



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Secretary

DATE: March 18, 2015
TO: Members of the Tallahassee Refugee Task Force
FROM: Theresa Leslie, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: March 17, 2015 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: June 25, 2015 World Refugee Day
Time: 11:00 P.M. – 1:30 P.M.
Location: St. Thomas More Co-Cathedral
Tennessee and Woodard
Contact: Theresa Leslie
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This task force has been active in the Tallahassee area for several years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An average of 20 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, 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!

TALLAHASSEE AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MINUTES

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

This meeting was held at Early Learning Coalition Training Room located at 3714 West Linebaugh Ave in Tallahassee, Florida. Theresa Leslie, Refugee Services Community Liaison for the Northwest Region represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A total of 19 were present during this meeting. Theresa called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM

Presentations:

Presentations were given by Stephanie Love from Step Up for Students and Roy Richardson from the Department of Labor.

Refugee Services Update:

- Hiram's retirement at the beginning of March was recognized as the statewide director of refugee services.
- Members were encouraged to report on their comments to the statewide Refugee Services Consultation in February.
- As announced at the December Task Force meeting, International Rescue Committee will be the Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS) provider for the Tallahassee area beginning on April 1, 2015.
- In June at the World Refugee Day, the IRC Executive Director and Case Manager will be speaking on behalf of their work with local refugees

General Updates

Maria Roswold, Catholic Charities, Refugee Social Services Provider in the Northwest Region for the past five years provided her final update and heartfelt thanks to all community partners and agency staff that contributed their work with refugees. She reported that during the past five years over 250 clients were served. All staff from Catholic Charities pledged their cooperation during the transition to the new provider in April.

Comprehensive Refugee Services in Leon County: Gloria Darling, Contract Unit Supervisor for the Office of Refugee Services provided a brief overview of the new contract with International Rescue Committee. She explained the difference in contract titles from the one used during the last five years. She explained that new refugee arrivals for Reception and Placement would not take place during the first six months of the contract period. This will afford the new provider staff to get on solid footing with the existing refugee caseload and learn the community resources available to refugees.

Step Up for Students, Every Child Deserves a Chance to Succeed, Presenter Stephanie Love from Jacksonville distributed the current brochures and handouts highlighting the programs goals and eligibility criteria. Ms. Love provided many examples of the type of students who could best be served by their participation. She explained how children in refugee families may need a smaller setting with a smaller student to teacher ratio while they are improving their English speaking and writing skills. She did stress that students who participate in a Step Up school do not have to take the FCAT. Ms. Love promised to send a supply of brochures for World Refugee Day.

Roy Richardson, Department of Labor, Community Outreach and Planning Specialist: Keeping an Eye on Wages and Hours, Mr. Richardson has been traveling through Florida and other southern states and has attended most Refugee Task Forces around the State. During his contact with providers and employers he is cautioning staff to keep their eyes and ears open regarding wage and hour issues that seem unreasonable and/or unfair. He wants us to stay alert to those who are forced to work overtime, aren't getting paid as promised, aren't getting the hourly rate they agreed to, or are threatened in any way regarding their work and reports to officials. He provided several examples to let all know that unfair practices to employees happen everywhere and his agency will investigate all reports. Investigations from the Department of Labor can only be conducted on employers who have 500 or more employees. This fact is unsettling. However, Mr. Richardson gave pointers on what to look for and how to contact him and his agency for technical assistance.

Upcoming Task Force Meeting will be held during the World Refugee Day event, June 25, 2015 from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the same location as last year, St. Thomas More Co-Cathedral Social Hall at the corner of Tennessee and Woodward.

Task Force meetings for the remainder of 2015 are scheduled as follows: -
September 8, 2015 and December 8, 2015 at the Early Learning Coalition Training Room, -
Tallahassee, FL. -