



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Secretary

DATE: April 26, 2018
TO: Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force
FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: April 24th Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: Tuesday, August 21, 2018
Time: 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Location: Pinellas Technical College, Bldg. 1
6100 154th Ave N, Clearwater, FL
Contact: Janet Blair
Phone: (813) 545-1716
Fax: (727) 588-7063
E-Mail: Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Tampa area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An average of 50 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 next meeting!

TAMPA BAY AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MINUTES

Mission Statement: Helping Refugees to settle, integrate and thrive through support, education and community.

The meeting was held at the Department of Children & Families located at 9393 North Florida Ave, Tampa, FL. Janet Blair, Taddese Fessehaye and David Draper represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Service Program. A total of 78 were present and the meeting was called to order at 1:37pm.

Presentations:

- A Mental Health Minute was offered by Grace Jean-Pierre from the mental health subcommittee. This educational presentation gave an overview of trauma informed care.
- Our first presentation was from Natalie Harrell, Director of Communications at DCF in the Suncoast Region. This presentation focused on the most effective way to utilize social media for outreach to refugee clients. Despite the many social media options, Harrell demonstrated 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.
- The second presentation was provided by faculty and students from University of South Florida (USF) who are conducting IRB approved research in collaboration with our task force. Not all faculty or students were able to be present but following is a list of the project which were presented with links and emails for those who want to get involved:
 1. Anthropology professor, Dr. Baer, reported on her nutritional research being conducted with the Congolese community, which is finding surprisingly similar outcomes to the research done in 2015 with the Burmese community. This research will be completed by the end of the year.
 2. Dr. Baer is also in the planning stages for the second addition of "American Stories" an oral history based curricula for ESOL students. Interviewees are needed for the project and anyone interested should email Dr. Baer at baer@usf.edu
 3. A small group of graduate students from the College of Public Health are conducting research on the bullying of refugee students. They are beginning their research with provider interviews and then plan to interview refugee parents. To participate in their study please go to https://usf.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4Meb2YzuPkvikvP
 4. Another College of Public Health graduate student, Jennifer Delva is conducting a needs assessment of health issues for refugee children. Anyone interested in being interviewed can contact her at jdelfa1@health.usf.edu
 5. Finally, a refugee services resource guide is being compiled by an undergraduate Honors College student. Please contact Nabeha Shaer at nshaer@mail.usf.edu

- The final presentation was from Debbi Jarrie from the CDC (Corporation to Develop Communities of Tampa). The CDC offers a variety of services which can benefit refugee families including youth programs, homeownership programs and employability workshops & services. The CDC is also refurbishing apartment buildings and single family homes in order to provide affordable housing for families. Information on CDC programs and services can be found at <https://www.cdcoftampa.org/> and Debbi Jarrie can be reached at: debbi.jarrie@cdcoftampa.org

Refugee Services Update

- Janet reported on the Faith Community Summit held on April 17th. A total of 61 registered online to attend representing 16 different local religious communities. The Summit was a tremendous success allowing the Task Force to educate and empower diverse faith communities already working with refugees and to recruit others who are interested in doing so. Radiant Hands was held up as a promising practice in their work for the past few years with hundreds of refugees in the community. Additionally, a data base was created by the registration process which will foster stronger communication and collaboration.
- The Welcoming Week annual event is being handed over to USF colleges & groups. They will serve as the main host and the task force will support the effort.
- CARIBE announced that the new Saturday class tailored to the Congolese community is going very well with nearly 40 participants. Significant progress is being made by the students. There are 3-4 volunteer drivers who ensure that each student is there on Saturdays and gas card donations for them are appreciated. Janet explained that previously there were almost no Congolese enrolled in adult education and so she and Ron went directly to the community to ask what the barriers were. The Congolese community requested a Saturday morning class and when a new class was started, we've seen a tremendous increase in ESOL enrollment and success.

Committee & General Updates

- The Mental Health Committee gave an update on their progress. This active committee has added several new members and works to build capacity within mental health agencies around culturally appropriate services for refugees, is available for consultation on individual client issues and provides ongoing education to the task force through the mental health minute and to the general community.
- The Education Committee will meet soon and focus on addressing the issue of bullying in Hillsborough County Schools. Lesleigh Lopez is the chair.
- The Outreach Committee has held two outreach events, one on each side of the bay at faith communities affiliated with the task force. More outreach efforts are planned for the future.
- The World Refugee Day Planning Committee is actively working on the upcoming event which will be held at Pinellas Technical College on June 22nd from 1:0-3:30pm. Pinellas Technical College has generously offered four scholarships to their program for four refugee adult education students who meet the requirements. Scholarship application forms will be distributed in April and the awards will be given at the event. Volunteers are still needed for the event.

Upcoming TF Meeting:

August 21st, 2018 at Pinellas Technical College in Clearwater