



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

David E. Wilkins
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 29, 2013
TO: Members of the Broward Area Refugee Task Force (RTF)
FROM: Miriam Rosario, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: March 21, 2013 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: May 16, 2013
Time: 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon
Location: Department of Health
7080 SW 24St. Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315
Tel. 954-467-4700 ext. 5725
E-Mail: Miriam_Rosario@dcf.state.fl.us
Taddese_Fessehaye@dcf.state.fl.us

This task force has been active in the Broward 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 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!

Southeast Region - Circuit 15
111 South Sapodilla Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

PALM BEACH AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTIONS

This meeting was held at Youth Co-Op, Inc. (YCI). Thirty-five people were in attendance. Hiram Ruiz, Director Refugee Services, Taddese Fessehay, Community Liaison Manager, and Miriam Rosario, Community Liaison for the Southeast Region represented the Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program. Everyone introduced themselves and the agency they represented. Miriam thanked YCI for hosting the meeting.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Demystifying DCF and Review of Mandatory Reporting, Laura L. Johnson, Client Relations Coordinator, Department of Children and Families (DCF), provided an overview of the Florida Abuse Hotline. The presentation included definitions of Abuse, Harm, Child Neglect, Sexual Abuse, Mental Injury and Abandonment. What to report, information caller should have ready when calling and who is mandated to report including the new “Penn State event”, if the suspected abuser is other than a parent, legal custodian, caregiver or other person responsible the suspicion is reportable to the FL Hotline/DCF. She also reviewed the new (as of October 2012) “Protection of Vulnerable Persons (Pen State Bill) penalties. Organizations and RTF members helping in the community were encourage to report and to be familiar with on what is in the report. Information about the reporter is confidential; however, the family has the right to know what is in the report. When reporting and if the report is not accepted, the reporter has the option to ask for a Hot line supervisor. The Florida Abuse Hotline is; 1-800-96-ABUSE or 1-800-962-2873.

Presentation on the Refugee Youth Program - Lina M. Rodriguez, MS, Youth Coordinator, Youth Co-Op, Inc. (YCI), provided an overview of the Refugee Youth Program. YCI has a youth program both in Broward and Palm Beach. The program is designed to help newly arrived refugee youth who have been in the country 3 years or less. The focus is on middle and high school youth, to help them excel in their education. Services include Tutoring (Math & English), Academic camps, Support and Enrichment services (testing and life skills training, computer instruction and mentoring). Career Development planning is available for high school students. The program also offers orientation services to new refugee families regarding the American school system, and serve as a liaison with the schools to promote integration and parental involvement. They no longer directly serve elementary students however they can receive general group orientation. Referrals are always welcome from RS providers, schools and the community by contacting Lina Rodriguez Youth Coordinator 954-961-1542 Ext 231; or in Broward Beatriz Borja 954-961-1542 ext. 232 and in Palm Beach Ingrid Riechmann 561-964-1693 ext. 118.

GENERAL UPDATES

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS):

- Brett Lassen, Broward Field Office Director, stated the USCIS is working hard to prevent Naturalization fraud especially to the Haitian community by offering Naturalization workshops. The next teleconference on I-94 automation is scheduled for March 27, 2013, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. (Eastern). During the teleconference,

subject matter experts from CBP will provide an update on the process to automate Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record, and answer questions. Additional information regarding CBP's Form I-94 automation, please visit CBP's website at www.cbp.gov and review their News Release. These sessions are known to be very helpful. Any customer who receives an immigrant visa package at an overseas consulate or embassy must pay the USCIS Immigrant Fee in order to receive their Green Card in the United States. This fee allows USCIS to recover the costs of processing immigrant visas after immigrant visa holders receive their visa packages from the Department of State. The rule became effective for all foreign nationals who receive an immigrant visa on or after Feb. 1, 2013. The USCIS Immigrant Fee is not related to the immigrant visa fees collected by the Department of State. For USCIS services or to learn more about the announcement and guidelines visit www.uscis.gov or call 1-800-375-5283.

ACCESS (DCF):

- Wilber Roney, from DCF ACCESS advised members of the importance for DCF to review all documentation as they apply for RAP. Making the copies readable will help expedite processing the cases. All DCF letters for SSA must be signed by the DCF supervisor. In order to expedite the SNAP application process, Wilber stated clients should submit I-94 and ID with picture. Additionally, to help reduce the errors in application process, refugees should be advised and helped to create a My ACCESS account on line.

Department of Motor Vehicle and Highway Safety (DMVHS):

- Richard Schwable, Area Coordinator from DMVHS, stated that he understands the importance of the ID needed for employment and offered his contact information to help with driver license needs and SSA requirements. He can be contacted at 954-677-5401 or call the service clerk at 954-677-5409.

NEW REFUGEE ARRIVAL UPDATE

- **Youth Co-Op, Inc.** – Jesus Garcia reported they resettled a family of four with 2 kids from Cuba in the Coral Springs area.
- **Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services** –Yamilet Vargas reported they have been approved for 38 slots in Broward. They have resettled two individuals from Cuba. Their plan is to resettle only in Broward; however, in accordance with the federal cooperative agreement for resettlement agencies they can resettle cases within 50 miles of their office or up to 100 miles from their office if they have US ties willing to assist them.

REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATES

- Adult Education- Gwynne Gonzalez, Director of Project RENEW, reported the Spring Term started 1/7/13 as well as their new computer classes. They did 200 intakes during Sept-October, with a total of 230 active enrollments. The 15 classes are spread in 7 campuses. Their new administrative location is 1000 Coconut Creek Blvd., Bldg.

60/Room 300, Coconut Creek, FL 33060. The telephone number is 954-201-8709. Gwynne raised the possibility for their new outreach brochures to be display at USCIS, Brett Lassen from USCIS agreed to explore the possibility.

- Employment- Jesus Garcia, Program Coordinator from Youth Co-Op, Inc. reported that they conducted 152 new client intakes and successfully placed 125 clients last year. Orientation has increased to an average of 36 per month in one site and 55-60 in their other site. The Margate site has increased with the Haitian community. He stated that they have noticed an increase in the number of Haitian and Cuban arrivals coming thru San Diego.
- Youth- Lina Rodriguez, Youth Program Coordinator, Youth Co-Op, Inc. reported that the program has 74 clients in Orientation, 63 students in tutoring and 22 in Career Development. They are expanding to other schools where the refugee youth are attending as the needs arise and are preparing for the summer educational camps. She also announced that the youth will be participating in the Broward School Rally "Above the Influence". This is an Anti-Drug Media Campaign conducted by the Office of National Drug Control Policy of the USA. The rally is scheduled for May 18, 2013.
- Employability Status- Aimee Cernicharo, Staff Senior Attorney, from St Thomas University Human Rights Institute stated that they have noticed an increase in the number of Cuban single men. Discussion continued on the impact these new arrivals could have on benefits.
- Integration Assistance- Craig Marcklinger, Supervisor from CWS reported on their group Orientations that are being provided during days and evenings. IA is available to provide orientation at Project Transition site to large groups. The program has 80 clients in Broward and Palm Beach. They are expecting to serve 180 clients the first year. The program is now fully staffed in both areas. Their Information and Referral (I&R) services has provided help to refugees who are looking for employment, mental health and housing assistance.
- Child Care- Shirley Thomas, Counselor from Family Central stated they have 15 slots and only received 13 referrals. They still have two available.

- **RS 2013 Statewide Consultation Update:**
RS is still in the process of developing the agenda and would very much welcome all members' suggestions on workshop topics and/or speakers/presenters. The consultation will also include several workshops focused on contracting with the Department, including a preview of new contracting requirements and discussions on performance reviews, financial consequences and monitoring. Hiram asked RS providers to consult with their contract managers as he would like more front line staff from all agencies to attend; not just their leadership. Statewide Consultation is scheduled for May 8-10, 2013. The Consultation will be held at the Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando 5601 Universal Blvd., Orlando, FL. The Consultation will provide opportunities to meet and interact with professional colleagues, refugees from throughout the state, and Ethnic Community Based Organization leaders. There will also be films and performances by refugee artists.

- Future Resettlement Populations 2013:**
 Hiram spoke about the current resettlement's trends. Congolese is the new group coming to the US starting late FFY 2013. Palm Beach County is being considered as a resettlement site for the Congolese due to the large French speaking community. He discussed ORR funding distribution and the importance on how to utilize the funds effectively to meet the needs of the refugee community. Florida is in a unique position regarding the nationwide new arrivals; however the Cuban/Haitian arrivals may have a change in numbers of locally.
- 2013 World Refugee Day Planning Meeting:** Discussion ensued on the upcoming WRD celebrations and the importance of these statewide activities. Taddese commented on ways to collaborate with community stake holders and invite elected officials. This will give us an opportunity to highlight the contributions of the refugees which will be recognized at the 2013 World Refugee Day celebration. He hopes the entire Refugee Services contracted providers and other community members will be part of the planning committee. Everyone's participation in the Planning Committee is crucial in order to make this event a huge success. Broward College has offered to host the WRD on June 19 with the collaboration of USCIS. The event will be a Family Fun Day.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Kellie-Ann Davis, Program Coordinator from Urban League announced their Free Tax VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) preparation services available at Hispanic Unity of Florida to those eligible making \$51K or less. She strongly advised the importance of educating refugees in tax fraud prevention. She also informed the members of the Ways to Work Car Loans available to working individuals with a minor in their care regardless of the credit score. Materials were distributed relating to these announcements.

NEXT MEETING

Date	Location	Contact person & Phone #
Mar 22, 2013	Youth Co-Op, Inc. 2112 S. Congress Ave., Suite 102 Palm Springs, FL 33406 Telephone: 561-964-1693	Jesus Garcia Tel. 954-961-1542
May 16, 2013	Department of Health 7080 SW 24St. Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315	Marie McMillan Tel. 954-467-4700 ext. 5725
June 20, 2013	WORLD REFUGEE DAY TBD	Broward College

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