



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carrol**  
Secretary

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** March 17, 2017  
**TO:** Members of the Tallahassee Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Theresa Leslie, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** March 14, 2017 Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** September 12, 2017  
*Note: World Refugee Day Event substitutes for June Task Force meeting*

**Time:** 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM  
**Location:** Department of Children & Families  
1317 Winewood Boulevard, Bldg 4 Conference Room  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

**Contact:** Theresa Leslie  
**Office:** (850) 778-4065  
**Cell:** (850) 445-4040  
**E-Mail:** Theresa.Leslie@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Tallahassee 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!*

2383 Phillips Rd. Tallahassee, FL 32308

## TALLAHASSEE AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

### **INTRODUCTION**

The meeting was held at the Department of Children Families Headquarters Office. Theresa Leslie, Community Liaison and George Lewis, RS Operations Manager represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Services (RS) Program. Rebecca Lockenbach, Refugee Services, Contract Manager was also present at this meeting. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

### **PRESENTATION**

A presentation given by George Lewis regarding the Trump Administration Executive Orders on Immigration and Refugees as stated in the official documents. Most participants were aware of these orders as they were highlighted on newscasts in the media.

Immediately after Mr. Lewis' presentation, Una Bilic, Site Manager with International Rescue Committee presented the effect of the Executive Orders on the local Refugee program. She stated that:

- December 2016 was the last time refugees have arrived in Tallahassee. And due to the Orders and reduction of official number of refugees to arrive after the ban, IRC did not expect to have new arrivals at least up until the next Federal Fiscal Year, Oct 2017.
- During the past year from January 2016 to December 2016, Congolese and Syrian refugees were arriving on a regular basis and kept them and a host of volunteers extremely busy finding and furnishing houses.
- Several families had moved to other states where they heard that possibly manufacturing jobs were available.
- Other families moved where they learned that larger refugee communities lived that had similar ethnic backgrounds. This sounded promising to the new arrivals as Tallahassee is slowly establishing its refugee community.
- Ms. Bilic gave an overview about the successes and challenges of resettling refugee families while meeting all the mandatory but very worthwhile requirements such as: medical screening including school immunizations and lab/blood work, ACCESS enrollment for public benefits including Medicaid, Social Security enrollment for each refugee, and school enrollment for the children and ESOL enrollment for the adults.
- Not all initial processes are mandatory but others are very helpful, such as: obtaining bus passes, Division of Motor Vehicles official picture identification, basic orientation to life in the U.S. and shortly after arriving adult refugees participate in several workshops and orientations related to employment.
- With the halt of new arrivals, their Comprehensive Refugee Services contract with the Department of Children and Families would be the main focus of their program. This would allow time to address the English and school tutoring needs of the children and adults, more intense recruitment of employers that offer on-the-job training, career ladder, and mentorship/internship, and further community outreach.

## **NEXT FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

George Lewis as lead for the Employment Service Team reported that employment service 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 economic self-sufficiency. All refugee employment and adult education service providers in Florida would be engaging in this effort.

Mr. Lewis provided handouts from the Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc, more familiarly known as the ABC Institute that could be explored locally.

1. The ABC Institute is an established employment program that can accept inexperienced construction workers and provide training including preparation for job applications and the interview process, OSHA and other safety training, and educate clients on available career tracks within the construction industry.
2. One handout was an overview of the program and the other one was actual agenda for one of their overview workshops entitled: “Apprenticeship, Education, and Training” in Coconut Creek Florida, Broward Training Center.
3. Mr. Lewis again mentioned this ABC Institute as just one of many resources employment providers could research and determine applicability for refugees.

## **PARTNERSHIP AND RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES**

Theresa Leslie took this opportunity to remind participants of the Good Samaritan Network as a resource for refugees. Volunteers and partner agency staff can take advantage of this program that utilizes its “Benevolent Account” to offer free clothes, diapers, school supplies, household items, and free food program on Tuesday morning. This program serves anyone in crisis and is not limited to refugees.

Glen and Beth Burns, Directors

Michael Mahan, Donations for Refugees Contact (makes arrangements for free items)

Good Samaritan Network

2810 Sharer Road, #30

Tallahassee, FL 32302

Email: [info@gsncares.org](mailto:info@gsncares.org)

850-297-1113

<http://www.gsncares.org/>

gsn\_brochure.pdf

## **COLLEGE STUDENTS AS VOLUNTEER TUTORS**

Theresa Leslie announced a new initiative that has been established by a group of FSU students from various majors to tutor school aged children.

This group of fifty plus volunteers have been organized the past few months and have been tutoring many of the 56 refugee students in Tallahassee. Since many of the students were familiar with the Arabic language they were assigned to the Syrian students while gradually taking on the

Congolese students. Students committed to tutoring 3 days a week for one class period. This effort has been coordinated with the Althea Valle, Leon County School, ESOL Coordinator.

Two other faith based group of volunteers have also been tutoring Congolese and Syrian students since the beginning of 2017. Just about all of the students are now experiencing their own tutor.

It is important to recognize that some of the tutors also participate in homework help at the students' home or at their faith based agency.

Volunteers are currently being recruited from FAMU as well.

### **SOCIAL EXPERIENCES**

Tutoring Volunteers organized a family picnic for students and families on a Sunday afternoon with soccer games and a pot luck early dinner. This event was such a success that college students want to expand these picnics to all refugees and volunteers.

### **PROGRAM AND RESOURCE UPDATES**

**Adult Education:** One of the Adult and Community Education ESOL Instructors came during her Spring Break as a volunteer. She invited anyone who would like to sit in an ESOL class to call Lynn Cunill at ACE 850-922-5343 24 hours in advance. She expressed the school's commitment to teaching English to the refugees while also making them feel welcome in their new community.

**Department of Health:** Refugee Health reported how they keep aware of all federal, state, and local policies and updates. As 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.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, September 12, 2017  
10:00 to Noon  
Department of Children and Families  
Winewood Office Complex, Bldg 4 Conference Room

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