



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

Ron DeSantis

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 8, 2020

TO: Members of the Tallahassee Refugee Task Force

FROM: Theresa Leslie, Refugee Services (RS)

SUBJECT: Task Force Meeting Minutes for September 8, 2020

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: December 8, 2020
Time: 10:00 AM to 11:30 PM
Location: Department of Children and Families
Microsoft TEAMS Conference Call Tallahassee, FL
Contact: Theresa Leslie
Office: (850) 778-4065
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E-Mail: Theresa.Leslie@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Tallahassee 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 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, 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.

TALLAHASSEE AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was held via conference call. Theresa Leslie from the Department of Children and Families Refugee called the meeting to order.

PRESENTATIONS

International Rescue Committee, Una Bilic, Site Manager presented program updates and current successes and challenges:

IRC reported that since the middle of March staff, interns, and volunteers have been working remotely while assisting refugee clients through the Zoom and What's App applications. However, IRC recently began having one staff person present at the office each day. Many clients have returned to work, but full-time hours have not been fully restored for everyone. During the last three months, IRC has helped clients brush up on job interviewing skills, job application completion, and hurricane preparedness. Local hotels and landscaping companies continue to be important employment partners for the refugee population. IRC reported that an AmeriCorps VISTA member and summer interns are working to find potential jobs for other clients.

IRC has been able to assist certain clients who have fallen behind on rent payments. During the summer months, the local school board and other non-profits have been delivering food and necessities to many of the refugee clients in the area. Backpacks were donated from a sorority and the local university.

IRC explained that many local refugees have approached the time when they can apply for citizenship. The Duval County Health Department was able to assist these families at a minimal cost to help them obtain required medical documentation. Currently, IRC is assisting 36 clients with citizenship applications.

IRC also asked task force members to help with suggestions/referrals for employment opportunities and mentoring volunteers.

IRC continues to develop its Mentoring program, which focuses on civic and social engagement while also supporting each client's individual educational and vocational advancement. The program is designed to give individuals extra guidance and experiences that will contribute to a successful future.

The Leon County Health Department reminded participants that RoseAnn Sheck, MSW will now be representing the Health Department.

Theresa Leslie, Refugee Services Community Liaison led a brainstorming session with the task force asking for their creative input about possible employment opportunities. All members were asked to forward their suggestions to Theresa Leslie or Una Bilic.

Human Trafficking Local Update was presented by Robin Hassler Thompson, JD, MA, Executive Director of the Survive and Thrive Advocacy Center (STAC).

Survive and Thrive Advocacy Center is a Coordinator and Service Provider for Victims of Human Trafficking nationally. As Executive Director, Robin Thompson works as a consultant and trainer whose work focuses on human trafficking and violence against women. Ms. Thompson explained that she teaches and updates many key professionals in health, social services, and justice system and other community leaders including faith-based agencies. Local, state, and federal law enforcement engage in her trainings and provide to her their interactions with alleged traffickers. Law enforcement have become increasingly aware that human trafficking is a hidden reality. Ms. Thompson remarked that STAC was created to fill these needs and meet the challenge of working intensely with the survivors of trafficking while keeping others alert to identify the traffickers. Ms. Thompson encouraged the task force to take advantage of their virtual training courses and webinars. She provided this link:

<https://www.surviveandthriveadvocacy.org/information/event-calendar/>

As part of their 3rd Friday monthly training, Ms. Thompson announced that on November 19, 2020 that healthcare professionals can take advantage of an excellent course on human trafficking. They can become informed by learning the requirements of Florida law regarding human trafficking education and help them identify both sex and labor trafficking within their practice setting. This training will also teach how to best respond and learn about resources to support trafficked persons and those who are at risk of being trafficked.

Task Force members and guests were thanked for their participation and continued support.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

10:00 to 11:30 AM

Department of Children and Families TEAMS conference call

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