



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Secretary

DATE: April 2, 2015
TO: Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force
FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: January 27th 2015 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: April 7, 2015
Time: 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Location: Pinellas Technical College
6100 154th Ave North, Clearwater FL
Contact: Janet Blair
Phone: (813) 545-1716
Fax: (727) 588-7063
E-Mail: Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com
Taddese.Fessehaye@myflfamilies.com

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 40 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!

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 Grace Lutheran Church located at 3714 West Linebaugh Ave in Tampa Florida. Hiram Ruiz, Director of Refugee Services, Patti Grogan, Deputy Director of Refugee Services and Janet Blair, Refugee Services Community Liaison for the SunCoast Region represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A total of 63 were present during this meeting. Janet called the meeting to order at 1:35pm.

Presentations:

Presentations were given by Amanda Lopez from Step Up for Students and Jody L. McBrien from the University of South Florida's College of Education.

Refugee Services Update:

- Hiram's retirement as the statewide director of refugee services was recognized with a letter of appreciation from Congresswoman Kathy Castor as well as numerous farewells from Task Force members.
- Members were encouraged to register now for the statewide Consultation in February as early registration is ending.
- An announcement was made that Hiram Ruiz would be a guest panelist at the League of Women Voter's event held on January 27th in St. Petersburg.

General Updates

Resettlement: Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) had 46 arrivals this calendar year. Catholic Charities had 24 families arrive and has 190 projected for the year. Coptic Orthodox Charities had 36 individual arrivals and has served 21 asylees this year, a total of 165 arrivals are expected for this fiscal year. Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services (GCJFCS) had a total of 34 individual arrivals this fiscal year and projects 110 total arrivals this fiscal year.

Mental Health Resources Subcommittee Update-Stacy Kratz, co-chair of the committee, gave an overview of the history, goals and accomplishments to date. The committee continues to meet monthly and is still working to identify and quantify the need for mental health services in refugee clients. Once the need is clearly articulated, the committee will work to reach out to local mental health providers and also to staff cases on an as needed basis.

Tampa Bay Garden—Father Berhanu announced the upcoming Open House event at the garden on Saturday, March 21st. Flyers will be sent to all Task Force members. The garden will have produce for sale and Burmese food available for a donation.

World Refugee Day Update—Janet announced plans to partner with United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) on a citizenship ceremony. Tours of the USCIS facility will be available for refugee adult education and refugee youth beforehand.

Welcoming Week Update—Janet announced that she and several Task Force members met with Hillsborough County Commissioner Kevin Beckner to discuss the prospect of Hillsborough County becoming an officially Welcoming County through Welcoming America. A series of events are planned for National Welcoming Week to be held Sept. 12-20 this year.

Refugee & Immigrant Women's Initiative (RAMWI)-Florence Ackey announced upcoming workshops for this newly formed psycho-educational group that aides refugee women in acculturation while also teaching them arts & crafts.

Upcoming Task Force Meetings (1:30-3:30pm):

- **April 7th**, Pinellas Technical College, Building 1, C.O.E. Room, 6100 154th Ave N, Clearwater
- **June 16th** USCIS 5629 Hoover Boulevard, Tampa
- **August 11th**, Pinellas Technical College, Building 1, C.O.E. Room, 6100 154th Ave N, Clearwater
- **October 6th** Children's Board of Hillsborough County, 1002 East Palm Ave, Tampa
- **December 1st**, Pinellas Technical College Building 1, C.O.E. Room, 6100 154th Ave N, Clearwater