



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott  
Governor

Mike Carrol  
Secretary

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** September 21, 2018  
**TO:** Members of the Palm Beach Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Miriam Rosario (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** September 21, 2018 Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** Friday, November 16, 2018  
**Time:** 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM  
**Location:** West Palm Beach City Hall  
401 Clematis St. West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
**Contact:** Miriam Rosario  
**Office:** (561) 227-6722  
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**E-Mail:** Miriam.rosario@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Palm Beach 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

## **PALM BEACH AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The meeting was held at the West Palm Beach City Hall. Miriam Rosario (MIR), Community Liaison represented the DCF, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Miriam thanked Mayor Jeri Muoio and Jose Tagle, assistant to the Mayor for hosting the meeting. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves, services and the agency they represented.

### **SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS**

A presentation was given by Rebecca Hahessy, Director of Client Services, Feeding South Florida (FSF) on services available to refugees and the community. FSF is the leading domestic hunger relief organization. FSF is the largest food bank in the counties they represent; Broward and Palm Beach. Rebecca shared some important new ways to improve food distribution and food insecurity. FSF provides opportunities for all - donating food and funds, sponsoring food drives, volunteer opportunities, and advocacy. They also assist with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), FL Kida Care, Medicaid and Medicare programs. FSF distributes \$84 million worth of food (50 million pounds) to south Florida communities. They are part of the national and state food pantries and food banks. Their centers also assist with phone calls, sending faxes and making copies. FSF connect families with training and resources to increase family stability. They provide access to nutritious food at the choice pantry and provide referrals to partners agencies. Staff and clients are advised to make appointments to visit their warehouses in Pembroke Pines and in Boynton Beach, to tour the place and to obtain the food that they need. In South Florida 68% of families must choose between food or utilities. There was an open discussion among members on ways to collaborate with FSF and questions on ways to educate and help refugee clients, children and seniors. Rebecca's PowerPoint presentation will be sent to task force members.

### **NEW ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN**

#### **Welcoming Week Planning (WW),**

During the week of September 14-24, 2018, Welcoming America and its partners across the country will host National Welcoming Week (NWW), a nationwide event that will bring together immigrants and U.S.-born community members in a spirit of unity through service projects focusing on volunteerism, civic participation, and creative expression. In Florida and nationwide, Welcoming Week will be celebrated. In Palm Beach County, the event took place at the Palm Beach County Library. In Broward County, the event will take place at Broward College (Project Renew) on 9/24/19 and will be hosted by Broward College. Miriam thanked BC/PR for their ongoing commitment.

### **GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

USCIS, Zulma Ruiz Community Relations Officer (CRO) indicated USCIS is now using Tablets for English Reading/Writing Tests. On Oct. 1, USCIS will be using digital tablets to administer the English reading and writing tests during naturalization interviews as part of the agency's ongoing business modernization efforts. Although USCIS applicants already use digital tablets

to sign or verify parts of their applications, this new approach expands tablet usage, allowing the device to be used for a greater portion of the application process. USCIS will be able to continue using the paper process on a case-by-case basis. While the eligibility requirements and the subject material of the naturalization test have not changed, applicants are now using a stylus on a digital tablet instead of a paper application. Immigration Services Officers (ISO) will carefully instruct applicants on how to use the tablets before administering the tests. For the reading test, a sentence will appear on the tablet and the ISO will ask the applicant to read it. For the writing test, several lines will appear on the tablet, replicating the appearance of a piece of blank paper. The ISO will read a sentence aloud and ask the applicant to write it on the tablet. Applicants will continue to take the civics test verbally, without the tablet.”

USCIS “are sending text and email messages about filing Form I-90, Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card online. If you are a lawful permanent resident and your Green Card has expired or is about to expire, or if you need to replace it for another reason, you may file Form I-90 online. Go to the Form I-90 page on our website to begin your online application process.”

There was a discussion regarding Employment Authorization Documents (EAD). There have been delays in the processing time of applications (4 to 8 months to process. Berta will discuss the issue with USCIS headquarters.

**ESS/DCF**-Teresa Hernandez, ESS Specialist, mentioned the importance of advising clients to report their Social Security number and current address to DCF. u

**DOH**- Merlene Ramon, DOH supervisor, informed that RS-DOH appointments are up to date. She has observed an increased number of Venezuelans receiving asylum. She also provided updates on all services to refugees including youth workshops.

**AHACA**- Susie Allen-Brinson, Program Administrator was not present but Miriam informed the task force that as of 02/01/19 adults on Medicaid will have a separate dental insurance (it will not be a part of their medical insurance) and they will be able to access dental care. All of the refugees receiving Medicaid will need to make sure their address is correct because they will be sending out new cards.

**RS Contracted providers:**

**Early Learning Coalition-PBC (ELC)**, Cecilia is leaving and introduced the new specialist. Senior Supervisor Family Services stated they have child care services slots available **Youth Co-OP, Inc. (YCI)** - Jesus Garcia, Coordinator, reported on new arrivals number in PBC. YCI is experiencing a decline in new intakes and referrals are welcome for those eligible with less than five years of arrival in the USA. **Catholic Charities (CCDPBC)**- Sandra Perez reported on MG numbers and families. The EAD being delayed 6 months. The providers are diligently helping these clients and providing direct services and referrals to alleviate these delays. **CWS**, Oscar Rivera, Director, no additional updates.

The RTF meeting adjourned at 11:00 am and followed the:

**DCF Refugee Services Community Public Meeting Time: 11:00AM – 12:00PM**

**NEW ISSUES/ACTIONS TAKEN: Community Meeting to discuss the future goals and service delivery system of refugee services in Broward County. This meeting is to prepare the community prior to issuing a solicitation/procurement document.**

Patti Grogan, Director of RS, presented and distributed a data report on Statewide Arrivals by Month, Federal Fiscal Year 2015 through July 2018. She introduced the Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS) service delivery model which is already functioning in certain areas of the state (Central Region). There were questions and answers. She emphasized that all future questions must be directed toward the procurement manager(s). Once the ITN is published, there is a silence and all questions must be submitted to the procurement contact person listed in the ITN.

**NEXT MEETING:**

**Next Meeting: Friday, November 16, 2018**  
Time: 10:00 to 12PM  
Location: West Palm Beach City Hall  
401 Clematis St. WPB, FL 33301

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