunities, mandated by Congress and funded with appropriations rather than the agency's operating funds, will provide up to \$10 million in grants for citizenship preparation programs in communities across the country.

These competitive grant opportunities are open to organizations that prepare lawful permanent residents for naturalization and promote civic assimilation through increased knowledge of English, U.S. history, and civics.

USCIS expects to announce award recipients in September 2020, if agency staff are available to review applications and oversee the program. However, should agency staff be furloughed in late August, USCIS anticipates that the grant program could be impacted or even terminated for the fiscal year.

USCIS seeks to expand availability of high-quality citizenship and assimilation services throughout the country with these two grant opportunities:

- [Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Application Services](#). This grant opportunity will fund up to 33 organizations that offer both citizenship instruction and naturalization application services to lawful permanent residents. Applications are due by Aug. 31.
- [The Refugee and Asylee Assimilation Program](#). This grant opportunity will fund up to six organizations to provide individualized services to lawful permanent residents who entered the United States under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program or were granted asylum. Applications are due by Aug. 31.

USCIS will consider various program and organizational factors, including past grantee performance, when making final award decisions. In addition, all funded grant recipients must enroll in [E-Verify](#) as a regular employer within 30 days of receiving the award and remain as a participant in good standing with E-Verify throughout the entire period of grant performance. Funded grant recipients will be required to verify all new hires at hiring locations performing work on a program or activity that is funded in whole or in part under the grant. New to this year's program is a prerequisite that applicants and sub-awardees certified under the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) must comply with all SEVP requirements at the time of application.

Since it began in 2009, the USCIS Citizenship and Assimilation Grant Program has awarded approximately \$92 million through 434 grants to immigrant-serving organizations in 39 states and the District of Columbia.

To apply for one of these funding opportunities, visit [grants.gov](#). For additional information on the Citizenship and Assimilation Grant Program for fiscal year 2020, visit [uscis.gov/grants](#) or email the USCIS Office of Citizenship at citizenshipgrantprogram@uscis.dhs.gov.

For more information on USCIS and our programs, please visit [uscis.gov](#) or follow us on Twitter ([@uscis](#)), Instagram ([/uscis](#)), YouTube ([/uscis](#)) and Facebook ([/uscis](#)).

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Fee Schedule and Changes to Certain Other Immigration Benefit Request Requirements

As required by federal law, USCIS conducted a comprehensive biennial fee review and determined that current fees do not recover the full cost of providing adjudication and naturalization services. On July 31, 2020, we announced a [final rule that adjusts the fees we charge](#) for most immigration and naturalization benefit requests. The new fees become effective Oct. 2, 2020.

USCIS is primarily funded by fees for immigration and naturalization services. Fee schedule adjustments are necessary to recover the full operating costs associated with administering the nation's lawful immigration system efficiently and fairly and efficiently adjudicating immigration benefit requests, including the numerous requests and services provided without charge.

In addition to adjusting fees, the final rule removes certain fee exemptions, limits fee waivers, alters premium processing time limits, and modifies certain intercountry adoption processing.

Some of our forms will change. We will post the new and revised forms online 30 days before the new rule goes into effect. These forms include:

- Form I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker;
- Form I-600/I-600A, Supplement 3, Request for Action on Approved Form I-600/I-600A;
- Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization; and
- Form I-912, Request for a Fee Waiver.

We are providing a grace period of up to 60 days in which we will accept both the previous and the new versions of certain forms as long as payment of the new, correct fees accompanies the forms. Applicants and petitioners must use the new or revised form by Oct. 2, 2020.

If you need help calculating your fees, please use the online USCIS [fee calculator](#). Our calculator will have the most up-to-date fee information and can help you determine the correct filing and biometric services fees for any [form processed at a USCIS lockbox facility](#).