



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carrol
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 7, 2017
TO: Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: Taddese Fessehaye, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: June 14, 2017 TF Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: August 9, 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. Twenty-nine people were in attendance. Taddese Fessehaye, Community Liaison Manager and Rosa Chaves, Community Liaison for the Central Region represented the Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Everyone introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Joyce Whidden, Executive Director Adult Literacy League (ALL), gave an overview of their program. Ms. Whidden stated that they have been in business since 1968, serving clients sixteen years and older. Eighty percent of their clients are register in English literacy. Their service area is Osceola, Orange, and Seminole counties, currently serving 1,200 students from 80 different countries and in 16 different languages. They have trained volunteers as tutors and just have five paid instructors some of them full-time and some others part-time. The tutoring is delivered at every library branch in all three above mentioned counties. The institution has assisted people taking the TOEFL test to get to Valencia College. Most of the classes are drop in and the program is free; no special documentation is required to enroll. They ask for Florida ID, but is not mandatory to have it. The program is supported by foundations, United Way, corporations and other organizations. The most common causes for dropping classes are transportation, child care, or work, however, they don't have the means to provide transportation nor child care assistance.

GENERAL UPDATES

USCIS – No one was present

DCF ESS/ACCESS: No one was present.

Area Health Care Administration (Medicaid) – Milagros (Millie) Chervoni, was present, but she had no update.

RS-CONTRACTED PROVIDER UPDATES

Catholic Charities of Central Florida, Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS):

Maria Diez, CRS Program Coordinator reported decrease in client numbers. Haitians are the predominant group they are seeing now. Among Cubans, they see mainly family reunification cases. Employment services continues to successfully place clients in jobs. Catholic Charities implemented a Conversational English which started a week ago. In Youth Program, they have 15 youth enrolled. Legal Services also has experienced a decrease in client numbers.

World Refugee Day (WRD) - Maria Diez provided an updated on WRD which will be celebrated on June 24, 2017 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM and a Naturalization Ceremony for 30 new citizens will also be part of the event. There will also be several performers and awards for volunteers.

Refugee Resettlement - Carolina Toro, Program Manager for Refugee Resettlement reported that there only 85 arrivals since October 2016. They had 16 arrivals in May 2017 and none in June as of today. Catholic Charities has now only 2 case managers and Matching Grant (MG) was cut by 50%. They have a pool of 104 volunteers and managing them has not been easy.

CRS Case Management - Monica Araujo, Case Management Supervisor reported that even though the total number of clients has gone down, they have seen an increase in Haitian arrivals coming through Brazil.

Legal Services - Noemi Guzman, Director of Immigration & Refugee Services reported:

1. Decline in the number of new arrivals; faster appointments are available for employment authorization documents (EAD).
2. Some clients are being detained for several months and released without parole; we cannot provide EAD services without parole.
3. Delays in the adjudication of LPR status; the process takes over a year requiring clients to update medical records at a cost to them.
4. TPS Haiti re-registration period, runs from May 24, 2017 – July 24, 2017. The program was extended for an additional 6 months until January 2018. We do not know what will happen after January.

Discussion pursued related to the Naturalization process, fees and the medical certification.

Adult Education – Reported that the Adult Education Program is running well and they implemented a conversational English class.

Youth Services – Reported that they have fifteen youth enrolled and the program is running well. Now they are doing activities together with CareerSource which has good programs for Youth.

Community Coordinated Care for Children (4C) -

Wesline Archelus-Valentin, Haitian Services Coordinator and Michael Montgomery, Counselor II were present, but had no updates.

County Health Departments:

Osceola – Lizzete M. Plaud – Health Service Representative from DOH reported a decrease in number of clients. They had only 25 clients in May which is around 50% of clients seen last year in the same period. They had 10 clients in June which is only 21% of those seen last year. Consequently, they decrease the number of days dedicated to laboratory to just one day (Thursdays) and only in the morning. Assessments are done on Thursday morning and afternoon.

Orange – Martha Ruiz – Government Operations Consultant from WIC and Nutrition Services stated that they are also experiencing a decrease in the number of clients and they already have a cut in the budget from the Agriculture Department which never happened in the past. Previously, WIC served 39,000 clients monthly and WIC service now decreased by 2,500; however, they notice an increase in the number of Venezuelan clients. They have a new flyer according to the new specifications they have on their department.

Kathy Walker – TB Program Manager reported a decrease in number of clients. From March to the beginning of June, they had 126 clients and in total since October 2016 they have seen only 240 clients.

Seminole – Tania Slade, TB Program Manager reported they had only 14 clients and all were refugees and not asylees or parolees.

Lutheran Services Florida:

Jarir Dawi, Program Manager reported that R&P numbers have gone down and the number of employees has been reduced from 6 to 3; they are pushing forward with the support of volunteers. LSF is receiving one family per month since February this year. They have 40 anticipated arrivals and 125 MG slots for next fiscal year.

NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday, August 9, 2017

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

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

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