



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Secretary

DATE: June 28, 2016
TO: Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force
FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: April 5th 2016 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: August 2, 2016
Time: 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Location: Children's Board of Hillsborough County
1002 East Palm Ave, Tampa FL
Contact: Janet Blair
Phone: (813) 545-1716
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This task force has been active in the Tampa area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An average of 50 people 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 next meeting!

TAMPA BAY AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MINUTES

Mission Statement: Helping Refugees to settle, integrate and thrive through support, education and community.

This meeting was held at the Department of Children & Families located at 9393 North Florida Ave, Tampa, Florida. Patti Grogan, Director of Refugee Services and Janet Blair, Community Liaison for the SunCoast Region represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A total of 56 were present during this meeting. Janet called the meeting to order at 1:35pm and Patti led participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Presentations:

- A presentation was given by Sunny Hall from The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay. The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay is a community partner of the Task Force and working closely with the mental health subcommittee to insure that clients are receiving trauma informed services. Sunny reminded Task Force members to dial 211 for a wide range of services. Basic services include suicide prevention, care coordination, follow-up and referrals. Veteran services are available. Other services provided include sexual assault exams and counseling. Services are provided in a linguistic and culturally appropriate manner. All services are available 24/7. The center has trauma informed care, voice and choice. One to five days is the typical response to non-urgent referrals and requests. Contact: shall@crisiscenter.com for more information or to arrange to take a tour visit <https://www.crisiscenter.com/>
- A second presentation was given by the staff of Radiant Hands, led by Magda Selah. Radiant Hands has been partnering with the Task Force since October, 2015. As a nonprofit and locally funded program, Radiant Hands offers a wide range of services to over 100 refugee families with the goal of helping them become self-sufficient and integrated into the community. Radiant Hands focuses on assisting clients identifying as Muslim, but will help all refugees regardless of their faith affiliation. Radiant Hands staff work closely with the four local resettlement agencies to provide various services for clients. For example, they provide a “Welcome Basket” which includes prayer rugs, tea, and culturally appropriate hot meals, used furniture, linen, dishes, utensils, etc. all of which is donated from community members and given to new arrivals. Radiant Hands staff also provide job referrals and counseling services as needed and 3 months of paid phone service. Staff and volunteers speak a variety of languages including Arabic and Farsi. Additional services include providing training for women to get jobs who have never worked in their native countries and assistance with relocation to another state if necessary. Radiant Hands has a website at <http://www.radianthands.org/>

Refugee Services Update:

- Patti Grogan gave an update on refugee arrivals statewide—as of April 2016 a total of 24,925 have arrived to the state for an average of 5,000 arrivals per month. Ninety-five percent of these arrivals are from Cuba and many of them are joining family members already residing in Florida. Many

Cubans are crossing the border after going through Central America on a perilous and difficult journey. Refugee Services is focused on helping these new arrivals to find employment and 12,000 were placed in jobs last year. This year the employment numbers will be even higher. Other populations we expect to see in Florida this year include Congolese and some Syrians. Burmese resettlement has come to a close.

- Janet Blair and Doug Haskitt gave an update on this year's World Refugee Day event which will be held on June 17th at Pinellas Technical College in St. Petersburg, FL. This year's event will include a citizenship ceremony, awards for faculty and students of Pinellas County Schools and a screening of the film "Refugees: Roads to Success."
- Janet also announced that the Tampa Welcoming Week event will be held on Saturday, September 17th at the University of South Florida and is being sponsored by the Honors College and Pacific Interpreters. This second annual event will include a cultural festival and a planning committee is already hard at work to make this year's event even more successful than last year. Please see Janet if you want to join this committee.

General Updates

United States Citizenship & Immigration Services: is partnering with both the Tampa Bay and SWFL Task Forces to conduct citizenship ceremonies for World Refugee Day in two locations.

Adult Education: The CARIBE Tampa program is partnering with University of South Florida on several initiatives, one of which is an oral history curriculum that will be created by sharing stories of local refugees and then developed by college and graduate students into a 4th grade curriculum that can be utilized by ESOL programs county wide.

Project Prosper: It was announced that April is financial literacy month and that Project Prosper now has capacity to generate loans to 20 individuals at a \$1,500 maximum loan amount.

Global Community Church: Pastor Joseph announced that he will open a summer tutoring program for elementary school students this summer at his church.

Hillsborough County Government: Hillsborough County is hosting the first annual Diversity Festival on Saturday, April 16, at 601 E. Kennedy, 11 AM-3PM, Indian groups, Asian participants, Special Olympics gymnastics, diverse foods available. For more information call 813-276-8401.

University of Tampa/UN-USA Tampa Chapter: A Human Rights Day event will be held on April 23rd at the University of Tampa that is free and open to the public to attend.

Congolese Community of Tampa Bay: A new nonprofit organization has been formed locally to assist Congolese refugees as well as refugees from other African countries. This is a voluntary organization and they are currently filing for nonprofit status. The president is Tshimanga Mukendi who can be reached at Tshimanga.mukendi@gmail.com

Upcoming TF Meetings

- June 17th, World Refugee Day Event, 10:00am to 12pm, Pinellas Technical College, 901 34th Street South, St. Petersburg, FL 33711
- August 2nd, 1:30-3:30pm, The Children's Board of Hillsborough County, 1002 East Palm Avenue, Tampa, FL 33605
- Dec. 6th, 1:30-3:30pm, The Children's Board of Hillsborough County, 1002 East Palm Avenue, Tampa, FL 33605