



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott  
Governor

Mike Carrol  
Secretary

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 5, 2016  
**TO:** Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Pedro Padua, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** February 10, 2016 TF Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** April 13, 2016  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Florida Department of Transportation Building  
133 S. Semoran Blvd., Orlando, FL 32807  
**Contact:** Pedro Padua  
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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, S1111D, Orlando, Florida 32801

***Mission: Work in Partnership with Local Communities to Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency***

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**ORLANDO AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING**

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**INTRODUCTIONS**

This meeting was held at the Florida Department of Transportation Building, located at 133 S. Semoran Blvd; Orlando, FL 32807. Forty-one people were in attendance. Taddese Fessehaye, Community Liaison Unit Manager for the Refugee Services Program and Pedro Padua, Central Region Community Liaison represented the Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Everyone introduced themselves and the agency they represented.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION – ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS – SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM**

Mr. Greg Moody, Executive Area Director for Orange County Public Schools – School Choice Program started off by indicating there are various program components within the School Choice Program: There is Alternative Education which is non-traditional – students attend school half a day and work half a day. He said the program has two excellent partners: Universal Studios and Simmons Youth Mall. He added the Choice Program includes Orange County Chartered Schools, Virtual Education, Extended Day (before and after school care for elementary and middle school students), a Teen Parent Program in collaboration with the BETA Center, and The Career Tech Centers.

Dr. Kimberly Marlow, Director of School Choice Programs for Orange County Public Schools explained Orange County Magnet Opportunities are designed to engage students in specific areas to discover their talents, explore their interest and focus on academic rigor. She added, there are 26 schools with 36 magnet programs: 6 elementary, 9 middle and 22 high Schools. Elementary magnets focus on Aviation and Aerospace, Dual Language, Foreign Language and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). The middle school programs are: Visual and Performing Arts, World and Dual Language, International Baccalaureate and Cambridge Middle School Program.

The High School Programs are in Engineering, Medical Careers and Arts, Criminal Justice, Law and Finance, Veterinary Science, Technology, Visual and Performing Arts, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge and Agri-science. She indicated electronic applications opens November 1 to February 15. Interested parties can visit: [www.schoolchoice.ocps.net](http://www.schoolchoice.ocps.net)

She added that if there are more qualified applicants than seats, a lottery is held. Taddese asked about what they do for placement level of 16 or 17 year old that may not have school transcripts from their country of origin; adding that some schools refuse to enroll them. Dr. Marlow replied that everyone is entitled to a free education and suggested advocates and parents don't talk to the registrar at school; but rather ask to speak with the principal or assistant principal. Mr. Moody said that people could contact him if they encounter any problems. Both his contact information and that of Dr. Marlow were provided in power point hand out that was distributed to everyone.

**GENERAL UPDATES**

**USCIS** – Donald Jarrell, *D10 Community Relations Officer (West Palm Beach and Orlando areas)* mentioned they'll be participating in several outreach events:

Sunday, February 21, 2016

**2<sup>nd</sup> Newcomer Orientation Fair "Welcome to Orlando"** Venezolanos en Orlando, VEO - 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM At Ana G. Mendez University System Metro Orlando Campus, 5601 S. Semoran Blvd., Orlando, FL 32822.

NALEO Citizenship Day - Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 - 10:00 AM at la Mision La Cosecha Church, located at 2830 N. Orange Blossom Trail, Kissimmee, FL 34744

USCIS Office of Citizenship Teacher Training for Citizenship Preparation on Thursday, April 28, 2016 from 9-3 at the Orlando Field Office located at 6680 Corporate Centre Blvd, Orlando. PLEASE RSVP to [donald.jarrell@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:donald.jarrell@uscis.dhs.gov) to attend and for more information

**DCF ESS/ACCESS** – Lodia Rojas, RAP Unit Supervisor for ACCESS talked about the implementation of the work registration requirements for “Able Bodied Adults without Dependents” (ABAWD) age 18 to 49 to receive food stamps or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. She explained the computer has been sanctioning Matching Grant and RCA clients; but since they are enrolled in an employment program their cases are being reopened as RAP Unit learns of particular cases.

**AHCA – Agency for Health Care Administration (Medicaid)** – Milagros (Millie) Chervoni, gave an update about the implementation of **Express Enrollment** to Medicaid Managed Care. Beginning in January recipients could chose a plan at the time their application was submitted or the agency would enroll individuals who are mandated to participate into a plan after eligibility determination. Refugees are **not** Mandatory Participants; but are strongly encouraged to choose and enroll in a plan since it is very difficult to find providers that accept Medicaid. She indicated people could call the Choice Counselors at 1-877-711-3662 if they need assistance in choosing a plan.

**WRD** – World Refugee Day – Pedro reported this year’s celebration is being planned to take place on Sunday, June 12 from 12:00 to 5:00 PM at Oak Ridge High School Cafeteria. He said the Workgroup will meet on-site on February 19 at 2:30 PM to map out the area and decide on set up for space utilization. He extended an invitation to anyone wishing to attend.

### **RS-CONTRACTED PROVIDER UPDATES**

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

Deborah Cruz, CRS Program Manager, reported the program has been busy. She added the Food Stamp requirements and enrollment of children in Child Care has been a challenge (there are 26 children on waiting list). They are reporting on FS clients as they become aware of sanctions. She said they are working with 4C to find a solution to the enrollment problem.

Monica Araujo, Case Manager Supervisor, reported there has been an increase in Cuban arrivals and an increase in homeless clients.

**Employment** – Debbie Cruz, reported the employment program has been successful coordinating hiring events in production, housekeeping and placement of a couple of professionals in engineering and Information Technology.

**Adult Education** – Katherine Diaz, ESOL Program Coordinator, reported that due to arrival increase they had to restructure the program to offer classes in the morning, afternoon and evenings. She added they have 200 students on voucher program (Seminole and Osceola) but there is waiting list in Seminole and Osceola.

Taddese asked if she gets any update reports about attendance and grades for students using vouchers. Katherine replied affirmatively, indicating they signed a release of information as part of the MOU.

**Legal Services** – Noemi Guzman, Program Coordinator, reported that DCF Sanctions has had a negative impact on clients seeking fee waivers. The program is scheduling appointments 3 to 5 months out for adjustment of status and added that parole extensions for Haitians is on hold because ICE is waiting on policy. She indicated there are 25/30 clients affected.

**Youth** – Maria Diez, Program Coordinator, reported the program has been drastically reduced; they were serving 120 students and now they have 3 case workers serving 45 to 50 students with emphasis on older youth or High School students.

Richard Logue asked if there was anything that could be done to avert budget cuts. Taddese indicated that Mr. Ken Tonta, Assistant Director for Programs with ORR will be traveling to Miami, along with Patti Grogan, RS Director to view firsthand the impact the arrival increase is having on service delivery in Miami and in other areas.

**PALMAS** – Rose Exantus-Boisrond, Program Coordinator, reported that 9 PALMAS students have been nominated for the National Honor Society. She mentioned the program has been having problems again with data entry due to security software at Orange County Public School. She added that CRS has been helping with data input since there has been an increase of Cuban students.

**Community Coordinated Care for Children**, Michael Montgomery, Family Support Specialist, reported they enrolled 8 children in November, 4 in December and 2 in January. They have 25 children on waiting list.

#### **County Health Departments**

County Health Department reports were omitted due to shortage of time.

#### **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday, April 13, 2016

**Location:** Florida Department of Transportation Building  
133 S. Semoran Blvd., Orlando, FL 32807

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