



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carrol**  
Secretary

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 6, 2018  
**TO:** Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Taddese Fessehaye, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** February 14, 2018 TF Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** Wednesday, April 11, 2017  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Florida Department of Transportation  
133 S. Semoran Blvd., Orlando, FL 32807  
**Contact:** Taddese Fessehaye  
**Office:** (407) 317-7335  
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**E-Mail:** Taddese.Fessehaye@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 the Florida Department of Transportation, located at 133 S. Semoran Blvd; Orlando, FL 32807. Twenty-eight people were in attendance. Taddese Fessehaye, Community Liaison Manager represented the Florida Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. David Draper, RS Procurement Manager and Rosa Chaves, Community Liaison for the Central Region were also present. Everyone introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

### SPECIAL PRESENTATION

- I. **WIC - Martha Elena Ruiz, Government Operations Consultant with the Florida Department of Health in Orange County** and WIC & Nutrition Services, provided an overview about the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) program.
  - WIC was created in 1966 and was introduced as a law of the USA in 1972. It is a federally funded nutrition program providing healthy foods education and counseling, breastfeeding support, and referrals for health care.
  - WIC provides services to every one regardless of their immigration status. They see around 33,000-35,000 clients per month in 8 permanent sites/clinics, provide an EBT card with \$47.00 monthly per person plus vegetables that can be accepted by 2,000 supermarkets in Florida. Also, it contributes \$120.00 extra in formula for babies. WIC serves pregnant and postpartum women as well as infants and children up to 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. The program also provides services to homeless and foster kids. The criteria for eligibility includes family size, gross household income (could be up to 185% of the Federal Poverty Level), Florida resident for more than 10 days, have been in emergency situation - been in a shelter, needs food, and/or formula for children and must be at nutritional risk. For the income eligibility exists a table according to the family size and they count the fetus as a family member.
  - The program is run by registered dietitians and nutritionists, providing assessment of nutrition status, nutrition counseling and education, interactive nutrition campaigns, medical nutrition therapy, and breastfeeding education, counseling, and support (80% of Orange County WIC mothers initiated breastfeeding). They try to have a diverse group of nutritionists from the same culture of clients even sign language.
  - The WIC program saves about \$1.77 in Medicaid costs for every \$1.00 WIC spends to serve a pregnant woman during the first 60 days after birth. The WIC program

also saves about \$3.50 for every \$1.00 spent on prenatal component of WIC over the following 18 years. Moreover, the provision of these services helps to reduce childhood iron deficiency anemia and infant mortality.

- From January 2017 through December 2017, WIC clients have spent \$26.6 million in EBT transactions and the average amount clients spend per month is \$2,218,280.

II. **CHRYSALIS HEALTH - Monica Hertzbach, Community Relations Liaison** provided an overview about their Mental Health Counseling Program.

- Chrysalis is one of the leading providers of mental health services for children, adolescents, adults, and families throughout the South Florida area. It was founded originally in 1995 as a small behavioral health group home for children, The Chrysalis Center began providing a full range of community mental health services in March, 1999. Over time, Chrysalis evolved in response to a growing need for effective behavioral healthcare for children and families in the community. Today, Chrysalis Health is a comprehensive behavioral healthcare agency serving people of all ages throughout Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties. They have a diverse group of team members, including therapists, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, who care for those in schools, homes, and throughout many locations across South Florida.
- Chrysalis Health provides mental health counseling for depression, anxiety, sexual abuse, substance abuse, etc. Therapists go home to provide treatment and make the assessment been a bridge between home and school. They also serve Medicaid clients but no Medicare and have not age limited up starting at the age of tree years old. They do not provide services to autistic individuals.
- Chrysalis serves clients in two languages- English and Spanish and are in need of a Creole speaking therapist. They receive referrals from different agencies such as DCF, OCPS, etc.

**GENERAL UPDATES/ ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Anna Packham, Market Place Director with Primary Care ACCESS Network** stated that Puerto Rican and Virgin Islands' clients now have an extended "Special Enrollment" in the Market Place and they do not have the regular 60 days' window after losing their Medicaid.

**Debbie Cruz, Director of Comprehensive Refugee Services with CC** stated that they are seeing less number of new arrivals and most of them are Haitians. In December 2017, they resettled a Congolese family with one of the family members pregnant and one week after they arrived she delivered a tiny baby who is now in a good health condition. St. John Vianney Catholic Church opened ESOL classes onsite and CC is partnering with them and sending refugee clients from that area to take classes. CC is reporting success

in high schoolers. One of their youth clients is working with the Second Harvest Food bank after a successful on-the-job training.

**Taddese** 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. Consequently, Florida's refugee program budget has been reduced by approximately 40% – 50%. LSF in Orlando closed on Jan 26, 2018, IRC in Miami is closing at the end of March 2018, and several other programs have closed in Miami. Jacksonville area used to provide different services through individual organizations. Now RS is considering a model similar to that of Orlando and the Southwest Florida Comprehensive Refugee Services.

**David Draper, Procurement Manager with RS** stated that due to the decrease in the number of clients, agencies should be very creative on how to maintain services for refugees.

**Edly Vliet, Community Relations Officer with the USCIS** stated that they are reviewing the most recent files and especially Venezuelan asylum seekers. Edly advised that we should explain to clients to be patient with the process. EAD is taking about 4.5 months which is a little more than previous processing period due to the workload.

#### **COMMUNITY PROJECT UPDATES**

Taddese suggested to form a planning workgroup for the 2018 World Refugee Day commemoration and the members listed below volunteered to serve in the workgroup. The group agreed to conduct their first meeting on Feb 23rd at 10:00 am. Rosa Chaves was tasked with facilitating the meetings and sending invitations.

1. Ada Tirado - Community Health Centers
2. Jose Aguayo - Working Together Coalition
3. Salma Chiny - Office of United States Senator Marco Rubio
4. Weam Jabbar – Arab American community Center (AACC)
5. Representatives from Catholic Charities
6. Martha Ruiz - WIC/DOH Orange County
7. Representatives from Summit Church

#### **NEXT MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday, April 11, 2018

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

**Location:** Florida Department of Transportation  
Lake George Conference Room  
133 S. Semoran Boulevard  
Orlando, FL 32807

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