



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 22, 2020
TO: Members of the Broward Refugee Task Force
FROM: Miriam Rosario (RS)
SUBJECT: July 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: September 18, 2020
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 Palm Beach 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

PALM BEACH AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was held via a telephone 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 for joining the meeting. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves and the agencies they represented. Approximately 40 people joined the call.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

A brief overview of the Department of Health Translation project was presented by Sasha Verbillis-Kolp, LCSW, MSW. Members of the task force and others members worked on this special translation project. The purpose of the project was to translate certain behavioral health screening tools (the RHS-15) into Haitian Creole. The RHS-15 is a mental health screening tool used in health settings to screen people for mind and body symptoms that may be bothering them. The tool is also available in many other languages. Every culture and language has specific terms/phrases to relate emotions and emotional distress. The purpose of this project was to explore emotions and expressions most appropriate and common in the Haitian Creole language. The tool will be used nationally and globally. The assessment tool is available for SER community partners and can be obtained by contacting **Sasha Verbillis Kolp at: sverbilliskolp@gmail.com**.

NEW ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN

Each agency discussed how services and resources are currently being provided during the pandemic. Offices closures and reopening were discussed, as well as timelines. Palm Beach County remains under a continued State of Emergency.

Carlos Naranjo, Resettlement Program Coordinator, Church World Service (CWS)/South Florida Offices, provided information on the Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS). Carlos indicated that due to the Covid19 pandemic situation and Social Security Administration (SSA) office closures, initial SSN card processing has been suspended due the unavailability of the face-to-face interviews. Many clients have been unable to apply for a social security card.

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

American Red Cross (ARC), Jaime Cruz, stated all local ARC office remained closed. Because of the pandemic, fewer volunteers are working with the ARC. RAC continues to try and educate families on hurricane preparedness and fire safety. Questions can be directed to 786-714-6796.

FL Highway Safety Motor Vehicle (FLHSMV) - Ulises Pacheco, Program Consultant, stated that offices are open as of June 3. Offices are open via appointment only. Ulises encouraged individuals to utilize online services whenever possible. For more information, contact 1-850-617-2000 or 1-850-617-3000 (automated 24 hours). For information on online services visit FLHSMV.GOV.

Florida Agency for Health Care Administration. (AHCA) - BUREAU OF MEDICAID, Jerome Hill, Program Operations Administrator – SES, stated that all offices are currently closed. They stated that hospital ICUs are currently being impacted by the pandemic.

Career Source of Palm Beach (CSPBC)- Yolanda Hernandez, Manager Client Services and Marta Roque Senior Career Consultant TANF Program stated that offices are temporarily closes. Clients can receive assistance via appointment only. Most staff are working remotely and assisting customers virtually. More information can be obtained at <https://careersourcepbc.com/> or by calling Marta Roque at (561) 340-1060 ext. 2356.

Palm Beach County Library System- Jayme Bosio, Government Research Services Librarian, Palm Beach County Library System presented and shared updates about the library. Activities are being conducted online through Zoom. The Adult Literacy Project is providing one-on-one virtual tutoring. The Palm Beach County Food Bank has individuals that are assisting others with SNAP benefits applications (must have an appointment). The library is lending Wi-Fi hotspots to families that need them. Meals are being distributed to eligible children. The SNAP program has expanded benefits to 5 library locations.

Department of Health (DOH) – Jill, Register Nurse Supervisor II, TB/Hepatitis, Refugee Coordinator, Florida Department of Health-PB County, updated the task force on refugee clients receiving health assessments, vaccinations, and follow-ups. Clients can call or walk-in. Appointments are being scheduled. DOH is open every day.

ESS/DCF- Teresa Hernandez, Economic Self-Sufficiency Program (ESS/DCF) and Gus Artau, Community Partners Liaison announced that ACCESS storefronts remain closed (there continues to be drop boxes to drop off documents). Documents can also be scanned and faxed. Clients are again required to complete an interview to receive benefits. Clients may call 1-866-762-2237 or 850-300-4323 (TTY 1-800-955-8771) to complete an interview telephonically. In July ESS/DCF staff started calling clients for interviews. Additional information can be located at DCF website: <https://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>.

RS/DCF – David Draper, CL Manager, stated that important operational updates can be found on the DCF Covid-19 webpage (www.myflfamilies.com/COVID19). The governor’s eviction moratorium has been extended until 8/1/2020. He encouraged the task force to research additional community housing resources and solutions to prevent housing issues for refugee families.

RS Contracted providers: Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS);

Carlos Naranjo, Resettlement Program Coordinator, Church World Service (CWS)/South Florida Offices, provided information on the **Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS)**. All CRS services and Matching Grant (MG) services are operating virtually. CRS services are all operational and clients can be seen face-to-face via appointments. The program has been seeing an increasing number of arrivals (parolees). The CRS employment is working hard to place refugees in employment (many recent job placements). Job developers are helping clients with interview skills and job searches. The CRS program continues to provide Tier Case Management, Employment, Career Laddering, Legal Services, Adult Education, Child Care (vouchers) and Mentoring services.

Sherrie Bedwell with the **Palm Beach County Schools** shared the updates for the **Adult Education Program which are offered through the Palm Beach School District**. Adult Education class sessions are being offered online. PBC schools are currently closed. Students are learning computer skills and virtual learning with the help of the teachers. Students have finished the summer sessions and fall registration will start on 8/10.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Meeting: Friday, September 18, 2020

Time: 10:00 AM to 12PM

Location: TBA

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