



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Secretary

DATE: March 9, 2018
TO: Members of the South West Florida Refugee Task Force
FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: February 28th, 2018 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: May 9th 2018
Time: 1:00-3:00pm
Location: USCIS Fort Myers Field
Office, 4220 Executive Circle,
Suite 1, Fort Myers, 33916

Contact: Janet Blair
Phone: (813) 545-1716
Fax: (813) 558-5598
E-Mail: Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com
Taddese.Fessehaye@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the South West Florida area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An Average of fifteen people attends 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 next meeting!

SunCoast Region, 11351 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL 33778

SWFL REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was held at the Sarasota Health Department, located at 2200 Ringling Blvd. Sarasota, Florida. Janet Blair, Community Liaison, represented the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). There were 18 people in attendance and the meeting was called to order at 1:30pm.

PRESENTATIONS

- The first presentation was given by Doug Griesenauer from Suncoast United Way. This presentation was on the ALICE population with a focus on Sarasota County. ALICE, an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, are households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), but less than what it costs to survive (the ALICE threshold). Of Florida's 7.5 million households (20.2 million people), 14% earn below the FPL, and another 30% are ALICE.

Sarasota ALICE levels are as follows: \$20,184 for single adult, \$56,520 for family of four

Federal Poverty Levels are: \$11,770 for single adult, 24,250 for family of four.

More detailed information can be found at each of the following link:

[United Way Suncoast](#)

- The second presentation was from Professor Jody McBrien from the University of South Florida, Sarasota Campus. McBrien gave an overview of her work with refugee resettlement programs in the US, New Zealand and Japan. While the U.S, has resettled over 3 million refugees since World War II, New Zealand has resettled 33,000 and Japan has accepted only 11,300 since 1979. The Japanese method is through an asylum process with very few being granted permanent asylum. Professor McBrien's focus is on the integration and academic success of refugee children. She can be reached at jlmcbrien@sar.usf.edu for more information.
- The final presentation was given by Natalie Harrell, Director of Communications at the Department of Children & Families in the Suncoast Region. This presentation focused on the most effective way to utilize social media for outreach. Despite many social media options, Harrell 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. Harrell 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.

PROVIDER & COMMUNITY UPDATES

- The SWFL Task Force's World Refugee Day event will be held in Sarasota this year at the University of South Florida. The event will be on Friday, June 22nd from noon to 2pm in Selby Auditorium. The event will be spearheaded by Professor Jody McBrien with a task force committee. The event will include a commemoration of World Refugee Day and hopefully a citizenship ceremony, we are still waiting for confirmation from USCIS.
- The Sarasota LSF program reported that they have not yet seen a slow down as they are still working with 400 active clients. The entire CRS program has started using a new outreach tool, Textedly, which allows them to text information to clients on job openings and other important announcements for a monthly fee of \$20 which allows 200 messages to be sent out. This outreach tool has been effective for the program.
- The Collier Health Department reported a slowdown in arrivals. This past month there were 30 new Cuban arrivals and 2 Haitians.

NEXT MEETING **May 9th 2018 from 1:00-3:00pm**

Contacts Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com or Taddese.Fesseheye@myflfamilies.com