



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carrol**  
Secretary

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** December 18, 2018  
**TO:** Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** David Draper, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** December 12, 2018 TF Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** Wednesday, Feb 13, 2018  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** TBD  
**Contact:** David Draper  
**Office:** (407) 317-7335  
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**E-Mail:** David.Draper@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Orlando 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 thirty to thirty-five 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 at the local, state and national level, request for proposals, training, workshops, conferences, discuss refugee service needs, and explore solutions to those needs. Meeting participants 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!***

400 W. Robinson Street, S1111C, Orlando, Florida 32801

## ORLANDO AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

### INTRODUCTION

This meeting was held at Summit Church located at 735 Herndon Ave. Orlando, FL, 32803. Nineteen people were in attendance. David Draper, Community Liaison Manager, represented the Florida Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Rosa Chaves, DCF Community Liaison for the Central Region, was also present. Everyone introduced themselves and the agencies they represented.

### SPECIAL PRESENTATION

I. **Hope Community Center (HCC) – Eli Garcia, Immigration Community Organizing and Advocacy Coordinator; Sara Ruiz, Citizenship Outreach Coordinator**, provided an overview about the Hope Community Center.

- HCC is a service learning community dedicated to the empowerment of Central Florida's immigrant and working poor communities through education, advocacy, and spiritual growth.
- Since 2014, HCC has obtained a “USCIS Citizenship Grant”. Through this grant, HCC provides citizenship exam preparation. The program utilizes 20-25 volunteers to help refugees complete necessary documents and conduct practice “mock” interviews to prepare for their citizenship exam. Their primary population is Hispanic, but they also serve Chinese, Jamaican, and Haitians and clients from the Virgin Islands and many other countries. HCC has maintained a thirty-year partnership with Catholic Charities. Through this partnership, Catholic Charities assists clients in filling out citizenship applications.
- HCC also operates other programs in the community including English classes and a program called “Making Ongoing Meaningful Steps” (or MOMS). MOMS was created to support mothers taking care of children at home during the workday. The program provides English language training and skills development.
- HCC also offers after-school tutoring, college/career orientation, and information regarding immigration. They have another program focused on community education called “Know Your Rights – Dignity Plan and Protection”. This program instructs immigrants, refugees, and others on their ‘rights’. This information is presented at fairs, workshops, and clinics.
- HCC also works with members of the community to promote the safety of children. They have a program focused on financial literacy. They also operate a program called “Adelante Caminantes” which assists immigrant children.

- II. **Up Orlando – Carla Cox, Program Director**, the presenter was unable to attend at the presentation was postponed.

### **GENERAL UPDATES/ ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Pastor Gabriel Ipasu, president of Africans family & Community Outreach (AFCO)** announced an annual fundraising event for Saturday December 22, 2018 which will be held at Summit Church (735 Herndon Ave. Orlando, Fl. 32803). They are expecting Christmas gift donations for forty or more children ages 1-14.

**Martha Ruiz, Government Operations Consultant from WIC and Nutrition Services** stated that the Florida Department of Health W.I.C. Program has not seen a reduction in the number of clients in Orange County. However, many other counties in Florida have seen a reduction in applicants due to rumors related to ‘public charge’ rules. W.I.C. has been calling clients to explain that W.I.C. enrollment is not a violation of any public charge rules. Also, Martha announced that the National Association of Latinos Executives will be conducting their 2019 Annual Leadership Summit in Orlando. This is an association of physicians, dietitians, and other health care providers who advocate for Latinos. This summit will be held at Universal Resort between February 13 – 15.

**Elizabeth Cronlund, Community Development Coordinator of Summit Church** stated that they received a ‘transitional foster care’ grant for 5 placements. They are currently recruiting certified foster families that will be able to assist with these placements.

**Debbie Cruz, Director of Comprehensive Refugee Services with Catholic Charities (CC)** stated that Catholic Charities continues to see an increase in the number of Venezuelans being approved for asylum. Some of the Venezuelans asylees come with English and job skills, while others need more assistance. However, many Venezuelans are refusing public benefits due to a fear that new ‘public charge’ rules will negatively impact them in the future. Also, Catholic Charities is working with 92 local parishes to provide English classes.

Catholic Charities also provides food assistance to refugees (and others) through their Food Pantry. They also stated that the Catholic Charities Refugee Youth Program will provide 86 youth clients with a ‘Breakfast with Santa’ on Saturday, December 15. The Catholic Charities employment program is adjusting to recent changes but continues to provide employment placements and career laddering. Catholic Charities has noticed an increase in the educational level of certain refugees coming into the United States.

**Vanessa McCarty, Supervising Attorney of Legal Services with Catholic Charities (CC)** stated that they are expanding their “Naturalization and Immigration Services”. They state that the State Department is accelerating the process for obtaining residency.

**Taddese Fessehaye, a private citizen** also reminded the Task Force that the “Legal Aid Society” can sometimes help clients who do not qualify for the legal program at Catholic Charities.

**Martha Ruiz, Government Operations Consultant from WIC and Nutrition Services** reminded everyone that rules proposed by the State Department sometimes take a long time to approve and any impact stemming from these changes will not happen anytime soon.

**David Draper, Community Liaison Manager from Department of Children and Families DCF** stated that there are currently three active DCF Refugee Services procurements in Florida (Tampa/St. Pete, Palm Beach, and Broward). The new contracts are scheduled to begin on October 1, 2019. After these services are procured, every major area (aside from Miami) will operate a ‘Comprehensive Refugee Services’ program. It was also mentioned that Angela Eagle, an AmeriCorps VISTA member with DCF Refugee Services in working on filling all AmeriCorps VISTA slots.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday, Feb 13, 2019

**Time:** 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

**Location:** TBD

**Contact:** David.Draper@myflfamilies.com (407) 317-7335  
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