



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carrol
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 22, 2018.
TO: Members of the Broward Refugee Task Force
FROM: **Miriam Rosario (RS)**
SUBJECT: March 15, 2018 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: May 17, 2018
Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Location: Florida Department of Children and Families,
1400 W. Commercial Blvd. Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309
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 Broward 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

BROWARD COUNTY REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was held at the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Miriam Rosario, Community Liaison represented the DCF, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Miriam thanked the Economic Self-Sufficient (ESS) Program, DCF for hosting the meeting. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

A presentation on “**Using Social Media for Community Outreach**” was given by Paige Patterson-Hughes, Southeast Region Communications Director at the Department of Children & Families in the Southeast Region. This presentation focused on the most effective way to utilize social media for outreach. Despite many social media options, Ms. Patterson pointed out that Facebook is still the most utilized and effective tool to master for outreach purposes. Studies show that refugees are using Facebook more than any other social media with an average of 7 hours per day of usage. Paige explained that Facebook Groups have the capacity to build on-line communities and are now prioritized by Facebook so all posts in these groups will show up first in a member’s newsfeed. All Facebook posts are automatically translated so this saves time and funds and allows for timely communication between agencies/programs and potential clients in the Facebook group. It is critical to have a point person assigned to maintain the group and post regularly. It was emphasized the importance of information posted in the internet it reminds indefinitely and its exposure worldwide.

A second presentation on “**Increasing Connections between the Haitian community and Mental Health Services**” was given Alexa Lee, Director of Programs and Kathlyn Belizaire, Outreach Specialist, Palm Beach County Substance Awareness Coalition (SAC). Palm Beach County Substance Awareness Coalition was created to give parents and youths the tools to live drug and alcohol free. By bringing together local educators, substance abuse professionals, law enforcement administrators, and business leaders, they coordinate activities, provide information, and organize public awareness campaigns to steer youths and adults away from harmful substances. The presentation highlighted the importance to inform the community specially the Haitian community of services available to them. Alexa Lee made the announcement of two brand-new grants that benefit the Haitian and Hispanic communities. The two new grants are to outreach in both Palm Beach and Broward County community the Haitian and Hispanic population on available counseling services in their own language. Ms. Lee describe both programs. These groups are working in schools, community centers, and in homes to educate teens, parents and all other adults about the dangers of using drugs and alcohol. The Haitian program is available especially to the youth. SCA can partner with another organization and during event they help the group with resume writing, job interviewing as they learn about their counseling services. A survey was distributed by SAC to assess what topics will be interested to the clients served by the RTF organizations. The Survey Questioner was completed by RTF members and Kathlyn Belizaire coordinated with RS providers’ further collaborations.

NEW ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN**Client Outreach Plan for 2018**

Miriam stated that among the 25 resettlement organizations that closed nationally, some are in the state of Florida. Several of them have closed or are planning to close due to the dramatic reduction in refugee admissions. RS providers are strongly doing outreach plans with the community organizations and contacting previous clients as ways to increase intake and those served. Consequently, WRD celebrations will share resources and will be an outreach activity as well. The RS providers discussed some ways to improve their strategies. Miriam stated that due to the decrease in the number of clients, agencies should be very creative on how to maintain services for refugees.

Planning for World Refugee Day (WRD) 2018

Jocelyn Martinez, Program Director for Project RENEW reported on the planning activities to coordinate the WRD event. She informed that the celebration of "World Refugee Day" will be on Friday, June 15, 2018 at Broward College's North Campus in Coconut Creek, Florida. Refugees will be recognized for the accomplishments and awards will be given into cover different categories. This year a resource fair will be coordinated with various community organizations. Recognizing that refugees are an integral part of our community, the goal of the World Refugee Day celebration is to introduce prominent civic, religious, and community leaders to the community, faith based, and governmental organizations and agencies that serve refugees in our community. The event will honor and recognize refugees on an award luncheon that will follow a naturalization ceremony by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Should you have any questions and/or to RSVP, please contact Clara Jaramillo (Broward College/Project RENEW) at 954-201-3713.

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

USCIS, Zulma Ruiz reported on a new payment option is available for the 41 fee-based forms processed at USCIS Lockbox facilities. To pay by Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover, applicants will need to use Form G-1450, Authorization for Credit Card Transaction (PDF, 260 KB). Police clearance letters are no longer required for Cuban Adjustment Act (CAA) applicants. To read more about what to submit in conjunction with CAA Application for Adjustment, please visit <https://www.uscis.gov/greencard/caa>. She also briefly spoke about Haiti-the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation and the impact for Haiti. TPS beneficiaries who re-registered may request a new Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Additional information available- <https://www.dhs.gov/tps> . Additional information: to check the status of a pending application, petition, or request, go to Case Status Online, can also call us at 1-800-375-5283 (TDD for deaf and hard of hearing: 1-800-767-1833) or make an appointment at a local field office at infopass.uscis.gov.

ESS/DCF- Wilbert Rodney remind all on the different benefits such as DSNAP, RAP, TANF and each services criteria.

DOH- Migdalia Diaz, DOH informed that RS-DOH appointments are up to date and she can be contacted via email at Migdalia.Diaz-Nieves@flhealth.gov with any questions. She stated that they are seeing less number of new arrivals and most of them are Haitians.

West Regional Library Broward County –The RTF members and community partners and volunteers will work on the WRD annual event. Mary Cassell, Librarian Senior West Regional Library provided information on this new partnership with USCIS and all the services the Broward Library can provide to RS providers and clients. USCIS will visit libraries to provide forms and general information.

RS Contracted providers: Project RENEW (PR) Clara Jarramillo with PR reported on their registration process for their program. PR have two intake sessions, no GED in been offer during these sessions. PR is doing strong outreach and is asking the community partners for referrals. **Church World Service (CWS)** – discussed his Legal services and referrals process, The IA and Information and Referral program are actively helping many new arrivals specially in the Haitian community. **Youth Co-OP, Inc. (YCI)** – Jesus Garcia reported on their Employment, Vocational Career Laddering, Youth Program which offers GED and Career planning and Educational Path. YCI also offers Credentials/translations services. YCI is experiencing a decline in new intakes, and referral are welcome for those eligible with less than five years of arrival in the USA. Catholic Charities (CCLS)- Peterson St. Philippe Attorney from Catholic Charites Legal Services reported on EAD delaying to average of 4 months, The CCLS is diligently helping these clients and providing direct services and referrals to alleviate these delays. No additional updates.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 17, 2018

Time: 10:00 to 12PM

Location: Florida Department of Children and Families,
1400 W. Commercial Blvd. Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309

Contact: Miriam.Rosario@myflfamilies.com Phone: (561) 227-6722
Taddese.Fessehaye@myflfamilies.com Phone: (407) 317-7335