



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 24, 2020
TO: Members of the Palm Beach Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: **Miriam Rosario**, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: September 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: November 20, 2020
Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Location: TBA
Contact: **Miriam Rosario**
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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 COUNTY REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING**INTRODUCTION**

The meeting was held via a conference telephone call. Miriam Rosario (MIR), Community Liaison, represented the DCF, Refugee Services (RS) Program, Southeast Region (SER). Miriam thanked all participants for calling into the meeting. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves and the agencies they represented.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

David Claros, Supervising Attorney, Church World Service, provided an overview presentation on changes to immigration policy and their impact on clients served through the comprehensive refugee services program. He mentioned the pandemic creating issues in scheduling immigration hearings. He stated that USCIS fees will also soon be increasing. Other topics discussed included the public charge rule, difficulties in applying for asylum, and USCIS delays in processing work permits.

NEW ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN

In response to the pandemic, beginning on Monday, September 14, Palm Beach and Broward are moving into phase two of the Safe, Smart, Step-by-Step Plan for Florida's Recovery. The task force had an open conversation about how services are being provided during the pandemic and timelines for reopening offices. Palm Beach School District will reopen classroom learning on September 21 and Broward County School District will be reviewing their plan on September 22 and most likely reopening in October. Families still have the option for E-Learning instruction in-home if they are unable or unwilling to be physically present in school. Refugee Services (RS) has created tools to help parents and provider staff navigate the school system. This tool includes links, phone numbers, and information.

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCHA) -Jerome Hill – Program Operations Administrator, - Bureau of Medicaid, informed the task force that offices are closed and AHCA continues to work virtually.

U.S. Department of Labor / Wage and Hour Division- Ariel G Rivera Maldonado, Community Outreach and Resource Planning Specialist, indicated that their physical office remains closed during the pandemic. However, their offices remain completely operation (services are being provided by phone, online, and virtually). The office continues to focus on employment protections related to minimum wage payments, overtime laws, family medical leave, and safe/acceptable employment conditions.

Career Sources Palm Beach (CSPB)- Marta Roque gave updates on the programs and services currently being offered by their program.

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Palm Beach County (HMHB)- Marta Espinosa, Outreach Educators, spoke about their program and services offered to help mothers. Clients can call the office. During this pandemic Phase II HMHB services have not been interrupted. HMHB has offered pampers and formula to families in need during the pandemic. HMHB will be closing their office in West Palm Beach in November. The office in Lake Worth remain open. Greenacres, 4601 Lake Worth Road. Greenacres, FL 33463. Call at 1 (888) 414-4642.

Palm Beach County Sheriff Office (PBSO)- Marcia Bahia, Gang Prevention Coordinator, stated that they are offering virtual workshops and training to all refugee youth.

CILO- A representative of CILO report on rent assistance resources programs they are offering.

Economic Self-Sufficiency (ACCESS) Program, ESS/DCF- Teresa Hernandez-Troisi, Senior Human Services Program Specialist, reported on ACCESS. DCF storefronts are continuing to offer drop boxes for applications (or applications can be scanned or faxed). Customers can visit the DCF Website and also Virtually ask questions thru a “bubble”. A new DCF Virtual Assistant on the MYACCESS page can help customers reset passwords, update verification for application processing, and get quick answers to general questions. The virtual assistance initiative is available in English, Spanish and Creole. Please note, DCF’s Statewide Customer Call Center is still available for customer questions and application assistance at 850-300-4323 or 1-866-762-2237 (TTY 1-800-955-8771). Representatives are available for extended hours, Monday through Friday, 7a.m. to 6p.m. Please visit www.myflfamilies.com/covid19/access.shtml for more information.

ACCESS/DCF-Gus Artau, Community ACCESS Partner, spoke about the new “Aunt Bertha” initiative and website (www.myfloridamyfamily.com). The site is designed to act as a database for those that need to connect to various non-profits and faith-based organizations. The system will be available to the general public, partner agencies and organizations, and DCF staff. This web-based system will help match people in need of services with the agencies that can help them meet those specific needs or services. DCF would like to expand this service throughout the community to include as many non-profit service providers as possible. If you find you are not listed and would like to be, you can request to be added through the website.

RS/DCF – David Draper, CL Manager, reminded task force members to check the DCF Covid-19 webpage for important updates on benefits and service delivery. He mentioned that DCF Refugee Services currently has two active procurements, one in Southwest Florida and another in Miami. He mentioned the state’s eviction moratorium being extended through October 1. He also shared that the next refugee task force will be through a virtual call (Microsoft Teams).

RS Providers:

Catholic Charities of Dioceses of Palm Beach (CCDPB), Sandra Perez, Catholic Charities, stated that they were recently awarded a new grant to work with those impacted by human trafficking. Sandra will be directing this program as well as the matching grant and resettlement programs. **Church World Service (CWS)** legal program noted that some asylum applications are being processed and granted. He also mentioned delays in the processing of employment authorization. Carlos I. Naranjo, Resettlement Program Coordinator, and Francisco Figueroa, Program Administrator, Church World Service (CWS), provided information on the CRS and Matching Grant (MG) programs in Palm Beach. CRS and MG are both fully operational and clients are seeing by appointment only. Virtual appointments are also available. CRS services include Tier Case Management, Employment, Career Ladders, Legal, Adult Education, Child Care, and Mentoring services. Oscar Rivera, Director Southern Programs, CWS updated the task force on arrivals numbers. CWS is seeing an increase in Cuban and Haitian arrivals. The Mentoring Services program is functioning and both mentors and mentees are being recruited and matched.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Meeting: Friday, November 20, 2020
Time: 10:00 to 12PM
Location: Virtual Call TBA

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