



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: Dec 15th, 2020
TO: Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: David Draper, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: Dec 9th, 2020 Task Force Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: Wednesday, Feb 10th, 2021
Time: 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon
Location: Microsoft Teams or TBA

Contact: David Draper
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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 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 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, S1111C, Orlando, Florida 32801

ORLANDO AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

This meeting was held through Microsoft Teams. Approximately 57 people were in attendance. David Draper, Community Liaison Manager, represented the Florida Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Rosa Chaves, Community Liaison for the Central Region, was also present. Everyone introduced themselves and the agencies that they represented.

Special presentation

- **Shaimaa Elawdan – ESL Program Manager Catholic Charities of Central Florida**, provided an overview about Adult Education Program at Catholic Charities. They are now providing morning, afternoon, and night as well as online and hybrid classes. Teachers attend bi-monthly trainings and provide weekly reports to students.
- **Yamilet Exposito – CRS Vocational Advisor and Orientation Coordinator Catholic Charities Central Florida**, provided an overview on the impact of COVID on orientation. New Arrival Orientations and Pre-Employment training are being offered virtually and through educational videos and tutorials. They also have clients enrolled in a vocational study to help them achieve their educational and career goals. They have clients enrolled at Orange Technical college. Many refugees are enrolling in health science programs and architecture/construction. Regarding clients, the vast majority are Haitians and Cubans. Student retention has been good.

GENERAL UPDATES/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Vesna Bozic, USCIS Community Relations Officer**, informed the task force that USCIS is now offering test in braille. The naturalization test has changed slightly (Only the civics portion) – the reading a writing portion remain unchanged. This will only impact people who filed an application after Wednesdays at 10:30am and Thursdays at 6:00pm.
- **Maria Diez – Mentoring and Youth Programs**, announced that they need mentors who are Creole speakers to help Haitian clients. Mentors who apply will be trained and should commit for at least for six months. They have 50 clients between the Mentoring and Youth programs.
- **Sandra Algarin, Community Health Centers** said that if a person doesn't qualify for assistance, they can apply for a discount if the family income is under \$51,000 a year or fall under 400% of poverty level. They have Covid testing by appointment only. They also offer programs for eligible migrants.

Asli Yalim, UCF Assistant Professor in the school of Social Work is still conducting research on the kinds of issues health care providers are having in mental health specifically related to refugee clients.

- **Janet Foggs – DCF Government Operations Consultant**, informed the task force that SNAP benefits were extended this month. Everyone will receive the maximum amount. The DCF Care Coordinator Program new project is doing well. Anyone in need of case management should reach out.
- **Michael Holbrook – CC Director of Comprehensive Refugee Services**, let the task force know that they have been focusing in preparing for rental assistance issues when the eviction moratorium expires.

David Draper, Department of Children and Families Refugee Services Community Liaison Manager encouraged everyone to continue checking the DCF webpage for Covid-19 updates on operation and changes to benefits. DCF Refugee Services released three procurements (NW, SW, and Miami). If anyone has questions about them, they must contact the procurement manager listed on the ITN (intention of Negotiate). Arrivals statewide are slow and the majority of people arriving are Cubans and Haitians. Some Colombians and Venezuelans are being approved for asylum. The current refugee presidential determination was set at 15,000 (however this could change). The eviction moratorium ended, but the CDC eviction moratorium is still in place throughout the calendar year.

NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday Feb 10th, 2021

Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

Location: Virtual Microsoft Teams

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