



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carrol
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 24, 2017
TO: Members of the Palm Beach Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: **Miriam Rosario (RS)**
SUBJECT: March 17, 2017 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: May 19, 2017
Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Location: West Palm Beach City Hall
WPB, Florida 33401
Contact: Miriam Rosario
Office: (561) 227-6722
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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!

11 So Sapodilla Ave, FL 33401

PALM BEACH AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was held at the West Palm Beach City Hall. Miriam Rosario, Community Liaison represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Services (RS) Program. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

A presentation given by Maryam Kassae, Esq., Children's Health and Immigration Project (CHIP) Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc. The CHIP helps children with no status in receiving their needed services including their parents and care givers, adult care givers. They advocate for immigrations issues and including Special Immigration Juveniles clients. Discussion on the definition and benefits of the V-Visa program for victims of domestic violence which Legal Aid used to provided. Legal Aid still offers para-legal and legal services for low income regardless of status.

Claudia Herrera, LMFT, CFLE, Director of Clinical Services Center for Family Services of Palm Beach County, Inc (CFFS). The CFFS is a behavioral health agency, serving PBC residents since 1961. Programs include; individual counseling, Substance use recovery, Employment Assistance Program, Therapy for sexual abuse children, Therapy for pregnant women and for parents and Children (ages 0-5). For additional information please call; 561-616-1222 or email cfsintake@ctrfam.org Referrals form were distributed and outreach materials.

NEW ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN

World Refugee Day:

Sindy De Leon (Youth Coop, Inc-YCI) reported on the PB WRD Day event, this year the event will be held same as last year at the Palm Beach State College. The date is schedule for 6/22/17 in the morning. The program starts at around 9:30 am. with the music professor playing some patriotic songs and afterwards the actual WRD Award Ceremony program will start. The USCIS Citizenship ceremony will be at 11:00 and USCIS has its own program. Millie Rodriguez (HCD/C.L. Primary Care Clinics) stated the importance to submit the vendor registration on time and the logo to be able to participate in the WRD.

Step Up Scholarships: Melissa Jaramillo was not present however she submitted update and outreach material for distributions. The SU4Students has two scholarships for Florida school children; FL Tax Credit Scholarship (FLTCS) and the Gardiner Scholarship (Gardiner). FLTCS is income-based and low-income families can choose between two K-12 scholarships for 2016-2017 school year. The FLTC covers up to \$5,886 for tuition and fees and \$500 for transportation. The Gardiner is for children with special needs is based on personal learning scholarship accounts/PLSA). Annual awards average \$10k and can go toward a combination options including private schools or home education, therapists, curriculum and technology. For more information, contact the Hotline; 1-877-735-7837. Or visit www.StepUpFotStudents.org

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS

USCIS-Michele Ramos, supervisor with USCIS indicated no updates and did encourage any refugee questions to be diverted to their Infor pass and USCIS office. The Executive Orders on Immigration and Refugees and policy changes in immigration and their effect in the refugee and immigration community was discussed. USCIS is a non-enforcement unless the person has a warrant as the USCIS has officers. CWS had partner with Bridges Language Academy and Legal Aid of PBC and provided an overview on Immigration Policy Changes to address refugees and immigrants concerns. Other areas impacted in the immigrant community have been the food pantries as refugees and immigrant are concern in using their Public benefits. Legal Aid indicated some have opted out of reaching for assistance in fear these may jeopardize their benefits for Lawful Permanent Residence and/or US Citizenship and others have not been sending their children to schools. CWS offered to Legal Aid of PBC to participate during one of their community Radio Talk Show and present to the Haitian community on this topic. Most participants were aware of these orders and changes as they were highlighted on newscasts in other media. Members discussed the effect of the Executive Orders on the local Refugee programs. The numbers have drastically been reduced in comparison to previous years' refugee's number of arrivals in PBC. The Reception and Placement/Resettlement organizations (R&P) such as Church World Service, Catholic Charities and Youth Coop, Inc. did not expect to have increases arrivals at least up until the next Federal Fiscal Year due to the Orders and reduction of official number of refugees to arrive after the ban. During the past year from January 2016 to December 2016, refugees were arriving on a regular basis and kept them and a host of volunteers extremely busy finding jobs and housing. Several families had moved to other states where they heard that possibly of jobs were available and communities with similar cultures. With the policy changes impact on new arrivals, their Match Grant programs and the RS, Department of Children and Families would be the main focus of their program. This would allow time to address the English languages and school tutoring needs of the children and adults, more intense recruitment of employers that offer on-the-job training, career laddering, and mentorship/internship, and further community outreach.

Miriam Rosario reported on a previous meeting among statewide RS staff and Employment providers. Employment providers and RS staff would work together to reestablish contract goals and tasks. These updates would primarily focus on more intense efforts to establish stronger and more promising job opportunities for refugees to gain a stronger sense of self sufficiency. All regions in Florida would be engaging in this effort. Miriam also informed on PBC one penny new law impacting employment areas such as construction. Mr. Jose Tagle, WPB City Hall discussed on new construction projects in the area and the needs of workers and provide training including preparation for job applications and the interview process and job safety training, and educate clients on available career tracks within the construction agency.

DCF/ESS- Teresa Hernandez stated on the importance to inform DCF on any Match Grant action on this specific cases and to report any change on line as soon as possible. She briefly informed on the ABAB, SNAP and Medicaid clients requirements for Career Source or RS employment participation.

Health Council of Southeast Florida- Cindy Kennedy representative announced on their services, including the coming events for assistance and steps in reapplying to Medicaid. HCSF provided outreach material to guide the refugee community in defining life changing event for

health insurance coverage under the ACA. For additional information please visit www.enrollbandtc.org

RS Contracted Providers:

Employment Services: Cindy De Leon, supervisor YCI reported on their intakes still high numbers but not as previous this quarter's 280 intakes. They have experience increases in the Haitian community intake and they demonstrate highly desires to join the work forces. Their **Youth Pathway Program (YPP)** has commenced and now have 8 cases. She exulted the members to refer the youth over 16 -19 years old to their YCI for Career or Academic assessment. Jose Tagle mentioned of the West Palm Beach City Youth Program at the Mandel Library as a resource for the YPP.

Integration Assistance (IA) & Legal Services: Silvio Padilla, director CWS provided briefly oversight regarding their Legal and IA program. Their IA program have experience an increase in the Haitian community. However, they need to wait for their EAD adding additional stress as new arrivals. He stated they have been working closely with their volunteer and the community outreach thru their Community Outreach Coordinator to help their refugees and clients. Discussion regarding the important to recognize that some of these volunteers may need training on R&P policies expectations and refugee services awareness to effectively participate with the RS organization's volunteer programs. Miriam Rosario took this opportunity to remind participants of the importance to network as a resource for refugees. Miriam reminded on the announced some new initiatives that has been established by the PBC Library System offering opportunities in various resources including cultural school aged children activities and grant research. Since many of the families are from Arabic/Syrian language they can discussed these needs with the Multicultural Library Division and their needs assessment can be presented to their local branch. This effort can be coordinated with Marisol DeJesus PBC Library System. Many other group of volunteers including Faith Groups and have also been approaching RS program and offering to help and volunteering their skills and talents to tutor refugees including Congolese and Syrian students. RS/DCF is tracking these opportunities and all have been referring to the RS providers and Resettlement Organizations (R&P) in their respective regions.

Department of Health: Not present but reported on medical assessments for all newly arriving refugees are required; they are still assisting local public health units even while there has been a reduction in these appointments.

Adult Education: Noel Hernandez, Project Transition was not present but submitted his report and indicated the Adult Education ESOL is not moving this semester and classes will begin as usual in the same locations. He stated the schools' commitment to teaching English to the refugees while also making them feel welcome in their new community.

Next Meeting: Friday, May 19th 2017
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
West Palm Beach City Hall
WPB, Florida 33401

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