



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carrol**  
Secretary

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** May 16, 2018  
**TO:** Members of the Jacksonville Area Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** LeAndra Stafford, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** May 9, 2018 Meeting Minutes

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**THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:**

**Date:** July 11, 2018  
**Time:** 1:30 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.  
**Location:** Baptist Association of Jacksonville  
2700 University Boulevard South  
Jacksonville, Florida 32216  
**Contact:** LeAndra Stafford  
**Office:** (904) 485-9540  
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**E-Mail:** Leandra.Stafford@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Jacksonville area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An average of about twenty-five to thirty people 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!*

5920 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, Florida 32211

## JACKSONVILLE AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

### INTRODUCTION

The meeting was held at the Jacksonville Baptist Association. LeAndra Stafford, Community Liaison represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Services (RS) Program facilitated the meeting. There were 29 people in attendance. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

### GUEST PRESENTATION

- 1.) Maria Aristizabal, Florida's First Coast YMCA Vice President of Youth Development/Operation.
  - A. Maria shared with the group her background. She is a Columbian immigrant who arrived in the 80's. She worked in the School system in North Carolina. She became an advocate for immigrants in the 90's in North Carolina when there was an influx of Mexicans for agriculture (a growth of 400% in the state). From there she has worked for the YMCA for 16 years.
  - B. Because of her advocacy, she has become involved with the Y's "DIG Program" which stands for Diversity, Inclusion, and Global work.
  - C. The Y has locations all around the world including in Africa and she states that when she visits Africa, she learns a great deal from them. DIG is intended to educate staff to become more welcoming to diverse communities and to the refugee community.
  - D. One of her goals in DIG is to partner with providers in the refugee program to work together to welcome the refugees.
  - E. One of the services are free water safety classes. It will consist of 8 class sessions. There is also a grant to make transportation available for those who need it.
  - F. There are summer sessions for ages 5 – 15 and financial assistance is available for families in need.
  - G. They also partner with Baptist for a Healthy Living Center and it is open to all community members. It is located at the Williams YMCA. They have schedule classes and interpretation. They also offer financial assistance.
  - H. The YMCA also offer the CIT program (counselor in training) at the Dupont and Johnson Centers. Currently they are working on getting several refugee teens to participate in the program and are hoping to get more.
- 2.) Willie Coates Jr, City of Jacksonville Parks, Recreation and Community Service Department, Aquatics Supervisor
  - A. Willie introduced Stephanie Holden as the representative for the "Splash Squad"
  - B. The Aquatics Dept has 32 outdoor pools in their program and they are funded through different partners in the Jax Safe Kids project.
  - C. This year they are partnering with DCPS (Duval County Public School) and are giving away to summer camp eight lessons free. Any lessons over eight will cost \$60.
  - D. There will be one instructor for every seven students.

- E. Registration began May 7<sup>th</sup>. However, they are currently working on offering sessions throughout the year. They are installing heaters in seven pool locations throughout Jacksonville.

### **REFUGEE SERVICES CONTRACTED PROVIDERS UPDATE**

- **World Relief (Jose Vega, Director):**
  - WR had 59 arrivals since Oct. 2017
  - 3 arrivals scheduled for May 2018, 2 scheduled for June 2018
  - May 14<sup>th</sup> World Relief Golf Tournament
  - Summer Camp will be held at Faith United for grades 1<sup>st</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>.
  
- **Catholic Charities Bureau (Michelle Karolak, Director):**
  - CCB has no arrivals scheduled
  - 105 registered for FSCJ for the next 15-week term (starts in May)
  - CCB is creating a temp class of level 400 – 500 to keep students engaged until FSCJ next term is started.
  - One ESOL class is closing at Lakewood, opening a class at Prince of Peace in June, and they are currently looking for a location in Orange Park to hold class.
  - There are no pending child care issues pertaining to ESOL.
  
- **Lutheran Social Services (Cristina Parcel, Director):**
  - LSS had 53 arrivals since Oct. 2017
  - LSS has received a family of 4 in April and expect 2 families of 6 each in late May.
  - LSS has 50 employment placements in April.
  - The Youth program is accepting placement for summer camp; one component of the program will allow the students to be paid to attend training.
  - Good news: A client received a GED yesterday.
  
- **Jacksonville Area Legal Aid:**
  - No Update
  
- **Early Learning Coalition:**
  - No Update

### **GENERAL UPDATES**

**USCIS** – The Jacksonville Field Office has become a “pilot office” process changing how client will make contact. Will have to call a national phone number. No more “info passes” for appointments will be given out.

**World Refugee Day 2018** – Will be held on June 15<sup>th</sup> at the Southside Baptist Church 1435 Atlantic Blvd. Jacksonville, Fl. 32207, and the Naturalization will be at the Balis Community Center in San Marco.

**FSCJ ESOL** – ESOL will be closed next week (March 19 – 23) and level testing will be March 26 – April 13<sup>th</sup>. This is for placement in classes starting May 7<sup>th</sup> which is a 15-week class.

**The Healing Project** (Christine Rothberg) – They have been funded for the next year. They recently hired a therapist who is an Arabic speaker and will work on Wednesdays and Saturday. They are also in the process of hiring another therapist who speaks Spanish. Finally, they have an intern name Parker.

**NEW ISSUES/ ACTIONS TAKEN**

- 1.) Agape Clinic located on Kennerly Drive will be abruptly closed on Friday, May 11<sup>th</sup> due to building issue. They will reopen in another location July 1<sup>st</sup>. Until that time, patients can use the other Agape locations around town.
- 2.) There has been an issue with Medicaid transportation. They are dropping clients off at wrong locations; not picking them up; and in one instances the driver took the client to his personal home before dropping them off.
  - A. Deweece Ogden (Agency for Health Care Admin) advised to file a complaint for any Medicaid concerns to 1-800-254-1055. This line is handled by state employees and they keep track of complaints about contracted providers.
  - B. She also stated Medicaid Insurance providers usually use Brokers to subcontract their transportation and they also have a complaint line that can be contacted to inform them of what is going on.