



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carrol**  
Secretary

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** February 5, 2017  
**TO:** Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Taddese Fessehaye, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** December 13, 2017 TF Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** Wednesday, February 14, 2017  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Florida Department of Transportation  
133 S. Semoran Blvd., Orlando, FL 32807  
**Contact:** Taddese Fessehaye  
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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 attends 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

### INTRODUCTIONS

This meeting was held at the Florida Department of Transportation Building, located at 133 S. Semoran Blvd; Orlando, FL 32807. Thirty-four people were in attendance. Taddese Fessehaye, Community Liaison Manager represented the Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. David Draper, RS Procurement Manager was also present. Everyone introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

### SPECIAL PRESENTATION

#### **I. Community Coordinated Care for Children (4C)**

Shantara Family & Community Partnership Coordinator, provided an overview about the Head start, Early Head Start, and CCP programs.

- Head Start and Early Head Start programs are federally funded and serving children from birth to five years old.
- Early Head Start and CCP (Children Care Partnership) are also federally funded and serve children from birth to three years old. In this case, the family must also be eligible for School Readiness
- Eligibility is based on income, child's age, and proof of residence (lease or mortgage)
- These programs provide free meals including formula and baby food; health screening; developmental screening, vision and hearing screening, and height and weight screening. It also provides hygiene supplies.
- Children with disabilities are welcome and they classify them as type of disability. They do assessments for the program to have 10% of children with disability.
- They always accept applications, but also have a waiting list. Once enrolled they keep these clients until the age of five or three years old, respectively.
- Also, they have the "walking Wednesday" service in Orlando where people can come without appointment to ask for services.
- Each county has its own grant. The program starts with EHS and continue with HS programs.
- Once in the program, they provide English classes. Children should go with an adult.

#### **II. CAIR Orlando**

- Rasha Mubarak, Orlando Regional Coordinator, spoke about CAIR (Council of American Islamic Relations). CAIR is a civil rights organization that provides direct legal representation for victims of any kind of discrimination including bullying.

CAIR advocates for justice unconditionally. Islamophobia is especially high in Florida where females are singled out because of their appearances and they are harassed. The Council do manage legal and immigration services with specialization in asylum cases, naturalization, and “know your rights program” which teaches about employment, school, housing, prisoner’s rights, etc. They also teach their religious beliefs.

- There are approximately 1.7 billion Muslims in the world and approximately 8 million in the U.S, and 400,000 of them are in the state of Florida.
- The enormous diversity of the American Muslim community can be defined by racial, ethnic, linguistic and national origin and its traditions may vary based on ethnicity and country of origin, but not every Muslim is Islam and not every Muslim is religious.
- Their values such as honesty, truthfulness, respect for the earth, care, compassion, respect for learning and wisdom, etc., are very important for the community. They do daily prayers, but the main day for their congregation is Friday and is an obligation for males to go to the mosque, but is optional for females. Not all Muslims shake hands and not having an eye contact is a sign of respect. One of the main holidays is Eid Al-Fitr celebrated after fasting the month of Ramadan.
- There are five pillars of faith: Declaration of faith, Prayer, Fasting, Charity, and Hajj.

III. Monica Hertzbach who was scheduled to give a presentation on Chrysalis Health couldn’t come due to unforeseen circumstances.

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

Patti Grogan, Director of Refugee Services briefly discussed the status of the refugee program. She pointed out that the number of refugee arrivals are decreasing significantly as well as the budget. Due to the recent immigration policy changes, providers all over the state of Florida and nationally have been affected significantly. The number of Cuban and Haitian entrants arriving to the state of Florida keep changing and went down this year as well. The Cuban Family Reunification Program remains closed due to the attach on the U.S. embassy personnel. All Cubans are now traveling to Bogota, Colombia for their visas to reunite with their families. “We were wondering if they can make it that way but we have no idea what is going to happen” Patti says.

Even with a low number of refugees coming, we will continue to provide the same services. We will have significantly fewer resources, the funds are not going to be the same (are going to be decreased) and we resettled less than 100 individuals during the first quarter of 2018. We will have fewer clients, but service will continue.

Patti spoke about Puerto Ricans who were impacted by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. She thanked Refugee Services staff who were involved in providing assistance to PR evacuees

at the Orlando Airport for several weeks and helping Floridians in the Food For Florida (FFP) program all over the state. Patti also mentioned the tremendous impact in housing caused by the PR evacuees, especially in the central Florida region, which makes it difficult to find affordable housing for refugees.

### **NEW ISSUES / ACTIONS TAKEN:**

- I. 2017 YEAR-IN-REVIEW: Taddese gave an overview about task force activities in 2017. He also mentioned the two big events - World Refugee Day on June 23, 2017 and Welcoming Week on Sep 23, 2017. He thanked all task force members that contributed to the success of these two events.
  
- II. TF GOALS FY 2018: Taddese asked the audience what the goals for next year should be and if they have any suggestions for changes in format of the Task Force Meeting for 2018. Below are the ideas presented by the meeting participants:
  1. Invite a speaker about housing solutions in Florida. It was suggested to look into available lots and place mobile homes for new arrivals.
  2. Invite a speaker with information about how to integrate children to the school system; somebody from OCPs.
  3. Patti advised to ensure refugees don't become homeless by working with them before they fall in to crisis point. Lauren Gaines from Summit church suggested avoiding homelessness by asking for help from churches and having good groups of volunteers to keep an eye in the families and tracking them closely.
  4. Bring someone from "Voices of Refugees" for information about the program.
  5. Invite refugees to talk about their resettlement experiences.
  
- III. Community Project Updates:  
Taddese suggested to start planning early for 2018 World Refugee Day commemoration.

### **NEXT MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017

**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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