



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

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carroll**  
Secretary

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**DATE:** May 18, 2015  
**TO:** Members of the South West Florida Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** April 1st Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** June 10, 2015  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Career Source  
3050 Horseshoe Drive N Bldg A Suite 110  
Naples, FL 34104  
**Contact:** Janet Blair  
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This task force has been active in the South West Florida area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An Average of twenty 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, 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!*

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SunCoast Region, 9393 North Florida Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33612-7907

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

## **SWF REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES**

This meeting was held at the Lee County Health Department located at 83 Pondella Road in Ft Myers, FL and was facilitated by Janet Blair and Taddese Fessehaye from the Community Liaison Unit of the Refugee Services program at the Florida Department of Children and Families. Twenty-seven members were in attendance when the meeting was called to order at 10:10am.

### **PRESENTATIONS**

A presentation was given by program director Rose Marie Connor on the new Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) Comprehensive Refugee Services model that was launched on March 2, 2015 in the South West Florida area ranging from Manatee/Sarasota counties down to Collier County. The new LSF program covers a total of 10 counties and has three office locations in Collier, Lee and Sarasota counties. Office managers from all three sites attended the meeting and distributed their contact information to Task Force members. Refugee Services is creating brochures for each newly opened office to be distributed at the next Task Force meeting.

The second presentation was given by Melissa Jaramillo, Outreach Manager for the non-profit organization, Step Up for Students. An overview of the income based scholarships was given as well as a summary of the scholarships for students with special needs. Enrollment is currently open for the program and is managed on a first come, first served basis. Scholarships are available up to the age of 19 for enrollment in private K-12 schools. Outreach materials were distributed.

A final, brief presentation was given by Katie Addison of Pacific Interpreters on the importance of working with trained interpreters. Ms. Addison explained the hiring and screening system at Pacific Interpreters and gave Task Force members tips on how to best work with an interpreter by phone. She recommended asking clients to repeat back important instructions if there was any concern about them not receiving all aspects of a detailed message and that an interpreter's Identification Number be recorded in case there are any concerns about the interpreter's abilities or attitudes. Further training can be offered locally at the provider's request.

### **REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE**

Taddese Fessehaye gave a summary of the statewide Refugee Services Consultation which was held in February in Jacksonville and all who attended saw it as the best Consultation to date. Taddese also announced that Patti Grogan is now the Director of Refugee Services statewide and that applications are being taken for the Deputy Director position. In addition, Taddese announced that the Refugee Services AmeriCorps Vista proposal looks like it will be funded and Vista volunteers should begin with provider agencies in May or June. Locations for Vista staff include Tampa, Jacksonville, Ft Myers and Orlando. Vista volunteers will work on anti-poverty initiatives outlined in the proposal.

**PROGRAM INFORMATION & UPDATES**

**Resettlement Program:** The program director and three resettlement staff from Catholic Charities (CC) Reception & Placement /Match Grant program attended the meeting. One issue during the transition that was identified was that upon intake at LSF, clients are not always being asked if they are in a Match Grant (MG) program. This resulted in one family having to return money due to accidentally being enrolled in both MG and Employment. Otherwise the transition to the new LSF program has gone smoothly. CC reported 34 R&P clients and 41 MG clients enrolled this fiscal year to date. CC has a total of 90 MG slots for this fiscal year. CC also pointed out that they do expect to see Ukrainian refugees/asylees within the next year as the North Port area is one of the largest Ukrainian communities in the Southeast. CC is also working with unaccompanied minors and has five open cases at this time.

**Health Department:** The Refugee Clinic in Collier County provided services to 120 new arrivals this calendar year. In addition to the influx of Cuban border crossers, the clinic has seen Haitian clients from the Immokalee area that have come for services.

**Adult Education:** (Project STRIVE): The Collier County program has 145 enrolled in ESOL classes and 9 students in Vocational Training this semester.

**Refugee Youth**

The youth program has 55 students enrolled and has plans to expand to Lee County in the future. The program manager is considering approaching Florida Gulf Coast University regarding space for tutoring in Lee County in order to keep costs low.

**Childcare:** Not Present.

**OPEN DISCUSSION**

Janet and Taddese facilitated a discussion around plans for World Refugee Day in June. It was decided that an event should be held for the first time in Lee County as the new LSF office has opened in Ft Myers and wants to raise community awareness regarding refugees in the area. A planning committee was formed and will meet via conference call within the next two weeks.

**NEXT MEETING:**

Date: Wednesday, June 10th 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Location: Career Source 3050 Horseshoe Drive N Bldg A Suite 110, Naples, FL 34104

Contact: [Janet.Blair@myffamilies.com](mailto:Janet.Blair@myffamilies.com) or (813) 545-1716